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Why all the poor cannot migrate?

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Migration is dynamic process; it is often an available option for the rural poor as they strive to improve their lives and livelihoods. However, the large cities may not offer them opportunities that they had envisaged at time of migration.

During a field visit to village Tursi, Union council Masoo Bozdar Tando Allahyar, in December 2016, I had a key informant Interview with Jeavan Kachi. Jeavan is 37 years old and works as a labourer. He is the only bread earner for his family, which includes his wife and two young sons and three daughters. Due to his very extreme poor financial position, in May 2008, Jeavan decided to migrate to Karachi to find better economic opportunities. Since he is an illiterate and unskilled worker, he decided to sell vegetables in Sabzi Mandi (Vegetable market) Karachi in the hope of earning more money to take better care of family. But living out of village approximately 219 kilometres away from home was difficult for him.

Jeavan said, "I went to Karachi in 2008 for selling vegetables at Sabzi Market, life was very much fast there and I was very simple person so it was very difficult for me to work there. It was a big change in my life. I had thought that it would be beneficial to live in a big city and to make a decent living but now I know that it is not so. It was much more difficult to adjust there than I had imagined."

Although, Jeavan lived in the Sabzi Market and saved daily travel expenses. However, after meeting his food and other expenses, his daily earnings were about Rs. 300 per day. Jeavan said, "I was expecting to earn much more in Karachi. My net earnings in Karachi were almost the same as in village, when I did find labouring work. Given this situation, I decided to return to my village"

After spending only five days in Karachi, Jeavan decided to return to his village. He said that he also missed his family and the general rural life that he was familiar with. He added that he soon realised that by living in Karachi he would essentially be cut off from his family as the cost of travel from Karachi to his village was prohibitive. And, he could not move his family to Karachi as it was costly to live there.

Jeavan's wife said that when he was away in Karachi, she too faced problems. She did not have cash to buy basic food items and she could not continue to borrow money from neighbours on the promise that she will repay when Jeavan sends money.

Jeavan said, "We always think that big cities have big opportunities but we often forget that cities are much more complex than we think. Only people who are literate and have some skills can have a chance of survival in big cities. Not-literate people like us will prefer to return back to their villages." Jeavan continued, "I would suggest to people who want to migrate to cities, do so if have some skills, have relatives there and can afford to take your family with you. Otherwise, it is better to stay in the village and live with your family."

Jathoo a relative of Jeavan said, "It is our tradition or culture that we prefer to live together and do not feel good leaving the family behind us for the search of work in other cities. Whatever work we get in the village, we will happily do it and prefer to live with our children."

Vocational and Technical Skills Training (VTST) is one important component of the European Union (EU) funded SUCCESS Programme. Under this component, market-driven training will be provided to youth (male and female) from selected poor households. Having technical skills allow these people to better avail income generating activities locally as well as in nearby peri-urban and urban areas.

Note: Original Names have been changed to maintain privacy.

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