

India (2012-14)

Project: The Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development

Research: The Commuting Worker: an Overlooked Aspect of Urban-Rural Interaction. Evidence from India

Grantees: S. Chandrasekhar and Ajay Sharma

In 2012, Indian scholars, S. Chandrasekhar and Ajay Sharma won the Japanese Award Outstanding Research on Development, administered by GDN and funded by the Government of Japan. The Award gave the team access to a large grant for pursuing policy-relevant research, and access to mentorship by a thematic expert for technical assistance.

Through their research, Chandrasekhar and Sharma made a compelling case for pushing the study of labour mobility beyond labour migration, to include labour commuting as an important channel of interaction between urban and rural labour markets. Their work threw light on this phenomenon in the Indian context based on the analysis of the spatial distribution of economic activities, location quotients, urbanization levels, size of peri-urban areas, local employment rates and urban-rural wage differentials. The research findings suggest that commuting can help reduce regional unemployment and narrow wage differences between rural and urban areas.

Through an interview with Chandrasekhar, GDN was able to establish that the research attracted the attention of media and policy stakeholders. Chandrasekhar wrote an article in the [Hindu Business Line](#) and his work was referred to in an op-ed piece in the [Business Standard](#) (both newsweeklies in India). He was also invited to write for two blogs, notably, [Ideas for India](#) and by the [Centre for the Advanced Study of India](#) at the University of Pennsylvania. He presented his research at the International Conference on Labour and Employment Issues in the Contest of Emerging Rural-Urban Continuum in March 2015. It was organized by the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj which is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and a think tank of the India Ministry of Rural Development. The research was published in the academic journal, *World Development* in September 2014 and will also be featured as a book chapter in a forthcoming edited volume on “Subaltern Urbanization in India: An Introduction to Ordinary Towns’ Dynamics” by the international academic publisher Springer. While policy impact is a goal for the long-term, Chandrasekhar feels that the grant was instrumental for him to emerge as a visible voice in the labour mobility debate.