

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1. Introduction

This thesis basically looks into the changes in gender roles and experience of Nepalese women in the pretext of rapidly increasing labor migration of men for overseas employment. This is an attempt to examine women's experiences and changes in their work responsibilities, their decision-making abilities and their participation in social activities during labour migration of their husbands. In general, it is found that man's migration increases women's work responsibilities, decision making capacity and their participation in different socio-cultural activities. The women who take on the role of household head are more likely to develop confidence at handling household tasks and dealing with financial matters outside home as well. These consequences are highly sensitive to the socio-cultural norms as well as women's caste and individual characteristics.

The study has been organized in six units. Chapter one contains introduction, statement of problem, objective and significance of study. Likewise, Chapter two encompasses brief details of background information of Nepalese society in relation to the labour migration and its impacts in the socio-cultural dynamics in general. Similarly, Chapter three comprises of the theoretical understanding of the term empowerment with particular focus on the review of different research related to laour migration and its impact on families. Likewise, Chapter four includes rationale of selecting study area, research design, sample size, procedure and method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. Moreover, Chapter five contains the analysis of the impacts of labor migration in different socio-economic dimensions most importantly and gender role in the families of remittance holders. The impacts of labour migration in the living condition of dependent families have been illustrated in different facts, figures, diagram, and charts, followed by interpretation. Finally, Chapter six highlights major findings, conclusions of the study and recommendations for the concerned stakeholders who can make contribution for the formulation of effective policy and programs for improving living condition of remittance holders.

1.1 Background of Study:

Although bestowed with huge natural resources, Nepal has been lagging behind in terms of development initiatives with limited Per Capita income only USD 812 (2018) in average. Nepal falls in 145th position out of 187 countries in terms of Human Development Index (UNDP Report, 2014). Nepal is the developing country where remittance shares about 29% in national GDP in average. Over 70% of the population lives in rural areas. Almost 2/3 of the population derives its livelihood from agriculture, mostly subsistent one, contributing one third to the gross national product. The poor rural people in Nepal generally have large family members with small landholdings or none at all, and high rates of illiteracy. Nearly a quarter of Nepalese population still lives below poverty line. The chronic poverty, low productivity in agriculture sector, population growth and lack of livelihood options have complicated socio-economic situation of the nation. Furthermore, political instability, degrading condition of national industries, lack of foreign investment in industry sectors, high unemployment rate, have hugely impacted overall socio-economic dimensions of the nation. The growing nationwide frustration and precariousness coupled with lack of job opportunity within nation, has resulted in the massive migration of Nepalese youths for foreign employment.

In past few decades, Nepal has experienced tremendous increase in labour migration of youths for foreign employment. Indeed, labour migration has become one of the important sources of the current Nepalese economy; one out of every eleven Nepalese adults is in foreign employment and more than half of the households in the country receive remittances. In fact, with remittance inflow accounting for about 29.4 % percent of the country's GDP in 2017, Nepal ranks third in the world in terms of remittances received. Labor migration from Nepal is heavily gendered; almost 90 percent of the country's migrant population is male. This male-dominated migration has contributed to an increase in the number of female-headed households; about 48.7 percent of migrant households are headed by women, compared to 16.9 percent for non-migrant households (Yearly Progress Report 2016/17, Department of Foreign Employment Nepal). The prevalence of gender discrimination in the socio-economic aspects of the country, along with a dismal socio-economic and political situation, makes the case of Nepal interesting to study. Male-dominated migration is a common feature among most South Asian countries because of the prevalence of male

breadwinner – female homemaker ideology, cultural restrictions on women’s mobility in public spaces and, in some cases, restrictions placed by the government. The gendered nature of labor demand at the destination country, with many of the jobs in Middle East has increased the migration of men members in past few decades.

With the rise in movement of workers across borders, understanding the experiences of transnationally split families is becoming increasingly important. A woman’s experience during her husband’s absence directly affects her role as the caretaker of the family and influences the well-being of her children as well as other household members. Hence, with the increasing rate of out migration of men, it is important to understand the consequences faced by women and to provide them with the resources essential to coping with these challenges. Since men’s migration directly affects women’s ability to represent their own interests, studying migration through a gendered perspective can provide important insights into changes in intra-household power relationships and its impact on women’s status in society in general and family in particular. As men migrate, women take on the role of household heads, make more decisions, manage financial matters and singlehandedly bear all childcare responsibilities. Although these changes could leave female-headed migrant households in a vulnerable position with increased family burden and household responsibilities along with their lower access to resources such as education, employment or credit, in long run, it could contribute towards empowering them in many aspects.

1.2 Statement of Problem:

Labour migration for foreign employment has become an increasingly pressing issue in Nepali society as it leaves the wives and dependents in crucial situations to maintain their survival on their own with the occasional remittance received from different labour destination countries. It brings lots of changes especially in the migrants’ wives as they have to handle all household tasks including other outside tasks they husbands used to handle before their departure to foreign country. Although there are many changes taking place within migrant’s household, the available literature does not seem to have focused on the multi-dimensional impacts observed in the family of remittance holders. In the pretext of the large gap in the impact study of migrant’s household from gender perspective, this study has been

carried out in order to fulfil this gap. The study tries to look into the changes in women's roles and experience leading them to gradual empowerment in absence of their husband. Unlike other traditional concept, this study does not take the women's increased role as family burden or hindrance to their freedom. It rather analyses their gradual development in their thinking, working and confidence level gradually helping them to come up with certain maturity at dealing with both household and outside works in absence of their husband. This study tries to justify that women's increased role and responsibilities in absence of their husband although appear to be family burden. But in fact, these increased tasks help women to gradually grow with maturity leading them to empowerment in many aspects.

1.3 Research Questions:

This study mainly explores the dimensions of labor migration and its socio-economic impacts in the families of remittance holders in Rajghat VDC (now Bagmati municipality) Sarlahi. The focus of this study is the examination of the impacts of men's absence on women's empowerment. Here, women's work and their access to labor market, their decision-making power and their participation in social activities are used as indicators of their gradual empowerment in all aspects. The study is focused on seeking the response of the following questions;

- a) What are the major causes of the labour migration in study area?
- b) How does labour migration change gender role especially in work responsibility, decision making, participation in social activities in study area?
- c) How has the labour migration contributed in overall women's empowerment in the study area?

1.4 Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of this study is to look into the changes in women's roles and experiences in Nepal during migration of men and understand the impacts of these changes on their empowerment. This study looks into the impacts of men's migration on women's lives by analysing the changes in women's work responsibilities, their involvement in household decision-making and their participation in social activities. It also examines the role of various socio-economic and household characteristics in influencing women's experiences during men's migration. By exploring these

questions, my study sheds light on both the struggles and the achievements of women during their husbands' absence and provides insights that might be useful to policymakers interested in improving women social and economic status.

1.5 Relevance of Study:

Despite lots of changes in women's role and responsibilities in the families of remittance holders, the gender aspect of labour migration from Nepal has been largely neglected in the academic literature as well as in migration-related policymaking. Moreover, hardly has there been the analysis on changes in women's decision-making abilities and their participation in social sphere. The literature on both these aspects of women's empowerment, in the case of Nepal, is scarce. Considering this, the study has been carried out to look into gender impacts of labour migration in the family of migrants' households. This study examines the impacts of male migration on women's participation in labor market. The study is relevant because it provides insights that might be useful to policymakers interested in improving women social and economic status. Also this study provides comprehensive understanding of the intricacies associated with Nepalese women's ability to make household decisions and participate in social activities. The study is relevant and timely as it has tried to overcome some of the shortcomings of the existing studies in regard to multiple impacts of labour migration in women's empowerment in Nepal.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Socio-Economic Context:

When men migrate for overseas work, the economic and socio-cultural context in which their families are left behind changes. In social strata with less restrictive gender norms, women may take up some of the economic and social responsibilities that are typically done by men. Also, they may gain freedom and increased access and control over household resources during men's absence (Palmer, 1985; Acosta, 2006). In the long-run, such changes may reduce the gender division of labor contributing to lowering gender inequality. However, in societies with more restrictive gender norms, social scrutiny over women's activities might intensify during their husbands' absence, as migrant wives may be suspected of being vulnerable and they may face higher risk of sexual abuse. Hence, women may want to minimize their appearances in public spaces to maintain their image of being 'good wives' (Menjivar and Agadjanian, 2007; Debnath and Selim, 2009; McEvoy et al., 2012). In such instances, having to take up tasks that require public interaction by stepping into male-dominated spaces may add tension and anxiety to women's lives. Men's migration also changes the household structure and transforms the division of labor and the power relations among household members left behind.

In nuclear households, women take on the role of de facto heads, manage all domestic and childcare work, and assume new financial responsibilities. While such changes could increase women's autonomy and bargaining power at home, they could also add stress to their lives as women have to take on new challenges and cope with living as single parents and migrant wives in a patriarchal society (Brown, 1983; Haas and van Rooij, 2010). In extended households, women may be living under the supervision of their in-laws or other senior household members. In such cases, husbands' migration could sometimes mean the loss of an ally and a decline in bargaining power as women often rely on their husbands to negotiate their position within the household and to voice their opinions (Kasper, 2005; Desai and Banerjee, 2008). At other times, women's relationship with their in-laws may remain the same or even improve during men's absence (see Louhichi, 1997). In such instances, women's bargaining position within the household may strengthen. Also, in cases where their husbands may have

been abusive or demanding, women may experience increased freedom and relief during men's migration.

Power inequalities within the house based on age, sex, education and employment status of household members along with gendered social norms are crucial to understanding women's experiences during men's migration. While some women may gain bargaining power and greater access to resources, others may experience higher stress levels from increased responsibilities and constraints on their physical mobility. The experience of a woman who is the household head and receives remittances might be much different from that of a woman who lives in extended family where remittances are sent to her in-laws. For example, women in Pakistan, who were left under the supervision of senior (usually male) household members during their husbands' migration and had limited access to remittances, experienced higher stress levels than those in Egypt and Turkey, where women gained higher level of autonomy and greater access to economic resources during their husbands' absence (Palmer, 1985). This suggests that region-specific cultural norms and socio-economic characteristics can be central to explaining the consequences of migration. Hence, case studies focusing on specific regions, with an in-depth analysis of the socio-cultural structures that influence women's experiences, might be appropriate for addressing my research questions.

2.2 Nepal Open to Globalized World

Nepal can't remain unaffected by the fast growing globalization process happening around the world. The rapid growth of globalization process has deeply impacted social-economic dynamics of Nepal. With the increasing speed of human civilization and cross cultural communication, Nepalese have been attracted towards modern life style and culture. In past few decades, there has been increasing trend of using modern commodities and following modern life style in Nepal. This inter-regional cultural, education and technological exchange has brought large section of Nepalese people closer to the global world. After 1990 down the lines, Nepal entered into the free and liberal market. Since then Nepalese people have gradually started entering into foreign job markets as well. The government's liberal policies, accompanied by mushrooming growth of the manpower agencies have also played instrumental role to encourage youths for labor migration. Especially, after the restoration of multi-

partydemocracy in 1990, socio-economic dimensions have changed drastically allowing people to communicate with the world. Along with diplomatic ties and relation with other countries around the world, the exchange of ideas and services at different level has harnessed inter-regional communication and cooperation. This has encouraged people to explore better option for educational, employment and other opportunities which eventually have increased inter-continental social mobility. This way, Nepal has been connected to globalized world with hope of economic upliftment but the cost of huge labour migration is yet to be analyzed.

2.3 Gradual Shift from Subsistence Economy to Free Market

Although Nepal is said to be an agriculture country with 33% of contribution in national GDP (Nepal Govt. Report, 2017), this sector has not been prioritized by the Govt. neither the youths find themselves interested in this sector. The traditional mindset of society towards educated people involving in farming has also discouraged many educated youths at involving in farming. The lack of irrigation facility, poor investment in agriculture and suitable market for agricultural products and almost no long term agriculture policy of the governments, large section of people mostly youths have turned their focus on other easy and fast income generating profession rather than farming. With the lack of adequate capital and proper environment for self-employed business, huge number of youths ends up going to foreign countries looking for better employment opportunity. In past few decades, Nepal has experienced tremendous increase in labor migration. Everyday about 1500 youths and half a million in a year in average are said to be migrating to gulf countries for employment opportunity. And, it is estimated that 3.5 million Nepalese workers are in gulf countries especially in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Dubai, Malaysia, and Korea. The flow of labour migration has shown in the table given below;

Table No 1: Flow of Labour Migration

SN	Skill Type	Men	Women	Total
1	High Skilled	191	19	210
2	Professional	731	56	787
3	Semi-Skilled	39326	3458	42784
4	Skilled	170453	9148	179601
5	Un skilled	266003	19442	285445
	Total	476704	32123	508827

Source:DOFE Report, 2017/2018

The globalization and modernization process has directly influenced Nepali society in all aspects. Along with the development of modern trends and culture, it has also increased mobility of thousands of Nepali youths in international labour market. The hard earned remittance no doubt contributes to minimize family poverty and improve quality of life to some extent but it has several negative impacts in overall socio-cultural dimensions.

2.4 Dependency and Labour Migration

With increasing speed of human civilization, the entire world has been changed into a global village where an access to communication and transportation has caused drastic increase in the human mobility from one corner to another corner of the world. The economic liberalization introduced in 21 century has brought sharp division between the capitalists and working class people around the world. And, entire economy of the world has been dominated by the handful capitalists leaving almost no space for the working class people at large. The economic freedom has ultimately created dependency of the large mass of working class people on the capitalists around the world. The mobility of the working class people in different corners of the world can be taken as their obligatory journey to fulfill their quest for better survival and quality life although it is hard to acquire. Over the past few decades, the country's economic dependency on the developed countries has caused a huge surge in out-migration of Nepalese youths and the volume of individuals opting for foreign employment has been quite unprecedented. It is estimated that about half a million work force enters in Nepalese labour market. Unfortunately, due to lack of investment in job creation within nation, the huge section of youths in Nepal has to rely on overseas employment opportunity in comparatively developed and rich countries. As huge number of Nepalese work force depends on employment opportunity abroad, the study of labour migration remains incomplete if we avoid analyzing its multi-dimensional impacts.

2.5 Labour Migration:

Labour migration is movement of workers from one place to another place with an intention of finding employment opportunity in new location. The movement of people from one part of geography to another part within a country is called internal migration whereas movement from one country to another country is called

international migration. Migration now has become a very essential and common phenomenon in each and every corner of the world. The term "Migrant Worker" refers to a person who is engaged in a remunerated activity in the state of which he or she is not a national (UN Convention 1, July, 2003). Usually, an international migrant brings/transfers money to their home countries. This transferred money either they bring with them or transfer to their dependents (family members) is termed as "remittance". As remittances come into the receiving country, expenditure and savings there will tend to increase thus, initiating investment and improving quality of life. Nepalese people have been migrating temporarily or permanently for employment opportunity within and beyond the nation since the first quarter of the 19th century leaving behind women, children and old people. And, this trend is rapidly increasing day by day.

Migration does not take place all of sudden; several factors are responsible for this. The nationwide poverty and people's inability to earn enough or produce enough to support themselves or their families are major reasons behind the movement from one place to another. These are not only characteristics of migration from poor to rich states; poverty also fuels movement from one developing country to others, where work prospects seem-at a distance, at least-to be better. Although, several risks and hazards are associated with labour migration, people migrate to another country at the risk of their life to overcome their family poverty and destitution.

2.6 Causes of Labour Migration

Labour migrations has been increasing across the globe along with the increasing number of urban centers and rising level of urbanization and globalization. The ministry of Labor and Employment estimates that there are approximately 3.5 million documented and undocumented Nepali people working in various gulf countries. Labour migration can be analyzed in two different aspects as pull and push factors. Push factors are those in their old place which force people to move. Various push factors such as transitional politics, high unemployment rate, dismal socio-economic situation, centralized economy, feudalistic economic structure and dependency culture etc. are considered to be the causative factors for labour migration. Pull factors are those in the target location which encourage people to move into new place that

includes peace and safety, chance of better job, better life, new innovation, exploration, quality life, and freedom and so on.

The major causes of the labor migration at large are mainly the nation-wide poverty and lack of economic opportunities at home. Out of the 400,000 youths that enter the labor market every year, more than 200,000 go overseas (Kharel, 2011). Additionally, the political environment, characterized by repeated strikes, closures and an investment-unfriendly setting, has driven the youths out of the country. The outflow of migrants was especially high during the war years, as many left the country to avoid being recruited into the war and to be able to find stable income source to support their families (DoFE, 2015). The expectation of relatively higher wages in the destination countries may have encouraged migration from Nepal to the overseas countries. However, it is important to note that in many cases Nepalese migrants do not get what they expect when they get to the destination; many workers have their passports withheld by employers and are exploited working long hours, receiving low wages.

Migrants often find themselves overestimating their ability to send remittances, and end up extending their stay or migrating repeatedly (Castaneda, 2013). In addition to these push and pull factors, other aspects such as government regulations, migrant networks and social pressures to migrate also affect decisions to migrate. The Nepalese government has been focusing on promoting foreign employment by identifying potential foreign markets, establishing temporary working programs and training and exporting Nepalese workers in order to address domestic unemployment (Chapagain, 2003).

Migrant networks have been central to encouraging migration from Nepal, as previous and current migrants pave way for prospective migrants by sharing their knowledge and experiences about the destination, strengthening migrant networks and increasing familiarity with the process and prospects of foreign migration (DoFE, 2015). Sometimes, status-enhancing changes in migrant families such as building a new house or display of goods brought from abroad motivates further migration and migration decisions may be driven by the need to maintain social standing (Adhikari and Holey, 2015; Castaneda, 2013). In fact, accounts of migration being motivated

by seeing other migrants building new houses and sending their children to better schools were evident in many of my fieldwork conversations.

2.7 Historical Phenomena of Labour Migration in Nepal

Nepalese workers have been migrating temporarily or permanently since the first quarter of the 19th century. It is believed to have started from the period of unification, more than 300 years ago. The induction of young Nepali individuals into the colonial British army in the early nineteenth century appears to be the first instance of the State's involvement in formalizing labour migration through treaties between two governments. The treaty between Amar Singh Thapa and David Ochterlony in 1815, specifically, made the flow of migrants from Nepal for foreign employment official and opened doors for such engagement beyond British India to other colonial territories. Later, the wave of migration to foreign countries expanded from a few neighboring countries like India, Burma, Bhutan, Sikkim and other labor importing countries in Southeast and East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America. The labor migration especially for employment opportunity has increased substantially since the people's revolution for democracy in 1951. In past few decades, Nepal has experienced increasing volume of labor migration. About 1500 youths in average are said to be migrating to gulf countries everyday for employment opportunity.

A historical turn in the migratory pattern came with the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990. The democratically elected Government in 1992 embarked on a journey of economic liberalization and made official moves to a free market economy, which also encouraged out-migration. The liberalization on mobility as well as the economy after the 1990s, coupled with the rapidly increasing labour demand in the Middle East countries, gradually increased the number of migrants travelling beyond India. The earliest record of labour permits issued by the Government shows that 3,605 Nepali left for foreign employment in 1993/94, primarily to Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). And, the trend of out migration for employment seems to be increasing day by day.

Nepal's political situation in different periods has shaped the country's relations with the global community, which in turn have influenced the flow of out-migrants. For instance, 1990 marked a significant turn in Nepalese politics with the restoration of

democracy and the liberal overtures on mobility and migration. The liberalized economic policy adopted after 1992 helped to formalize labour migrants and opened doors for recruitment and remitting agencies to operate in the country and solicit workers for jobs in other countries. The flow of out-migrants increased with the achievement of democratic freedom. Additionally, the 10 year arm conflict (1996-2006) initiated by Maoist against security forces and subsequent political turmoil complicated the overall socio-economic situation of the country which eventually increased labor migration.

Labour migrants passing through a successful migration cycle often becomes a source of inspiration for their families and communities to seek foreign employment. The personal and labour-related networks of labour migrants have paved the way for prospective migrants. There has been a steady increase in the total number of labour permits issued for foreign employment. According to government record, total of 2,226,152 labour permits were issued over the seven-year period, representing a staggering 137 percent increase between 2008/09 and 2014/15, which represents about 8 percent of Nepal's total population (Foreign Employment Department, 2013/14). The receivers represented all 75 districts of Nepal, 27 with the top-ten districts of origin Dhanusa, Mahottari, Jhapa, Morang, Siraha, Nawalparasi, Saptari, Sunsari, Sarlahi and Rupandehi. The top-ten districts constituted 36.4 per cent of all labour permits issued over the seven-year period. Of the ten districts, Dhanusa has the largest number of migrants amongst all.

The prospect of relatively more lucrative work in foreign countries has increasingly appealed to Nepalese work force. Among the 110 permitted countries for foreign employment, the most attractive destination countries for Nepali foreign labour migrants since 1993 have been Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE. Malaysia has become the destination country with the largest number of Nepali migrants of 40.9 per cent of all male and female labour migrants, followed by Saudi Arabia (at 22.9 per cent), Qatar (at 20.3 per cent), UAE (at 11.2 per cent) and Kuwait (at 2.1 per cent), (Foreign Employment Department, 2013/14).

2.8 Labour Migration and Remittance in Nepal

Remittances sent by the migrant workers have become a major contributing factor to increasing household income as well as to the country's gross domestic product

(GDP).The remittance has represented a 25.7 percent share in national GDP in 2012/013 and a 29.1 per cent share during the first eight months of 2014/15. However, the data on remittances is not disaggregated in terms of migrant workers and their inflow of remittances (such as from students abroad who work part-time or emigrants who send money home to their parents). Hence, it is difficult to determine the direct remittance from labour migrants in all destination countries. According to the nature of jobs and skilled required, the wage range of migrant workers varies from 20,000 to 100,000 rupees (NR). The government data reveals, NR 40,600 are remitted per household per year on average(FEPB Report, 2015). The highest salary and benefits is reported from the Republic of Korea, where Nepali migrant workers go through the government channel under the Employment Promotion System.

Since remittance flows directly into the hands of the people who need it most and are often spent on household education and health expenses, as well as small businesses. Healthier and better educated people benefit the society and economy as a whole. Negative aspects of remittance are that it makes countries more vulnerable to global and regional economic crises, and more dependent upon international migration patterns. When not channeled through the formal financial system, remittances cause a large amount of money to flow into the country unregulated, untaxed, or unmonitored. These informal channels can be misused for money laundering, terrorism, smuggling, and other illegal activities.

2.9 Risk and Benefits of Labour Migration

Although Nepal Government has introduced many procedural measures to address grievances and distress of migrant workers, including fraud and other abuse in the process of migration, a considerable number of cases, particularly in relation to female labour migrants, have been frequently reported in the media. Both female and male migrants have been victims of exploitation, including workplace accidents, trafficking and situations equal to forced labour. The low salary and less than ideal workplaces; migration through irregular channels, increases their vulnerability; and lack of protection, especially for the domestic workers who are often subjected to physical violence, sexual harassment and economic exploitation. Nepali migrant workers have often been cheated due to the lack of skills training, pre-departure orientation about migration process, culture and laws of the destination countries.

2.10 Impacts of Labour Migration

With the global rise in migration of workers across countries, attention to the economic and social well-being of migrants, their families and their communities has been increasing. Currently, out of approximately 232 million international migrants in the world, about 150 million are labor migrants (ILO 2015). These migrants contribute to the development of destination countries and also support the economy at home by sending remittances to their families. Foreign labor migration is often seen as a savior, especially for workers from developing countries where problems such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and conflict are prevalent. The remittance sent from abroad by migrant workers contributes to the socio-economic development of recipient families and origin communities, for example, in the form of employment, food security, asset creation, livelihood diversification (income, sector and geographic), changes in attitudes or skills. The financial and social remittances can support off-farm livelihood diversification, which can in turn compensate for the income losses in the farm sector. The recipient households can invest remittances into income generating profession which in turn will provide them long term financial security. It also can help the families of migrant workers to fulfill their basic requirement in health, education, food, shelter, clothes and other needs. Furthermore, remittance contributes to the socio-economic development of recipient families and origin communities, for example, in the form of employment, food security, asset creation, livelihood diversification, changes in attitudes or skills.

Migration and foreign employment has provided alternative livelihood opportunities to many people in the face of slow socio-economic growth within the nation. But they have also brought new challenges in the overall socio-cultural dimension of Nepalese society. The male out-migration has heavily imposed an additional workload on women left behind. It has on the one hand imbalanced socio-economic mobility on the other hand; increasing rate of migration has increased nation's vulnerability thereby impacting overall development process of the sustainable national economy. Labour migration presents both challenges and opportunities in a globalized world today. At individual and household level, it provides major livelihood strategy for many people who may not find such outlet domestically; and for the state, it provides possible tool to promote development and reduce poverty. As the scale, scope and complexity of the phenomenon has grown, states and other stakeholders have become aware of the

challenges and opportunities with the growing realization that there are economic, social and cultural benefits to be realized and negative consequences to be minimized.

In addition to these economic impacts, men's migration has several implications on the non-economic aspects of everyday life and the socio-cultural context at the origin. Separation of families as well as changes in household structure and gender composition in the community could influence social norms. For example, in Nepal Hindu women are not allowed to perform funeral rites. Also, social remittances, in the form of transfer of knowledge and culture from the destination, could change cultural attitudes at home (Levitt, 1998). In Nepal, the gendered nature of migration has resulted in changes in gender relations and women's roles within the household and in the community, as is examined through the rest of this dissertation.

2.11 Legal Provisions for Foreign Employment

In light of the increasing labour migration trends, the *Foreign Employment Act 2007* was designed to address new issues brought by rapid growth in labour migration for foreign employment. The Act contains several provisions that respond to the changing dynamics of foreign labour migration patterns and differs from the 1985 legislation in one fundamental way: The original law and its subsequent amendments aimed at regulating the foreign labour market and preventing an exodus of higher-skilled individuals; the 2007 law sought to control and facilitate the process of Nepalese seeking foreign employment – but to control for the sake of making that process safe. Government of Nepal seems to have realized that foreign employment has been an attractive option for its young labour force and recognized the need for a new policy framework in response to the changing dynamics. In 2012, the Government introduced its Foreign Employment Policy, which reflects principles set out in international commitments that Nepal is a signatory to by inculcating the goal to “ensure safe, organized, respectable and reliable foreign employment to contribute to poverty reduction along with sustainable economic and social development through economic and non-economic benefits of foreign employment”.

The Foreign Employment Policy seeks to make optimal use of migrants' remittances by establishing financial channels for them to borrow money for the initial migration costs at fair interest rates so they do not begin their migration cycle overwhelmed with debt that consumes their earnings. These channels also enable migrants to remit their

earnings safely and ideally invest so that it grows while they are abroad and thus they return to a source of capital. The policy refers to establishing a Labour Bank, the preparation of which is ongoing, that would offer subsidized loans to prospective migrants to cover the fees, transport and other costs required to migrate formally. The bank would offer a remittance account and help returned migrants access additional capital for investment purposes. Currently, workers deposit 1,000 to 2500 rupees into a Migrant Workers' Welfare Fund, managed by the Foreign Employment Promotion Board, before departing to their destination country. Through a public-private partnership, the Government will establish the Labour Bank that will also offer loans to returned migrants for initiating their own business in Nepal.

The "human development" focus in the policy includes informing migrants and returned migrants of options for investing their earnings and providing skill training and financial literacy training to migrants and their families to pursue such opportunities. Additionally, the policy aims to create an enabling environment for investment by labour migrants through various tax benefits and concessions.

2.12 Foreign Employment Acts 1985 & 2007

The Government's first effort at regulating foreign employment was issued in 1985 in the form of the *Foreign Employment Act*. This Act was a response to the growing demand of labour in the global market and encouraged people to migrate to selected countries. The law was amended three times and governed all activities of foreign employment until it was repealed to give way to a new Act in 2007. The Foreign Employment Act promotes the security and welfare of foreign labour migrants with provisions for the protection of their rights and for the regularization and monitoring of the businesses that facilitate the migration process. The provisions include pre-departure preparation (including cultural orientation, what to expect, some language training etc.) and skills training, creation of the Migrant Workers' Welfare Fund and establishment of a Labour Desk at the national airport.

The Migrant Workers' Welfare Fund is designed to provide education and access to health facilities to the children of migrant workers, pay compensation to workers who are injured and to family in the event of death while working abroad and to evacuate workers during crises and covers the repatriating expenses of bodies of the deceased workers. To keep pace with the ever-changing dynamics of labour migration, the

Foreign Employment Act is under review currently, with adjustments expected that will further ensure that labour migration is safe, decent and dignified and in line with international frameworks governing labour migration, including the ILO multilateral framework.

Conclusion:

Labor migration has significant consequences to the country of origin. The hard earned remittances sent by the migrant workers play an extraordinary role in current accounts of many developing countries whereas the loss of skilled people imposes various kinds of costs on their countries of origin. There always remain gaps in our understanding of what labor migration is or can be used to promote development initiatives both at national and local level. Though the number of population migrating for foreign employment has increased and country of origin is benefiting from the remittance income in Nepal, its in-depth analysis has not been done. Hence, this study has tried to critically assess the impacts of the labour migration in the gender role and women empowerment in study population in Sarlahi district.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Women's empowerment is distinct from the empowerment of other disadvantaged or underprivileged groups in different social classes. Additionally, women live with men in the same household and constantly negotiate their power roles. These relations are shaped by conflicts from sharing work responsibilities and distributing household resources as well as cooperation from emotional ties and mutual dependence (Hartmann, 1981; Sen 1990b). Such complexities associated with women's roles within the household are central to understanding their empowerment. Women live within the constraints created by social norms; their choices and behavior are often based on what is expected of them in the society (Mosedale, 2005; Pickbourn, 2011). Hence, women's empowerment is a multidimensional concept that is highly sensitive to the socio-economic, historical and cultural setting in which it is being studied (Batliwala, 1994; Kabeer, 1999). This chapter begins by developing a conceptual framework on the basis of which empowerment is defined in this dissertation. Then, an overview of the status of women in Nepal including a discussion of the key religious and social norms that define gender relations in Nepal is presented. This section provides necessary background for interpreting empowerment and understanding the role of sociocultural factors in perpetuating gender inequality in Nepal. Next, the key research questions, based on the theoretical framework as well as the literature on the status of women in Nepal, are discussed.

3.2 Theoretical Framework: Defining Empowerment

Women's empowerment may be defined based on women's abilities to pursue these interests; there is no agreement on what these interests are. Hence, there exists no universally applicable and theoretically acceptable explanation of women's subordination from which a general definition of empowerment may be derived (Molyneux, 1985; Mosedale, 2005). Women may be empowered in one aspect of their lives but not in others; such complexities may be masked in studies that do not differentiate between the various aspects of empowerment (Malhotra et al., 2002). Also, because empowerment is context-specific, it is difficult to make cross-regional

and cross-cultural comparisons. For example, access to education may not be a good indicator of women's empowerment in most of the developed world but it is one of the key measures in Nepal, as girls are often not sent to school.

The notion of empowerment is based on women's abilities, their choices, and their power to influence household decisions, their control over household resources, and their participation in economic and social spheres. As illustrated by the definitions below: "...process of removing obstacles of women's active participation in all spheres in public and private life through full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making" (Beijing Platform for Action, UN 1995). "...control over material assets (physical, human, financial), intellectual resources (knowledge and information), and ideology (ability to generate, propagate and sustain specific sets of beliefs)" (Batliwala, 1994). "...rights, resources and voice are key aspects of women's empowerment" (World Bank, 2001). "...process by which women redefine gender roles in ways which extend their possibilities for being and doing" (Mosedale, 2005). Efforts to deter the maintenance of women's subordination are often based on abolishing the sexual division of labor, removing institutionalized forms of discrimination, attaining political equality, gaining freedom of choice over childbearing, adopting measures against male violence, and transforming structures and institutions that perpetuate gender discrimination (Batliwala, 1994; Molyneux, 1985).

There is a general agreement on using measures such as women's access to resources and ownership of assets (Quisumbing et al., 2000), rise in women's market participation (Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2008), decision-making power and autonomy (Desai and Banerjee, 2008), as indicators of empowerment. One of the theories that incorporates these aspects and provides a broad framework for understanding empowerment is Kabeer's (1999) work on gender, where empowerment is defined as the process through which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. Kabeer points out that in order to make choices, there need to be alternatives; for the poor who struggle for meeting basic necessities, this definition of exercising meaningful choices may not apply (p. 437). Also, sometimes differences in choices arise from difference in preferences and not from constraints. Since the notion of power is not relevant if the failure to achieve something comes from laziness or

from preferential differences, analysis on women's empowerment should examine if the differences in choices come from differences in constraints faced (p. 439).

Kabeer specifies resources, agency and achievements as the three main dimensions of empowerment (p. 437). Here, resources refer to access and future claims to resources, such as education, health care and employment; these set the pre-conditions for empowerment. Agency is described as the ability to define one's goals and act upon them; this includes aspects such as decision-making, bargaining, negotiation or deception and constitutes the process of empowerment. These two aspects of empowerment in Kabeer's framework derive from Amartya Sen's work on gender and development, where well-being and agency are identified as two central aspects of women's movement (Sen, 1985). In Sen's framework, well-being refers to a person's functioning such as their ability to be well-nourished, to avoid mortality, to be literate and to participate in social life (p. 197). Agency, on the other hand, refers to objectives that a person may pursue if allowed to think and act freely (p. 204). Increased access to resources such as education, health care and employment can directly contribute to women's well-being and increased ability to work outside home, make independent decisions and have ownership rights could add force to women's voice and strengthen their agency (Sen, 1999).

The third category in Kabeer's framework, achievement, refers to the outcomes of women's empowerment; these may be seen as improvement in children's or women's well-being due to women's empowered position (p. 438). Kabeer stresses that the three aspects of empowerment in her framework are closely tied and it is only through an inclusion of all these aspects that evaluations on empowerment can be made (p. 452). For example, a woman who gains access to or ownership of land but no control over its use may not see any change in her ability to make choices. Having access to the land is only a pre-condition for empowerment. Her ability to make choices may be expanded when she is able to exercise agency over the land she owns. In her analysis, Kabeer suggests a framework under which empowerment may be quantified by looking into variables that provide a measure for each of its three dimensions. Resources could be measured by looking at differences in primary functioning such as nourishment, health, shelter, education, access to employment, and ownership of land and other fixed assets. Agency could be measured by looking into indices of decision-making, incidence of male violence, or women's mobility in economic and social

spheres. Indicators of women's and children's well-being such as literacy rate, child mortality rate or infant immunization rates could be used as indicators of women's achievements. One of the main challenges in working with Kabeer's framework is that there are no clear distinctions on what indicators to choose for each of the three dimensions, as these concepts are closely tied and inter-dependent.

Malhotra et al. (2002) describe this problem by stating that, "While distinctions such as those between 'resources, agency and achievements' ... seem clear at the conceptual level, it is not always easy to completely separate them in developing empowerment indicators. And too, a given variable may function as an indicator of women's access to resources (or an enabling factor) in one context, of women's agency in another, and may represent an achievement in still other contexts." (p. 9). For example, wage-employment could be a measure of women's access to labor market (resources) but it could also be interpreted as increased agency through mobility in economic sphere or an achievement from having access to labor market and being less dependent on other household members.

Despite this complication, Kabeer's framework is specific enough to distinguish it from the general concept of power, look into the different aspects of empowerment and interpret it as a process of change. It also offers researchers the flexibility of choosing specific indicators for empowerment based on the context of the study. Additionally, the framework facilitates the interpretation of empowerment using mixed-methods, as it provides a solid basis for measuring empowerment quantitatively while emphasizing on the need to ensure triangulation of the different dimensions of empowerment through deeper qualitative analysis.

3.3 Household Power Relations and Social Norms

The definition of empowerment is highly sensitive to the context in which it is being studied. A woman living in a nuclear family may have more power to influence household decision-making and control resources than a woman living in an extended family with several older male and female members. Also, community level structures and norms on women's roles and responsibilities are central to understanding women's participation in social and economic spheres and their involvement in household decision-making. Hence, women's empowerment must be understood in the context of

intra-household power relations and social structures; such a framework is particularly useful for this study as men's migration results in indirect changes in these structures.

In analysing women's empowerment based on her position within the household, Sen's theory on 'cooperative conflict' provides interesting insights. Sen (1990b) mentions that relationships between household members are characterized by problems involving 'cooperation' as well as 'conflicts' (p. 29). He suggests 3 directional features for understanding these problems: breakdown well-being, perceived interest, and perceived contribution (p. 135). Here, breakdown well-being is the fall back position for each household member if he or she had to dissociate from the family; the higher the dependence of a household member on other members, the worse his or her breakdown position is. Perceived interest refers to the value a person attaches to his or her own well-being; perceived interest is lower if a person attaches more value to the well-being of other family members and is willing to make compromises for the betterment of these other members. Perceived contribution refers to the perception about how much each member is contributing to family's well-being; a person may achieve higher status within the family if his or her contribution is valued more by other family members (p. 136).

Women usually have worse breakdown positions, lower perceived interest and lower perceived contribution because of socially generated asymmetries related to women's ownership and their access to education, employment and other household resources (Braunstein, 2008; Sen, 1990b). Since most of women's work is household work that produces no remuneration and is less visible, women remain financially dependent on men. Also, gendered nature of labor market and lack of access to economic and social resources limits women's participation in market work. Even when women do take up market work and contribute to household income, their earning is considered secondary to men's income (de la Rocha, 1994).

Women's behaviors are influenced by the feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, guilt and shame from violating social norms (Pickbourn, 2011). Women may not want to participate in social and economic spheres, if it is not socially acceptable. Also, women may be reluctant to admit that they are making more decisions or taking on the role of the household heads, since those are considered to be 'male responsibilities'. Even when women's participation in socio-economic spheres increases and they make

more decisions, they might see these changes as an increase in stress rather than an expansion in their agency power, partly because they have to step into 'male territories' to take on these new roles (McEvoy et al., 2012). Such perceptions about women's place in the social and economic spaces are borne out of historical and cultural factors that constrain women's freedom and lower their perceived interest (Sen, 1999; Batliwala, 1994).

3.4 Status of Women in Nepal

According to the Gender Gap Report 2013, presented in the World Economic Forum, Nepal is among the countries with highest gender inequalities, ranking 121st out of 136 countries. Women are among the poorest in Nepal; though they work three to four more hours per day than men, they have lower income levels, limited access to education, marginal land holdings, and most of their labor is confined to domestic and farm work which is unpaid labor. Even when women take up wage employment, household work is considered their primary responsibility and they are expected to manage both domestic and market work. Also, women's decision-making position in the family is weaker than that of the male members and they are often restricted from participating in market work and social activities (Acharya & Bennett, 1983; Ledgerwood, 1997). Therefore, women carry higher workloads than most men but also have restricted freedom and lower access to resources; these have contributed to the subordination of women's economic and social status in Nepal. While the above description represents the overall status of Nepalese women, it is important to note that 'Nepalese women' cannot be specified as a singular category given the diversity in gender norms based on ethnicities, castes and regional characteristics. The constraints faced and the opportunities available to an upper class educated woman from urban region may be very different from those of women from lower class in rural areas. The gender gap ratio is based on the indicators for education, economic achievements, health and well-being and political participation of men and women.

3.5 Religious Norms in Nepali Society

Nepalese society is largely engrained with the notion of Hinduism. In Hindu notions women's sexual purity are central to understanding the gender norms. The sexual purity of an unmarried girl lies in her virginity; and the honour of her family,

especially that of the male members, is dependent on her sexual purity. Hence, pre-marital sex is considered a taboo for girls and their socialization with men outside the house is viewed with contempt. Girls are required to dress appropriately and behave politely in public spaces, so that they don't attract men. For the same reason, they are often restricted from going to the market alone, being outside the house after dark, and participating in economic and social activities. The roots of child marriage, which still exists in many parts of rural Nepal, partly come from the need to get daughters married while they are still sexually pure (Bennett, 1983; Gray, 1990). The sexual purity of married women, on the other hand, lies in being faithful to their husbands. Hence, women's participation in activities that require interaction with other men, such as taking up market work or participating in social activities, is restricted. Some high-caste Hindu groups in the Terai region also follow purdah norms of covering women's bodies and limiting their mobility (Acharya & Bennett, 1983). In some households, rituals such as washing husbands' and in-laws' feet every morning are followed to maintain women's devotion to their husbands and reinforce their submissive position in the family (Majupuria, 1989). Additionally, married women are required to wear *sindoor* (red vermilion powder), *potey* (glass-bead necklace) and bangles as marks of their married status (Adhikari et al., 1994).

In Hinduism, a woman's status is often defined by the well-being of the male members of the family. If a woman gives birth to a son, her position within the household rises. However, if a woman's husband dies, she is considered as being jinxed and her position within the household and the society declines. Widows from orthodox Hindu families are not allowed to remarry and they are required to practice abstinence from wearing auspicious colors (such as red and green) and attending propitious occasions like marriages (Majupuri, 1989). In fact, the husband's death is often blamed on the woman's misfortune; hence, women follow several restrictive practices, such as fasting and praying during festivals, to ask for husbands' long life and express devotion to their husbands. Men, on the other hand, face no such religious obligations to remain faithful to their wives. Nepalese women from other religious backgrounds face fewer constraints than Hindu women. For example, women from the Tibeto-Burman culture, most of whom follow Buddhism and other indigenous religions, are less concerned about matters of sexual purity. Unlike Hindu women, they do not face restrictions on social mobility or participation in economic spheres. Also, the norms on

marriage in these societies are more liberal in that women have more freedom in selecting their conjugal partners, the age of marriage is higher, pre-marital sex is acceptable and Polygamy is, however, not common in Nepal.

3.6 Socio-Cultural Norms

Hindu culture expects women to be good daughters, devoted wives and respectful daughters-in-law. It is common for a young woman to get married to a man she does not know and live with an unknown family, a wife who has to bear the violence and abuse of her drunkard husband, a daughter-in-law who has to remain subservient to all other household members and take up the most difficult household work, and a widow who is seen as a disgrace to her household. A typical Nepali household is characterized by a hierarchical system based on the age and gender of household members. This hierarchy partly determined by the relationship of each member to the household head, influences women's experiences and access to resources in the household. Usually, the eldest male member serves as the head of the household. Next in order are the spouse of the head followed by sons and then daughters. At the end of the hierarchy are daughters-in-law followed by their children. The lower position of conjugal women (daughters-in-law) relative to natal women (daughters) is partly based on the religious views that consider natal women as being sexually benign and conjugal women as being sexually powerful (Gray, 1990). Also, the woman who gives birth to a son has a higher status than a woman who has only daughters or who has no children at all, since she provides a legitimate male heir to the family. This hierarchy is important in understanding the differences in women's experiences within a household, as women at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Social norms regarding marriage play a key role in the persistence of discrimination against women and the preference for a male child in the Nepalese society. The patrilocal system of marriage that requires a woman to move to her husband's house upon marriage increases parents' preference for a son, since daughters are not going to be present to take care of them in old age or to carry on the family lineage. Additionally, the continuing existence of the dowry system, that requires the bride's parents to make large payments to the groom's family, could lower parents' preference for a female child (Majupuria, 1989). In fact, discrimination against girls begins even before she is born; as the practice of female feticide, though illegal, has been cited as

an increasing problem by health care service providers and administrators providing abortion services in Nepal (Lamichhane et al., 2011). After a girl is born, she faces various forms of disadvantages relative to her male siblings. Fewer girls have the opportunity to go to schools but most of girls spend more time in household work, and they receive unequal access to food and other household resources. Once she gets married, her position falls even lower as she has to start at the bottom of the household hierarchy and she is expected to take on an unfair burden of household work (Gray, 1990; Adhikari et al., 1994).

Nepalese women thus face various forms of discriminations based on religious beliefs and the social structure in which they live. These put severe constraints on women's ability to make choices and voice their opinions. In the long term, the unequal access to education and health care that girls receive put them at a disadvantaged position compared to their male counterparts in terms of gaining the skills to participate in social and economic activities. Hence, women either remain restricted to subsistence agriculture and household work or take up low paying market jobs, and remain financially dependent on their husbands (Bennett, 1983; Manjupuria, 1989). Because of the different forms of discrimination faced by women, they are still far behind men in terms of their achievements.

3.7 Socio-Economic Indicators

A quick overview of the socio-economic indicators for Nepal shows women are lagging behind men in terms of educational qualifications, economic achievements, asset ownership as well as participation in political sphere. In the last few decades, Nepal has been making steady progress in terms of educational achievement of the population as a whole. There has been an increase in the adult literacy rate as well as the percentage of population attending schools; however, there is a huge gap between the educational achievements of men and women. Gender inequality is even more intense within some social, regional and income groups. For example, in Terai middle caste group, only 58 percent of 6-10 year girls are at school compared to 94 percent for boys. Also, school enrolment is lower for children from poorer households, where the 36 percent of 6-10 year olds are out of school and two-thirds of these children are girls (Mathema, 2007).

3.8 Women's Work and Access to Wage-Employment

In most developing countries like Nepal, women's work is concentrated in household management. Irrespective of the difficulties associated with these tasks, there is little value attached to it since household work is seen more as women's duty than as her contribution to the family (de la Rocha, 1994). Also, since most of this work is unpaid, women remain financially dependent on other household members. Men, on the other hand, are mostly involved in income-generating employment activity which is valued for the financial security it provides to the family. Hence, increased participation in wage-employment could improve women's position in the household by making their work more visible. Women may also gain social respect from increased visibility of their work. The distribution of household resources may be less biased against women if they are able to earn and contribute to household income. Hence, participation in market work may improve a woman's breakdown position by reducing her dependence on other family members and providing her with some form of financial security. Also, being able to add to the family's economic security could change the perceptions about the woman's contribution to the family, and increase her perceived interest and perceived contribution (Sen, 1990a).

Expansion in women's ability to take up market work could help reduce bias against girls, as women become recognized as productive contributors of the society. Such changes would reduce women's dependence on men and in the long-term contribute towards removing structural inequalities between men and women (Sen, 1999). While in general increased participation in market work is seen as a sign of women's empowerment, having to take on such work might also add stress to their lives mainly because taking on wage-employment does not free women from unpaid household work (de la Rocha, 1994). Since household work and family-based agriculture are both mostly unpaid and undervalued work, women who spend more time on these tasks are likely to have a lower bargaining position within the household than women who bring in income through some form of market employment (Acharya and Bennett, 1983; Muet al. 2011). Less household or agricultural work could also improve women's wellbeing, as she might be able to enjoy more leisure time. Participation in wage employment and self-employment in non-agriculture enables women to contribute directly to household income; hence women involved in these

activities may have a stronger bargaining position and greater agency than women who are limited to household and subsistence agricultural work.

3.9 Women in Decision-Making Process

Increased decision-making authority expands women's ability to make life choices, influences the allocation of resources and improves the well-being of women and their families (WDR, 2012). Being able to make choices and exercise control over one's life is intrinsic to well-being. Women may be able to gain human capital with increased decision-making power. Studies examining the impacts of increased decision-making for women on children's well-being often find better health and education outcomes for children when mothers make more decisions (see Smith et al. 2003, Adhikari and Sawangdee, 2011; Desai and Johnson, 2005; de Haas and van Rooij, 2010). In Mexico, girls were found to spend less time in domestic work in households where mothers had greater decision-making power (Reggio, 2010). Also, Hadi (2001) finds better educational outcomes for girls when mothers have higher decision-making power. Such findings indicate that greater decision-making for women may be specifically beneficial for girls. Hence, increased decision-making for women could help reduce gender-based inequalities and contribute towards improved well-being for the entire family.

Women's participation in decision-making may vary based on the type of decisions (Khalaf, 2009; Palmer, 1985). For example, in households with male migrants, women may be entirely responsible for decisions on smaller everyday things like what food to buy or what to cook for dinner, simply because it is not possible to consult with their husbands over the phone on such minor aspects. However, bigger financial decisions related to buying and selling of assets or those related to children's health and education may be entirely controlled by men. Hence, it is essential to look into the differences in women's decision-making ability based on the type of decision. I, specifically, look into differences in women's decision-making ability on decisions on children's health, women's health, women's physical mobility, smaller everyday expenses, bigger financial investments, and the use of husband's income.

3.10 Women's Social Participation

As discussed above, women in Nepal face several forms of restrictions in terms of their mobility in public spaces due to the various religious and social norms. Such restrictions are common in the context of South Asia in general (see Mayoux, 2001; Desai and Banerjee, 2008). Women's physical mobility as an indicator of women's empowerment and argue that participation in community activities (such as weekly meetings for microfinance programs) gives women legitimate reasons to move in public spaces, increases their visibility and exposes them to new ideas that increase their self-confidence and make them more skilful with public interactions. As women form bonds with other women, they create an identity outside the family and find support from each other on everyday things like childcare, domestic work and participation in wage-employment (de la Rocha, 1994). Such transformations could expand women's knowledge base, extend their support network and result in improved breakdown position and higher perceived interest.

Women cannot address structural inequalities alone. However, collective solidarity among women through social networks could create conditions to help them identify their strategic and practical interests and transform social structures to reduce discrimination (Kabeer, 1999; Weiss, 1999). Hence, higher social participation and strengthened social network among women could be central to combating gender inequality. Increased freedom of movement in social spaces could transform norms that limit women to domestic spaces. Women who are outgoing are often stigmatized as being "loose characters". Also, the pervasiveness of harassment in the form of teasing, name-calling and making sexual advances discourage women's social participation. Such perceptions and practices may decline, as women gain confidence from their exposure to outside world and show restraints against discriminatory practices. These changes may in the long-term contribute towards furthering women's physical mobility and reducing the gender-based segregation of social responsibilities.

Women in Nepal are behind men in terms of their political participation as well. Though women constitute little more than half the population of the country and they actively participated in political movement of 1951, the mass movement of 1990, and the civil war from 1996 to 2006, they haven't gotten equal political representation or

equal rights (Pradhan, 2005; Pokharel, 2014). The new 2015 constitution has provisions for substantive gender equality including equal property rights and elimination of violence against women; however, the constitution also contains discriminatory clauses including unequal citizenship rights. Gender discrimination is deeply rooted in the socio-economic and cultural structures of the Nepalese society. As daughters, women are expected to be more obedient, less demanding and satisfied with lower access to resources than their brothers. Upon marriage, a woman is expected to remain subservient to her husband and in-laws. She has to start at the bottom of the household hierarchy and take charge of most of the household and childcare work (Bennett, 1983; Gray, 1990). And, throughout their lives, women's access to resources is more limited than that of men, they face severe limitations in terms of their freedom and mobility in public spaces and they are underrepresented in almost all public domains from civil service and local governance to politics and entrepreneurship (Mishra, 2014). Though women's access to education and employment has been increasing in the past couple decades, Nepalese society is still far from reaching the goals of gender equality.

3.11 Overview of the Existing Literature

There can be conflicts between the interests of men and women within the same family, and women are usually at the losing end because of their lower bargaining position in Nepali society. Since men's migration directly affects women's ability to represent their own interests, studying migration through a gendered perspective can provide important insights into changes in intra-household power relationships and its impact on women's status. Scholars focusing on the impact of male migration on families and communities left behind argue that men's migration could fundamentally change gender relations and transform socio-cultural beliefs that characterize traditional gendered practices at origin (Howell, 2002; Cohen et al. 2008). A review of these studies reveals mixed results, with women experiencing both gains and losses from male migration and the consequences being dependent on the various socio-economic and structural aspects of the case being studied. Some scholars portray a positive view, arguing that men's absence improves women's well-being by increasing their freedom and expanding their decision-making power (Durand and Massey, 2004; Hadi, 2001).

Remittances sent by migrants could enable women to attain a better standard of living for themselves and their children by lifting budget constraints and increasing their access to education, healthcare and credit facilities (Amuendo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2006; Haas and Van Rooij, 2010). Often, management of household resources by women could be advantageous for girls as several studies show that women are more likely to invest in their daughter's education and well-being than men (Hadi, 2001; Haas and van Rooij, 2010).

In some cases, men's migration may create shortages in labor supply (see Lipton, 1980) and increase women's participation in market work; thus contributing to women's empowerment by decreasing their financial dependence on men. These studies conclude that increases in women's freedom and bargaining power could expand their abilities and contribute towards shrinking the gender gap in access to social and economic opportunities. Other studies claim that the transformations that men's migration brings to women's family life and their social and economic position are often detrimental to their well-being, as women may be taking up more responsibilities but without much change in their status in the household hierarchy (Brown, 1983; Jetley, 1987; Agadjanian & Menjivar, 2007; McKenzie & Menjivar, 2011). These studies argue that because men still serve as the primary breadwinners and make the most important decisions, there may be no real transformation in women's status. Men's migration may also limit women's mobility in public spaces either because of increased scrutiny over their whereabouts in the absence of their husbands or because women may be more vulnerable to harassment by other men who believe that there is no one to protect the woman when her husband is away (Debnath & Selim, 2009; Adhikari and Hopley, 2015). Such circumstances limiting women's mobility could discourage women's participation in market work and keep them dependent on their husbands (Jetley, 1987; Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2008; Acosta, 2006). Additionally, emotional deprivation due to prolonged displacement of family may result in increased divorce rates and destabilization of families (Jetley, 1987; McKenzie and Menjivar, 2011; McEvoy, 2012).

A third strand in the literature finds mixed impacts of male migration on women's well-being. These studies point out that while women may experience higher stress levels and anxiety from increased workload during men's migration, they may also gain independence and self-confidence from taking up tasks like operating bank

accounts, supervising land, going to the market, negotiating terms of loans and managing household finances. A study by Sadiqui and Ennaji (2004) on Morocco claims that women's responsibilities as well as their dependence on their husbands increase during men's absence, but that they also enjoy a higher level of freedom and become stronger from having to fight social exclusion and negotiate power relations in the new setting. This is consistent with the findings of Desai and Banerjee (2008) who study the case of India and find that when men migrate, women in nuclear families enjoy higher autonomy but also experience an increase in workload, while women in extended families don't see much change in their workload but lose their autonomy. Some studies also point out that while remittances could increase women's access to resources, it could also weaken women's willingness to participate in market work and keep them financially dependent on their husbands (Amuendo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2006; Acosta, 2006).

Some scholars argue that the gains in autonomy during men's absence may disappear when men return, i.e. the changes experienced by women may be temporary (Kasper, 2005; Elbadawy and Roushdy, 2010; Sadiqui and Ennaji, 2004). Others claim that at least some permanent change may be seen in women's status as women learn to manage things on their own and will have negotiated a different position for themselves within the family and the society during men's absence (Yabiku et al., 2010). In order for women to realize economic gains through remittance reception, they should have access to the money and authority to use it. Gaining higher freedom in men's absence requires socio-economic conditions and household power relations that allow increased participation of women in socio-economic arenas and household decision-making. Also, while women in nuclear families may stand to gain power by assuming the role of household heads when their husbands migrate, women in extended households living under the headship of other family members may experience a decline in their bargaining power (Prasai, 2005; Desai and Banerjee, 2008). Studies on migration from Nepal mainly focus on the benefits of migration, such as poverty reduction through remittance inflows and reduced unemployment pressures through outflow of workers (see Lokshin et al., 2007; Acharya & Leon-Gonzalez, 2012). Hence, facilitating migration has been a priority for the government in solving the current economic problems and little attention is given to the social changes.

3.12 Conclusion

With the rise in movement of workers across borders, understanding the experiences of transnationally split families is becoming increasingly important. My study contributes to this literature by focusing on the experiences of women in households with male migrants. As men migrate, women take on the role of household heads, make more decisions, manage financial matters and singlehandedly bear all childcare responsibilities (Prasai, 2005). Though these changes could contribute towards empowering women in the long run, in the short run these increased responsibilities along with women's lower access to resources such as education, employment or credit could leave female-headed migrant households in a vulnerable position. Additionally, women have to deal with the changing socio-economic conditions created by men's absence and negotiate gender relations to live in a society that has historically suppressed women's freedom and restricted them within domestic spheres.

A woman's experience during her husband's absence directly affects her role as the caretaker of the family and influences the well-being of her children as well as other household members. Hence, with the rising rate of migration of men, it is increasingly important to understand the consequences faced by women and to provide them with the resources essential to coping with these challenges. For example, providing women with skill-based trainings and encouraging their participation in market work could make them more independent financially and improve their bargaining position within the family. In fact, migration of men from Nepal has increased the proportion of women in the workforce; however, women's lack of access to resources and skills has restricted their participation to low-income and low-skilled sector (ILO, 2010).

Policy-level efforts to discourage gender-specific division of labor, ensure equal pay for women and increase their access to resources might help reduce some of this discrepancy in women's achievements. A study such as this can help us to understand the process of economic development through a gendered lens. It provides insights into the role of social norms and the complexities associated with household power inequalities in influencing women's experiences and their participation in development. Women constitute slightly more than half of the world's population and their contribution to socio-economic development is also more than half because of

their dual roles in productive and reproductive spheres (Bari, 2005). However, most of their work is unpaid and undervalued. And, their lower economic and educational achievements have put them in a subordinate position in the society. Understanding the difficulties women face and providing them with necessary resources to expand their capabilities would not only reduce gender inequality but also contribute to increasing the productive capacity of the economy and facilitate development. The literature on women's status in other developing countries with widespread patriarchal norms reveal that women's experiences discussed above is not unique to Nepal. Women in many other countries face similar struggles in terms of their access to education and other resources and their freedom to participate in economic and social spheres. Hence, the study could serve as a resource to advocate for policies that enhance women's access to resources, support their participation in socio-economic spheres, and discourage cultural norms that promote gender inequality.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter includes rationale of selecting study area, research design, sample size and sampling procedure, method of data collection and method of data analysis and interpretation. To address the research questions presented in the previous chapter, I have used a mixed methods strategy. Broadly, mixed methods is defined as a research in which data is collected, analyzed and interpreted by integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). Qualitative research provides an exposure to the perceptions and behaviour of research subjects and helps understand the socio-cultural, economic and historical context of the study. It often reveals aspects of the study that the researcher may not have easily identified from reading the literature. However, qualitative methods are usually based on small samples at specific locations and the findings may not be generalizable to a larger population; hence it is often deemed less credible in policymaking. Also, qualitative studies are likely to be biased based on researcher's perspectives and fraught with problems associated with sample selection, relationship between the researcher and subject and the environment in which they interact.

By using mixed methods, this study hopes to provide a more holistic view of women's experiences during men's migration. Given the nature of our research questions that, as discussed in chapter 2, are highly sensitive to the socio-economic context as well as the cultural norms in Nepal; fieldwork involving direct interaction with women who had been affected by migration of men seemed essential for this study. Therefore, I carried out fieldwork in the study area from March to May, 2019. The fieldwork was instrumental to framing my research questions, understanding the socio-cultural norms at the research locations, and also interpreting the results from my quantitative research. The next section presents a discussion on the methodology used for my fieldwork including details on the selection of research locations, sample selection, and brief description of some of the individual and household characteristics of the fieldwork participants. The final section presents some concluding remarks.

4.2 Research Design:

In order to achieve objectives of the thesis, the descriptive and analytic method has been adopted. To provide direction to the study and analysis, questionnaire and interview method is applied in study area. Similarly, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the related agencies and informants to support research work. The qualitative data includes the case study and interview with key informants whereas quantitative data includes the data and information collected from survey and study report of concerned agencies.

4.3 Description of Fieldwork

The primary objective of my fieldwork was to collect information from women in migrant households about their experiences due to their husband's migration. The fieldwork involved conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 women, who are the wives of migrant workers. At my research location, I interviewed people working at local organizations about social and economic changes they had observed due to migration of men. In addition I conducted informational interviews with professionals working at government, nongovernment organizations focusing on migration to understand their perspectives on the prospects as well as the consequences of migration and to learn about the work they are doing to facilitate migration.

4.4 Selection of Research Location

My research location, Rajghat village is located in the mid-Southern part of Sarlahi district, somewhere about 15 km away from Mahendra highway. I decided to choose Rajghat as the target location for my study, partly because of the higher volume of households with absentees (migrant workers) compared to other villages in the catchment area. Secondly, the study location is close to my home town where I could easily go and take notes required for the research. Thirdly, because of budgetary and time constraints, I chose the location as per my convenience considering my engagement in employment for my survival. I conducted fieldwork during the summer season, when there was sharp increase in temperature.

4.5 Research Sample & Study Procedure

My study location, Rajghathas 2,040 households with total 10,186 population (4,866 male & 5,320 female) and absent population is 595 (539 male and 56 female). Due to time and budgetary constraints, I selected only 10 participants out of 595 households for my study. I started my study meeting the target participants and explaining my objectives and seeking their help in getting required information. I went house to house and in other occasion summoning people to one location, so I could interview them at once. In order to diversify my sample, I enlisted the participants from different villages and community from the research location. The positive aspect of using this methodology was that it was easier for me to get insights for my study; I was able to interview about 10 women at my study location within 10 days. Despite some difference, being familiar with the cultural norms in the study area and speaking the same language was an advantage for me. During interview, I often shared some stories with the study population so that they could relate to in order to make them comfortable in the interview setting.

4.6 Research Questionnaire

The research questionnaire used for my fieldwork is presented in Appendix B. I usually started the interviews by explaining the purpose of my research and getting the women's consent for participating in the study. I then collected background information from the participants on their age, education, household structure, ownership of land and other assets along with information on migrant's destination, work, duration of stay etc. I talked to them about the changes in their work responsibilities, their decision-making abilities, and their participation in social and economic spheres, due to their husbands' migration. I asked about these experiences in terms of both the opportunities gained, the challenges faced and the approaches taken to deal with the difficulties. During field study, I kept the interviews semi-structured and conversational, allowing the respondents to talk about their experiences more freely than having them follow a question-answer format. This helped me get a better understanding of their experiences from their perspectives and allowed me to see what aspects of their experiences seemed important to them.

4.7 Description of Field Study

Most of the women with whom I talked were wives of migrants. My analysis here, however only includes migrant wives since I am primarily interested in this group. I interviewed migrant wives between 30 to 40 years old. Most of the women had taken the role of household heads during their husbands' migration. In each of my research locations, I included women from different caste groups. Most of the women in my sample were from lower middle class family. The names of women mentioned in this study are not the original names as their identity has been kept secret. They are used here just for the representation of the study population. The brief details of the study population is given in the below mentioned table.

Table No 2: Brief Details of Study Population

SN	Name	Age	Education	Family member	Occupation
1	Nilam	38	Literate	5	shop and hotel
2	Ritu	30	Literate	3	Agriculture & animal husbandry
3	Mina	39	Literate	5	Agriculture
4	Priti	39	10+2	4	Agriculture
5	Sarita	35	12 class	3	Cosmetic shop
6	Sabitri	30	B.Ed	3	Job
7	Menuka	33	Literate	6	Agriculture
8	Lilamaya	35	Literate	5	Grocery shop
9	Dolma	30	Literate	5	Agriculture & carpet
10	Tika	33	Literate	6	Agriculture

4.8 Nature and Sources of Data:

To achieve objective of the study, both primary and secondary data were collected as per the requirement of the study; whereas quantitative and qualitative data has been

the main source of the study. The primary data were collected through field observation, interaction and personal interview with the families of remittance holders and other key informants from concerned agencies whereas secondary data was taken from different published and unpublished sources such as journals, books, articles, reports. Additionally, required information was collected from internet to meet the objective of the study. And based on the data and information, generalization has been made. In order to make data more comprehensive and reliable, the respondents were asked individually in the study area and their responses were filled in the questionnaire sheet. Based on the checklist, available information and documents were reviewed. The key informants from village and other concerned agencies and organization were also consulted as per the requirement of the study.

3.9 Data Collection Tools:

To make the study more purposeful, the researcher used the following data collection tools;

- Field observation
- Questionnaire
- Interview with study population

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

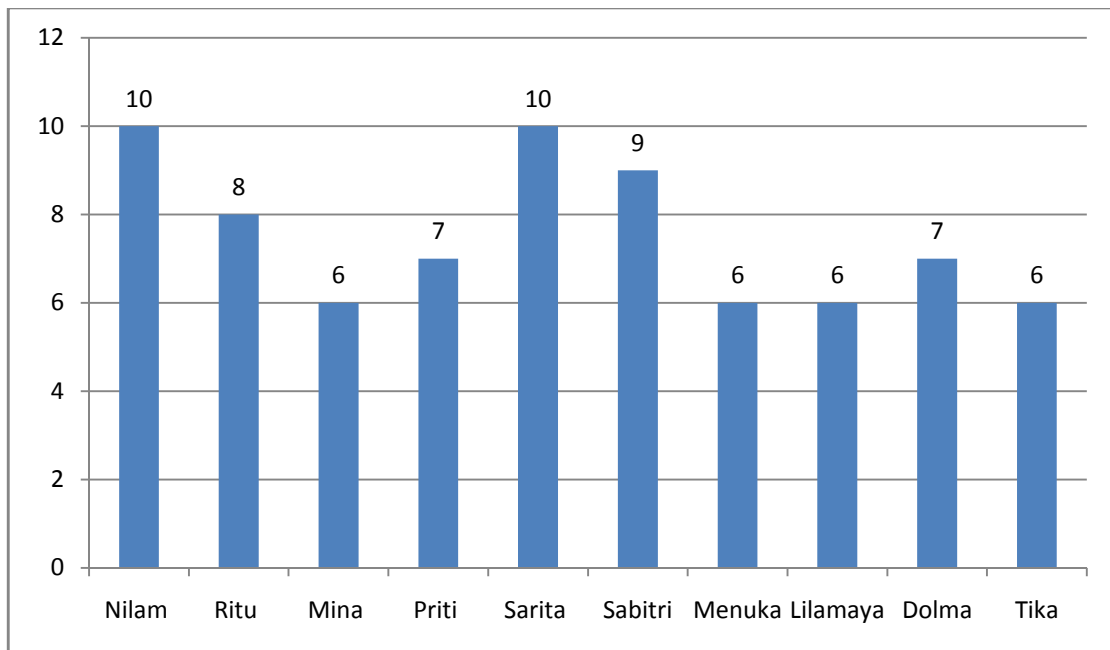
After having collected data and information through personal consultation, interview and internet research, the data were analyzed. The human development index and reports of government and other authentic organizations were also reviewed. The secondary data like national census 2011, academic journals, magazines, articles, research reports, published and unpublished research works related to the present study were also used for generalizing the facts and figures.

In the study field, to understand the implications of men's migration on women's participation in the social sphere, I talked to women about the following four aspects of social participation (a) if they had started going to the market or to the bank on their own after their husbands' migration, (b) if they had formed stronger ties with other women in the community as a result of their husbands' migration, (c) if their participation in community activities (either membership in a savings group or participation in literacy or skill-based trainings) had increased after their husbands' migration and d) if they had control over financial resource and access to decision making process. Often, women were apprehensive about dealing with banks and other formal financial institutions. As a 39-year-old migrant wife, Mina (name changed) says; "It is difficult not having my husband around. I have to take care of all the financial matters, take loans, deal with lenders and negotiate the terms of the loans."

5.1 Reasons behind Migration for Foreign Employment

The common response of most of the migrant's wife reveals that poverty, unemployment and lack of other livelihood opportunity in the village were found to be the causative factors for labour migration. 38 year aged Nilam(name changed) whose husband has been in Qatar for past ten years, says; with no more cultivable land left for us and poor financial status, my husband went to Qatar for employment. His earning has helped us maintain family survival and my children are able to join relatively better private school. Below table shows the total years the husbands of the study population have been spending their life in foreign country in course of foreign employment.

Figure no 1: Total Years of Migrant Husband Spending in Overseas Job



5.2 Women's Work Responsibilities in Migrant Households

Women who were not employed or were self-employed in agriculture with no remuneration were asked why they had not taken up paid employment activities. About 70 % of these women cited heavy workload within the house and in the agricultural fields as a key obstacle to taking on work outside home. They also mentioned that lack of education also did not help them find better job opportunity. Most women mentioned that men's migration had made it harder for them to participate in employment activities outside home either because of the intensification of household, childcare and agricultural work or because they faced additional restrictions on their mobility in public spaces during their husband's absence. When asked about the kind of market work women wanted to be employed in, most answers were concentrated within a few categories based on their educational and economic backgrounds. Women with higher educational qualifications considered teaching at schools or working at local offices as their ideal jobs. Women with lower or no education expressed their preference for being self-employed in the non-agricultural sector because it allowed them to earn money while working at or within close proximity of home.

5.3 Household Work

In most cases, women mentioned that their domestic responsibilities had increased after their husband's migration. They pointed out that though they took care of almost all the household work even before their husband's migration, the increase in responsibilities came mainly in terms of managing miscellaneous tasks outside home as well such as going to the market, taking children to school or to health center, or going to pay utility bills. A 35-year-old Sarita(name changed) whose husband is in Malaysia for overseas job for last 10 years said;

“It is difficult not having my husband here. I have to take care of my daughter and my mother-in-law, do all the cooking, cleaning and taking care of my children and run to the market when needed. Managing everything by myself is hard.”

Similar concerns were expressed by another woman named Lilamaya(name changed)

“I have to take care of three kids, cook and clean, look after grocery shop and fetch water and firewood. Household work is a woman's job; my husband didn't do any of this work even when he was here but he would go to the market and manage all financial matters. I have to take on all of his work and manage everything by myself now.”

Expressions of fear of being blamed for not managing money effectively or taking proper care of children were common in her conversation.

“My responsibilities have increased a lot after my husband's absence and it is not easy to live without a guardian at home. I felt more relaxed when my husband was here to take care of the work outside home. Now in his absence, I have to worry about managing money and taking care of kids and if anything goes wrong, it will be my fault.”

A 39-year-old mother of three children, Mina (name changed) explained;

“My workload at home hasn't changed by much. In fact, I had to work more when he was here. I had to wash his clothes, iron them and prepare good food every day. He would be mad at me if everything were not in proper order. So,

household work has actually become easier. I don't mind doing this work though; it is a woman's job to cook, clean and care for kids."

Most women who had separated from their in-laws after their husband's migration, talked about increased freedom and reduction in household work from not having to follow orders from in-laws and having fewer members to take care of. While some women talked about reduction in workload after separating from in-laws, others mentioned that their workload had increased since responsibilities were shared among household members when they lived in joint family. A woman named Menuka (name changed) recounted her experience: It has been very difficult living with my in-laws after my husband migrated. I have to follow orders from in-laws and I am not involved in any decision making process. Ritu (name changed), a mother of 1 child in contrast said;

"My responsibilities have increased since I separated from my in-laws. I have to do all of the household work and manage tasks outside home by myself. However, I feel more free and independent. I don't have to be following their orders all the time. Earlier, my husband sent remittances only to his parents, so I had to ask them for money whenever I needed it. Now he sends money to me separately, so I can do things that I want to do."

5.4 Self-Employment in Agriculture

Most of the women I talked to belonged to agricultural households. Some of them were partially engaged in carpet weaving, grocery shop and cattle farming. In these households, when men migrated, women would either work longer hours to replace male labor or hire people to work in the fields. Most women who continued with agricultural work mentioned that they had cut down production significantly, since they did not have the resources to produce enough to be able to sell in the market. The main source of income for most of these households was remittances; they saw agriculture as a secondary economic resource to support family's consumption needs. A 33-year-old migrant wife, Tika (name changed) stated;

"We still continue with agriculture work but most of it is only for our own consumption. We can't produce enough to sell in the market! (laughs) There is no one to help me out in the fields. I have to manage household work and look

after the kids in addition to working in the fields, so I only do as much as I can manage.”

Women mentioned that there was shortage of male labor needed to plough fields. Also, women who hired labor to help out with farming pointed out that it was expensive to hire workers and difficult to supervise them. One woman, named Nilam(name changed) summarized such issues with continuing with agricultural work in the absence of men in the following way:

“Since men are away, we hire people to work on the fields during growing season. I just hired workers and paid them Rs. 600 for planting crops in the fields. I also had to provide lunch and dinner to all the workers. I need to hire people again for cutting the crops and getting the products to the market; the total expenses could be more than expected and there is no guarantee that the crop yield will be of that value. As I don’t like to leave the land barren, I do all this work even though there is not much profit to be made in agriculture.”

Hence, absence of men has affected agricultural production; though women may be working more hours and their participation in subsistence agricultural work may have increased, the overall production among migrant households has declined. Similar trends were seen in terms of animal farming; while some women worked longer hours to replace male labor, others sold some or all the animals to reduce their responsibilities. In some cases, women showed more interest in livestock farming than crop farming because of the higher labor input needed for crop farming. A 39 year-old migrant wife, Priti(name changed) who had recently sold two buffalos to reduce her work responsibilities explained:

“I only have two goats to take care of now. With no one to help out with all the work here, I was having a difficult time keeping up with it. My husband told me to sell the cows, and because he has been able to send remittances on time we are doing okay.”

5.5 Self-Employment in Non-Agriculture

Self-employment in the non-agricultural sector seemed to be the most appealing work option for most women. Work in this sector is usually less strenuous than that in agricultural fields and the expected returns are higher. Additionally, most of this work

can be done at home or close to it, making it convenient for women to manage this work along with household and childcare responsibilities. One migrant's wife, Sarita(name changed) explained her preference for this kind of work by stating:

“I run cosmetic shop. When I have time, I also sew clothes. I can manage some household expenses with the money I make from these tasks. Since I can do all this work at home, it is easier for me to switch between these tasks and household work.”

In some cases, declines in home-based production were also reported as remittances became the main income source and women cut down on their production for more leisure or for providing better care to children. When asked about the kind of work they preferred to do, more than half of the women mentioned some form of side business such as running shops. However, a major hindrance to taking up this kind of work is the capital and skill required to start business. The most preferred option for women seemed to be to open a small convenience store, tailor shop at home or close to it. One migrant wife named Dolma Lama expressed her wish for being self-employed stating:

“Most of the household work is concentrated in the mornings and evenings, so I have some free time in the afternoon. If we got some skill-based training, we wouldn't have to stay at home all day long doing nothing. I would be interested in learning how to make things like mats and baskets, so I could work at home and earn some money.

5.6 Wage-Employment

Only 20 percent of the migrant wives I interviewed were employed for wages; this is consistent with low participation in wage-employment for Nepalese women in general. Based on their skills and educational background, wage employed women can be broadly categorized as high-skilled workers and low skilled workers. Women, who had completed the 12th standard in school or higher, were mainly employed in skilled-labor sector with relatively high wages. They worked at local school. Women with low or no education, on the other hand, were mostly employed in low-wage low-skilled jobs.

Table No 3 : Status of Education & Occupation of Study Population

SN	Name	Education	Occupation	Skills
1	Nilam	Literate	shop and hotel	No
2	Ritu	Literate	Agriculture	No
3	Mina	Literate	Agriculture	No
4	Priti	10+2	Agriculture	No
5	Sarita	12 class	Cosmetic shop	beauty parlar
6	Sabitri	B.Ed	Job	Computer
7	Menuka	Literate	Agriculture	No
8	Lilamaya	Literate	Grocery shop	No
9	Dolma	Literate	Agri&carpet	carpet weaving
10	Tika	Literate	Agriculture	No

Women employed in this low-skill sector were often from the poorest families; they did not have the resources to invest in capital or skill training to be able to be self-employed. Hence, they worked for wages in other people's farms and stores or took on manual labour jobs in carpet industry or other fields. Often, women's lack of education seemed to deter them from considering taking up wage-employment. Women stated that they did not think they had the knowledge or skills to work outside home and earn money like men did. Some women simply accepted that market work was not for them. The migrant's wife named Lilamaya (changed name), who was solely reliant on remittances and agriculture expressed;

“I don't know what kind of work is available for women like us. We run the household with whatever we receive from abroad. Also, household work and childcare responsibilities are what we can do with our knowledge.”

An important factor influencing women's lack of participation in the labor market seemed to be the perception about the kinds of work that are appropriate for women to do and the lack of opportunities for such jobs in the market. Women pointed out that they cannot just do any work and that there weren't too many job positions that would be suitable for women to take on. The labor market in Nepal is gender-segregated, with concentration of men and women in different types of jobs. Men dominate the

wage-employment sector for all kinds of jobs from professional high-skilled work to low-skilled jobs in construction and transportation while women are limited to doing agricultural work and home-based production.

Women who were employed in the wage-earning sector talked about their struggles in terms of managing household and childcare work with outside work. Some of them mentioned that they left their kids with their parents or in-laws while they went to work. Others pointed out that they had very little leisure time and had to work efficiently to be able to manage household work with wage-employment. Though wage-employed women seemed to receive some help in terms of childcare from family members, most household work such as cooking, cleaning etc. was almost entirely women's responsibility. The statements below demonstrate some of the struggles faced by wage-employed migrant wives, Ritu and Priti (name changed) said:

“It is difficult being alone as we have to work hard and compromise for our children's future. My responsibilities have increased since my husband's migration. I do the household work in the morning and evening and then I work for a few hours in farm; this keeps me busy all the day that I have no time to think of friends and relatives.”

Women who were not heavily burdened with household and childcare responsibilities mentioned that participating in wage-employment had helped them manage household expenses and reduced financial tensions at home. Usually women who were not involved in agriculture or animal farming and whose children were big enough to go to school during the day found time to take up some wage employment. A 33-year-old migrant's wife, Sarita (name changed) expressed;

“I took training of beauty parlour about 2 years ago but I only started my own shop recently since my children started going to school and I have free time during the day. I feel happy that I am able to contribute to family income. I have to pick her up at 3 and after that I just go home.”

Account of the interview with the women indicates that men's migration has resulted in an increase in women's household work and childcare responsibilities. The impact of men's migration on women's participation in subsistence agriculture is not as clear as some women chose to reduce production or completely give up agricultural work,

while others continued the work by taking up some of their husband's responsibilities. Given this expected increase in household work along with the possibility of increased subsistence agriculture and improvement in the households' financial status through receipt of remittances, women's participation in wage-employment and their involvement in self-employment in non-agricultural work is expected to decline during men's migration. Additionally, my observations on the underlying reasons for regional differences in women's experiences suggest that factors such as women's age and education, household factors such as family structure, caste group and economic background as well as regional factors associated with gender norms and socio-economic status are keys to explaining the differences in women's experiences.

5.7 Women in Decision Making Process

Women's participation in household decision making is an indicator of their bargaining power. Increased decision-making could tilt the distribution of household resources in women's favor, facilitate her participation in social and economic arenas and contribute towards empowering her. Women's involvement in household decision-making may change during men's migration because of transformations in their position in the household and the society due to men's absence. Here, we look into these changes, analyze what individual, household and regional characteristics affect women's decision-making abilities and examine what these changes may mean for women's empowerment in Nepal. Studies by Hadi (2001) on Bangladesh, Yabiku et al. (2010) on Mozambique and Jayaweera and Dias (2009) on Sri Lanka all find that women's autonomy and decision-making power increase with migration of adult male members. Other scholars have argued that the impact of men's migration on women's decision making is more complex, as women may be making more decisions but the most important decisions, especially ones related to spending remittances or investment in larger household assets, may be made by men (see De Haas and Van Rooij, 2010 on rural Morocco; Palmer, 1985 on Swaziland; and Khalaf, 2009 and Hjorth, 2011 on 159 Lebanon). Also, even when women make decisions, these decisions may be influenced by their husbands' interests, partly for maintaining the image of being ideal wives (Chapagain, 2006).

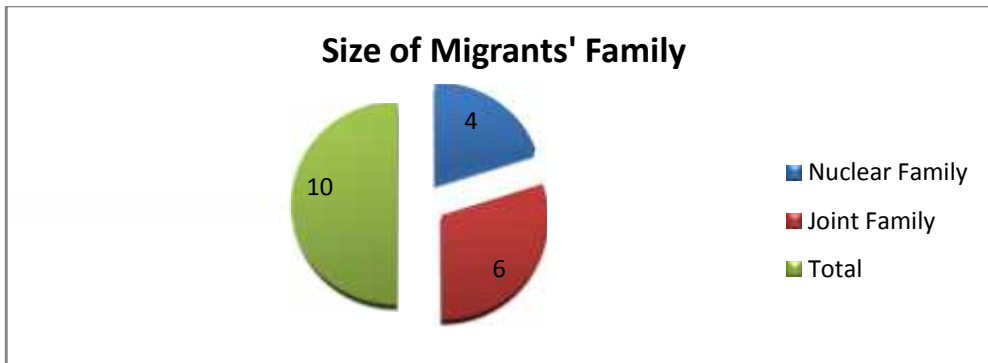
Household decision-making is a complex process. Many decisions may be made through some form of collaboration and implicit understanding between family

members. Power relations between household members are often central to determining women's ability to participate in decision-making during men's migration. For instance, studies by Desai and Banerjee (2008) and Rashid (2013) both find that women in nuclear households enjoy higher decision-making power during men's absence, while those in extended households may see their involvement in household decision-making remain the same or even decline, as other senior household members may take the role of key decision-maker. Often, women who are daughters-in-law of the household head rely on their husbands to represent their interests. Husbands' absence could be especially difficult for these women, as they are left alone to negotiate their position with their in-laws (Kasper, 2005). Notions of being good wives, good mothers and good daughters-in-law may influence how women behave and what decisions they make (Jetley, 1987; Rashid, 2013; Yabiku et al., 2010). For example, a woman's decision to participate in market work may be affected by whether it is socially acceptable for her to work outside home and how her family and the society may perceive her participation in market work.

5.8 Nepalese Women in Household Decision-Making Process

Traditional gender dynamics in Nepal is based on men as the key decision makers and women as economic dependents. Women have lower access to and control over household resources and they have less power in household decision making, even for decisions related to their own health (Acharya et al., 2010). Nepalese women are often younger than their husbands, have lower education and income and limited social and political participation; these factors restrict women's ability to negotiate a more gender equal conjugal relationship (Chapagain, 2006). During the interview with the wives of migrant workers, the women who lived in joint family had relatively less participation in decision making process but those living in nuclear family were found taking decision themselves in major household affairs. Only in financial matter and children education, they would consult their husband in foreign country.

Figure No 2 : Family Size of Migrant Households



During my fieldwork, I asked women about how decisions were made within the household and whether their participation in household decision-making had changed since their husband's migration. The women were found running the household according to their own wishes and not sharing every detail to their husbands about where and how the money is being spent. Such things create marital tensions in family and sometimes divorce as well. During the conversation, the migrant's wives living in joint family had less access to financial resources, decision making process and mobility in social activities compared to those living in nuclear family. Tika (name changed) who lives with her father and mother in-laws says; the migration of my husband has curtailed my freedom and I have no more access to financial resource nor am I a part of decision making process at home. I have to follow their orders and do as told in order to keep family peaceful. Quite contrarily, Priti (name changed) who lives in nuclear family has all possible freedom at her home. She takes entire decision both at household works and financial matters; and also enjoys the privilege of participating in social and cultural gathering.

5.9 Changes in Decision-Making Roles

Almost all the women I talked to mentioned that they always consulted their husbands in making important decisions, especially ones related to financial matters. They pointed out that it was essential to share information on how and where money was being spent with the migrant member, since he was the one providing for the family. Sabitri, a 30-year-old migrant wife mentioned: I consult with my husband to make all decisions small and big. He sends the money, so I have to ask him. If I use the money without asking, he will ask what I did with the money. Dolma, whose husband had been in Malaysia for last 7 years, gave a similar response: "I consult with my husband

when making any decision. It wouldn't be fair to use the money he earns without asking him; he would be really mad at me if I didn't get his approval on how and where to spend the money (laughs).”

5.10 Women's Social Participation during Men's Migration

Women's social participation refers to their ability to move from one place to another and interact in public spheres. Hence, aspects such as going to the bank, market or health center, visiting friends, and being involved in community activities are used as indicators of women's social participation. Men's migration gives women legitimate reasons to step into public spaces as they take up tasks that were previously managed by men (McEvoy, 2012). Hence, opportunities for increased freedom and greater access to resources may be created by men's migration. An expansion in women's ability to participate in public spaces is dependent on the existing socio-cultural structures. The above-mentioned gains in women's physical mobility may be observed in regions with less restrictive gender norms. However, in regions with high gender inequality and strict patriarchal norms, women may face increased limitations on their presence in public spaces during their husbands' absence.

Public ideology considers single women as being more vulnerable in the absence of their husbands to protect them; hence, they may face increased risk of sexual harassment in the forms of indecent comments or inappropriate advances from other men. In such circumstances, women may feel more susceptible to 'losing their honor' not just from being harassed but also from people in the society watching them closely and gossiping about their interactions with other men (Debnath and Selim, 2009; Hjorth, 2011). Gossip networks may be central to affecting women's ability and willingness to step into public spaces. Migrant wives may be especially sensitive to gossips, since living apart from their husbands increases suspicions about their infidelity. Also, women's relationship with their migrant husbands as well as with their children and in-laws may be directly affected by what people in the society talk about them (Dreby, 2009; McEvoy, 2012). Hence, increased scrutiny over women's movement in public spaces, higher likelihood of being gossiped about, fear of losing their images as 'good wives' and 'good mothers' and risking their morality, as well as worries about possible family break-ups, may discourage women from stepping into public spaces (Menjivar and Agadjanian, 2007; Dreby, 2009).

Household structure and women's position in the household also influences women's participation in public spaces. In nuclear households, women become the de-facto heads and take up responsibilities requiring public interaction, while in extended households such responsibilities may be assumed by other male or older female members (Desai and Banerjee, 2008). Also, for younger women in extended households, having to explain the reason for stepping out of the house to in-laws and getting their permission for it might be difficult and stressful (Kasper, 2005).

During men's migration, women may develop new forms of connections with kinship and neighborhood networks for support with everyday things. They may go to the market or to the bank with other women to reduce tensions associated with having to step into public spaces alone. They may rely on each other for support with childcare and domestic tasks. As women's networks expand, traditional norms limiting their engagement in public spaces may begin to dissolve. Such changes could foster solidarity among women, encourage them to resist restrictions on their freedom and contribute towards their empowerment in the long-term (Morgan and Niraula, 1996; Menjivar and Agadjanian, 2007).

5.11 Women's Social Participation in Nepal

The patriarchal structure of the Nepalese society defines women's place as being within the home, while men dominate public spaces. It is men who go to the market or bank, attend community events, take children to the health center and manage financial matters. Women are mainly responsible for care of family members and domestic tasks of cooking, cleaning, animal care and crop farming (Pradhan, 2005). Men and women are prepared for these different roles since childhood; while girls help their mothers with household work and learn the drudgeries of being a perfect homemaker, boys go to school and prepare themselves for joining the workforce and earnings for the family (Majupuria, 1989).

Women's participation in social spaces in Nepal varies based on their socio-economic backgrounds and region-specific gender norms. In general, women from Tibeto-Burman groups enjoy higher freedom of movement than women from Indo-Aryan groups that follow patriarchal Hindu religious beliefs more rigorously (Morgan and Niraula, 1996). In their study on women's status in Nepal, Bennett and Acharya (1983) find that women from orthodox Hindu families are mostly involved with

domestic and unpaid agricultural work, while those from Tibeto-Burman families often participate in market work and even migrate to urban areas for work. In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of development programs by international as well as local government and non-government organizations encouraging women's involvement in community organizations as a means of empowering them. Most programs on microfinance, community forestry, literacy and skilled-based trainings are targeted towards women (Leve, 2001). In general, these programs are seen as being beneficial for extending women's access to social resources and increasing their presence in public spaces. A study by Adhikari (2015) shows that participation in self-help groups have increased women's physical mobility and improved their ability to voice their opinions. Hence, the growth of self-help groups and community programs has contributed to increasing women's presence in social space.

5.12 Social Support among Women in the Community

Women in migrant households relied on each other for social and financial support. Most women mentioned that their friendship with one another was the strongest form of support they had in coping with the difficulties of having to live without their husbands in a patriarchal society and having to single-handedly manage all household and childcare responsibilities. Sarita (named changed) , a migrant wife, who belonged to a women's savings group that occasionally implemented women's empowerment programs, stated: When there are problems, there is no one to help out. We, women, have to take care of everything by ourselves. One of the most common problems women cited, when asked about the challenges they faced during their husbands' migration, was that there was no one to help out if someone in the family fell sick. In such cases, women sought help from each other in getting to the health center or taking care of the sick. Some women also expressed their discomfort from having to rely on other women for support, but cited that there was no other way to deal with the difficulties faced when men are away, other than helping each other out.

Dolma (name changed) added; "Things are especially difficult if my daughter or I fall sick. There is no one to take us to the health center or to run to the market to get medicines. We have to seek help from others in the community, which is sometimes difficult." Women in migrant households also depended on each other for financial support when there were delays in receiving remittances. Remittance is the main

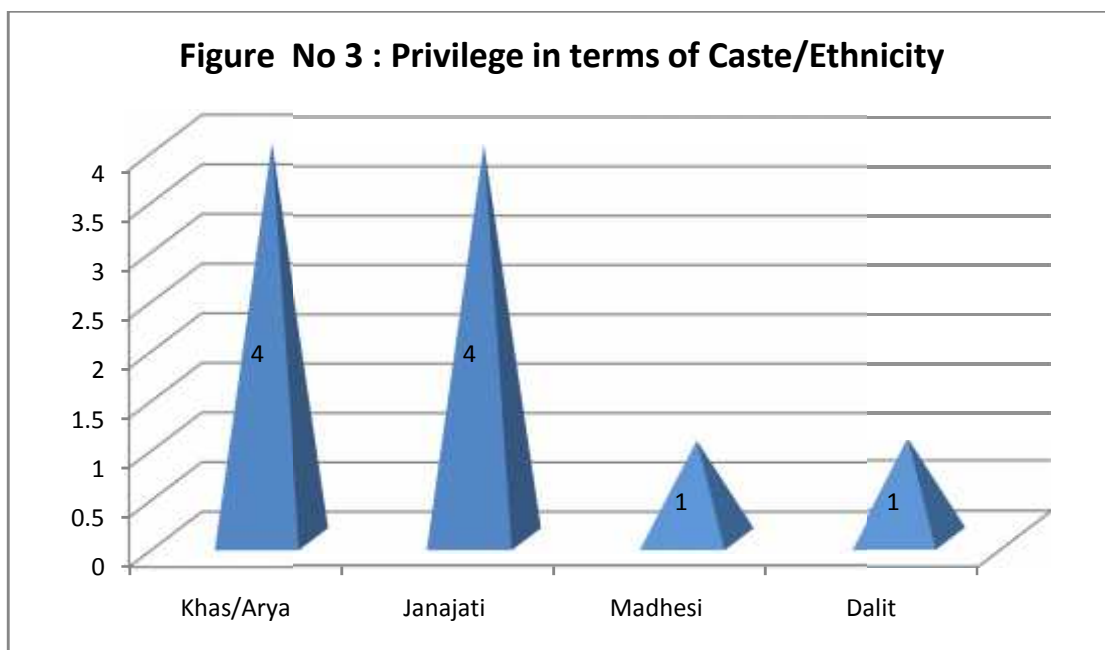
source of income for most migrant households and fluctuation in remittance receipt could directly affect the consumption needs, especially for poorer households. Since remittances are usually sent in bulk to minimize money transfer costs, there could be periods when households run out of money and have to wait to receive remittances. In such cases, women often borrowed from each other, instead of getting formal loans from banks. They mentioned that borrowing from each other was easier because of less strict terms of repayment and lower interest rates.

Nilam (name changed) , a migrant wife explained: I have friends here. We help each other out with taking care of kids. We borrow money from each other when we don't receive remittances on time and we pay back the loans as soon as the money comes in. Another migrant wife, Tika (name changed) explained;

“I prefer borrowing from other women rather than borrowing from the bank. Because banking process is very lengthy and often tedious. When we borrow from people we know, it is more convenient to borrow and they are more understanding if we are unable to meet payment terms. Sometimes I borrow from other women here and sometimes they borrow from me; that is how we manage things.”

5.13 Privilege in Terms of Caste/Ethnicity

My discussion with the below mentioned target respondents from different caste/ethnicity unveils the truth that women from Janajati have relatively more freedom and have almost full control in entire household affairs than those from other community. This privilege the Janajati women are entitled with has the cultural root that goes back to the on-going long tradition in their community where both husband and wife have almost equal access and control over family decision; therefore they share their power accordingly. Secondly, Janajati community is found not fully believing on Hindu notion where women are treated as subordinate to men.



Sharing the past life, a Janajati woman, Menuka (name change) Says; “My husband was not very much strict and he would allow me to go to watch movie with friends when there was not work pressure. In most of cultural programs, we used to go together.” Freedom in mobility and women’s participation in social and cultural programs is found to be very much common in Janajati community. Quite contrarily, women from Khas/Arya, Dalit and Madhesi community have hard time getting permission from their husband to participate in outdoor social functions. But in past few years, the trend is changing gradually and women from other community especially from migrant households are also seen in social functions in the village.

5.14 Empowerment VS Work Burden

It is natural for migrant’s wives to take on lots of family and social tasks during migration of men. As a single parent, her work pressure increases as there is no one to share her household tasks and other needful works outside home. While handling entire family tasks, they begin to develop their confidence at dealing with family and financial matter. This is how the process of empowerment begins at the migrant’s households where women learn doing new things, take decision on everyday situation and participate in social activities and functions representing their family; this helps them to a great extent for their gradual empowerment. Sometimes, they might not be able to be a part of social functions due to workload at home but this should be taken

as hindrance to their journey of empowerment. A migrant household from another village says;

“I was not allowed to take decision while my husband was at home; everytime he used to attend social functions and deal with financial matters. After his migration, I take on all the tasks he used to do to run our family. Sometimes it appears like a work burden but I feel it is helping me a lot. I have learnt many things and now I can easily handle household task both within and outside.

5.15 Conclusion

One of the key findings from my fieldwork is that the changes in women’s decision-making power due to the migration of men depend on her position within the household. Women who take on the role of household heads are more likely to experience an increase in their decision-making power upon their husbands’ migration. It is also found that factors such as women’s education, participation in wage-employment, exposure to social activities are central to understanding women’s ability to participate in household decision-making process.

Though the increase in decision-making power for female heads in migrant households could expand women’s agency in the long run, it is important to note that many women pointed out that having to make more decisions had added stresses to their lives. The increased stress seemed to stem partly from women’s financial dependence on their husbands, as women described that they were not comfortable making any financial decision without the consent of their husbands. Also, women feared that they might face social criticism if they are unable to take proper care of their children or abide by the social norms during their husband’s absence.

Based on my analysis, we see that women in migrant households are likely to have higher participation in social activities if they assume the role of household heads upon their husbands’ migration. Mostly in households where women did not have anyone to help out with the work outside home, those women stepped out of the house to manage these tasks. They did not seem much worried about the additional workload they have to carry on in the absence of their husband. This also reveals that the freedom they have in their husband’s absence although coupled with increased household responsibilities, gives them a space to mature themselves in many aspects

gradually leading them to certain level of maturity and empowerment. These findings have important implications in terms of the changes in women's empowerment during men's migration. Women whose participation in social sphere increases during their husbands' migration could experience an expansion in their abilities through increased access to resources, greater self-confidence and stronger social connections. However, women who face increased restrictions on their social participation during their husbands' migration could experience a decline in their access to resources and agency power; hence, they may feel disempowered.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This dissertation looks into the experiences of Nepalese women during labor migration of men and analyzes how these changes may have affected their empowerment. Analysis on women's empowerment is based on Kabeer's (1999) definition, where expansion of women's access to resources, agency and achievements are specified as the three main dimensions of empowerment. Using this framework, I look into women's work responsibilities and their access to income-generating activities, their participation in household decision-making, and their involvement in social activities as measures of their access to resources, agency and achievements, respectively. A mixed-methods approach, including qualitative analysis based on fieldwork and quantitative research using national level data sets from the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 is used for this study. A summary of my key findings is presented in the next section. This is followed by suggestions on alleviating women's hardships during men's migration and measures for ensuring the well-being of both the migrant and their families. Then, some shortcomings of this study and possibilities for future work are discussed. The final section presents some concluding remarks.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

This study looks into changes in women's work responsibilities, their decision-making power and their participation in social activities due to labor migration of men from Nepal. A central finding is that though women gain opportunities for increased freedom and expansion in their abilities in all three above mentioned dimensions of empowerment during men's absence, these opportunities are constrained by women's position in the household, their education and employment background, the caste and class group to which the women belong, and gendered social norms. On examining the changes in women's work responsibilities, I find that women in migrant households have higher domestic and subsistence farming responsibilities and lower participation in wage-employment or self-employment in non-agriculture sector. This finding is consistent with my fieldwork results, which indicate those

women's workloads in the house and on the farm increase during men's migration, and that this increase in domestic work along with reduced economic pressures by virtue of receiving remittances lowers their ability or willingness to participate in market work. Hence, in this respect wives of the migrant workers are more likely to be financially dependent on their husbands. Though, they perform economic and social functions of household maintenance, their ability to contribute to the family's economic security declines during their husbands' absence.

6.3 Policy Recommendations for Promoting Women's Empowerment

With the rise in men's migration, the bulk of household workload falls on women. Women, who spent most of their lives under the supervision of their fathers and husbands, are now overseeing financial matters, single-handedly managing household and childcare responsibilities and participating in social and cultural activities. Many of the issues faced by women when assuming these new roles, as discussed in this dissertation, arise from the existing socio-cultural structures that restrict women's freedom and gender norms based on notions about women's sexuality and their increased vulnerability during their husband's absence. The gendered division of labor and the barriers on access to assets maintain women's financial dependence on men. The inequities in education, the lack of information, and restrictions on physical mobility make it more difficult for women to take on the new responsibilities. Even women who live under the supervision of other members and don't have to take on many of these new responsibilities face increased restrictions on their physical mobility and limitations on their autonomy.

In order to ensure women's well-being under these circumstances, it is important to develop a socio-political framework within which women are provided with the necessary support and relevant skills to undertake their new roles. Also, transformations in social norms to discourage gender-based discrimination are equally important for expanding women's abilities. Also providing women with resources to help them cope with challenges faced during men's migration along with long-term strategies for reducing gender inequality by fighting discriminatory institutional and social norms and practices will help a lot to make visible change in society. While some of the proposals are policy measures, others are suggestions for provision of services through government or non-government organizations working with migrants

and their families. Finally, since migrant families are dependent on the migrants, their well-being depends on the success of the migrant member. Hence, some policy measures for providing support to the migrants and facilitating their return and reintegration are needed.

6.4 Financial Literacy and Training Programs

When men leave, women may take on new responsibilities of managing remittances and making financial decisions; however, they often lack the knowledge, confidence or the business know-how to use these funds effectively (Ionesco and Aghazarm, 2009). Women's reluctance to taking formal loans or investing remittances was apparent in many of the conversations I had during my fieldwork. They mentioned that they didn't feel confident signing documents, and worried about losing money from being involved in things they didn't fully understand. Women who were illiterate were even more disinclined to dealing with formal institutions. Provision of literacy programs and basic financial management trainings could help women overcome these difficulties and increase their access to financial resources. These trainings could be an opportunity to provide women with information on accessing bank accounts, earning interest on savings, taking loans, and understanding the terms of payment. Such programs would be beneficial to women in terms of learning to keep track of their income and expenses, planning for the future and reducing the possibility of running out of remittances before expected.

6.5 Reduction in Domestic Responsibilities

During men's migration, women's abilities to participate in market work and social activities are often obstructed because of intensification of their domestic, childcare and farming responsibilities. Increased workload during men's absence was the most commonly cited source of stress among the respondents in my fieldwork. Provision of resources that reduce women's domestic responsibilities might help alleviate this problem. For example, investment in infrastructure to improve access to drinking water, cooking fuel and other basic necessities will reduce the burden of household work for rural women and improve their living standards. Additionally, public provision of child and elderly care services may lower women's care responsibilities. Currently, childcare services, through government or private agencies, are almost non-existent in most of rural Nepal. Women in migrant households also experience an

increase in their workload associated with subsistence farming. Providing women with trainings on new techniques for farming more effectively and increasing their access to collection centers, markets and veterinary facilities could help relieve some of the workload associated with crop and cattle farming. Government could provide subsidized tractor services and irrigation facilities to ease women's farm work. Women may also benefit from information and training programs on hiring and supervising labor to manage their farm responsibilities. Reduction in women's domestic work responsibilities, by increasing their access to such resources, could provide them with the opportunity to participate in social and economic spheres and perhaps also enjoy some leisure time.

6.6 Increased Access to Education

Access to education is central to fighting gender inequality as education makes women more aware of their rights and encourages them to shift from home-based work to market work. Hence, the government should focus on improving school systems to make education more accessible to the poor and disadvantaged; such efforts would be especially beneficial for girls, since girls are first to drop out of school when their family faces financial constraints (Moghadam, 1998). Also, because government schools in Nepal are much cheaper than private schools, girls are more often sent to government schools. Improving the quality of education in these schools could help reduce the difference in educational attainment between men and women. Our discussion as well as findings from fieldwork have also illustrated that household work and parent's reluctance to sending girls to schools were among the key reasons for girls quitting school. In a study by Institute of Integrated Development Studies, it was estimated that a child in primary school in Nepal can do household chores worth USD 64 and a child in secondary school can do USD 122 worth of work per year while the cost of schooling for the child could be up to USD 25 (cited in Beardmore et al., 2010). Hence, sending girls to schools comes at a cost. In order to incentivize parents to send girls to school, implementation of some form of cash transfer programs may be helpful. For example, the Food for Education (FFE) program in Bangladesh, that provides food which can be taken home to children attending schools, have been deemed successful in terms of increasing school enrolment as well as reducing drop-out rates (see Ahmed and Babu, 2007; Meng and Ryan, 2007).

6.7 Increased Access to Employment Opportunities

As discussed in chapters 2 and 4 of this dissertation, economic independence, via involvement in market work is central to women's empowerment. Hence, efforts to increase women's access to employment opportunities either by providing them with the necessary resources for skill-development. This could encourage women's participation in market work. Women are among the poorest workers in Nepal; most of their work is concentrated in the unpaid domestic work and subsistence agriculture. Efforts to increase their access to other sectors that have higher productivity and better remuneration could strengthen their bargaining position (Acharya, 2008). During my fieldwork, almost 25 percent of the women who were not employed mentioned that they wanted to work but did not know how to find a job or did not have the skills to work. Provision of vocational trainings to gain the necessary skills and increased access to information on the opportunities in the job-market and the process for applying and getting hired could facilitate women's participation in market work. But for women to be able to find work there must be jobs available. Hence, efforts towards creating jobs as well as discouraging gender segregation in the labor market could contribute towards increasing women's access to labor market. Women's involvement in self-employment activities can be encouraged by providing them with trainings on developing entrepreneurial skills, building products and bringing them to market, and learning to keep account of financial transactions. Also, increased access to microfinance institutions to obtain credit for small-scale investment for home-based production or for taking skill-based trainings might motivate women's participation in self-employment activities and support their roles as entrepreneurs (Upadhyaya, 2002).

In addition to encouraging women's participation by providing them with the necessary skills, modifications in government legislation to discourage gender-based discrimination and facilitate the rights of women workers are essential. Currently, most women in Nepal are employed in the informal sector, where discrimination against women is more pronounced with lower wages, longer work hours, no fringe benefits and no incentive earnings. Even labor unions are dominated by men and do not give much attention to gender-sensitive labor policies (Upadhyaya, 2002). Export manufacturers in Nepal prefer female over male workers only because women are cheaper to employ, less likely to unionize, and have greater patience for tedious and

monotonous jobs involved in assembly operations (Acharya, 2008). Hence, policies that provide social protection for women along with pay equity should be implemented.

6.8 Migration Policies, Return and Reintegration of Migrants

The primary focus of this dissertation has been on the impacts of men's migration on the family left behind. These impacts are highly dependent on the wellbeing of the migrant member, as the main income source for most migrant households is remittance sent by migrants. Sunam and McCarthy (2016) find that the status of the migrant family is directly associated with the migrant's success, defined by their ability to send remittance. While households with 'successful' migrants were seen to be building new houses and buying more land, the families of migrants who were not 'successful' lived in poverty. Hence, experiences of migrants influence the status of their families. Here, I present a brief discussion on the existing migration policies and the necessary measures for maintaining the wellbeing of migrants and their families.

The rise in migration from Nepal has lifted many families out of poverty (see Lokshin et al., 2007; Acharya & Leon-Gonzalez, 2012). However, most Nepalese migrants face numerous challenges at the destination as they are employed in low-wage manual jobs under exploitative, dangerous, alienating and financially risky positions with minimum job security (see Adhikary et al., 2011; Gurung, 2000; Pattison, 2013; DoFE, 2014). Most migrants express that they would prefer to stay home if there were comparable opportunities available. In many cases, migrants take huge loans with exorbitant interest rates in order to migrate. If they have to return home without being able to earn enough, either due to low pay and exploitative work conditions or because of some unexpected circumstances, they not only return with no savings and huge debt but also have to borrow more to remigrate (Sunam and McCarthy, 2016; Prasai, 2005). In order to minimize such incidents and to ensure the well-being of migrants and their families, the government must formulate policies to protect migrants and ensure proper implementation of these policies.

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RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX A

District: Sarlahi

Village/ Municipality: Rajghat Village

Date of Initial Interview:

Part 1: Interviewee Information

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Caste/Ethnicity:

4. Education:

5. For how many years have you been married?

Part 2: Household Information

1) Household Members:

2) Who else lives in the house with you?

Part 3: Migrant Members

1. Relationship of migrant member to the interviewee:

2. Education level:

3. Current Destination:

4. Current Employment:

5. Length of absence:

6. Employment before leaving:

Part 4: Employment and Income

1. List all the sources of income for the house.
2. Is remittance the main source of income?

Agriculture:

1. Own any agricultural land?
2. List household members who work in family-owned land.
3. Agriculture products sold or for self-consumption?

Animal Husbandry:

1. Does the family own any cattle?
2. List all family members involved in taking care of the animals:
3. Sell any animal products or for self-consumption?
4. Employment outside home (Market and/or agricultural work for wages/in-kind/agricultural products):

Part 5: Women's Work Responsibilities

1. How difficult is it to work outside home and manage household tasks without men?
2. Do you face any kind of pressure from your husband to quit working outside?
3. Do you face any social pressure to quit working?
4. Why haven't you worked outside home?
 - a) Not necessary because we have enough income, by choice
 - b) Not allowed to work outside
 - c) Need to take care of the kids
 - d) No time, there is lot of household work

For women who started working after their husband's migration?

1. Why did you start working?
2. How difficult is it to manage both household and outside work?
3. Would you be able to manage things better if your husband was around?

Household Responsibilities

1. Have your responsibilities within the household increased after decreased since your husband's migration?
2. Which of the tasks of your husbands have you have to take over?
3. Has the overall workload increased?

Part 6: Financial Status and Remittance use

1. What are some of the major household expenses?
2. Do you sometimes have to borrow money to meet consumption needs?
3. Have you put some of your income into savings for the future?
4. Compared to before how has your financial status changed?
 - a) The children switched from going to government school to private school
 - b) Living standard has become better than after husband migration
6. Has remittance income been invested in anything?
7. Have you saved remittance income for future investment?

Part 7: Mobility and Autonomy

1. Under whose name is remittance sent?
2. Who manages financial matters in the house?
3. Who goes to the bank to get the remittance or make other financial transactions?
4. Who went to the bank before your husband's migration?

5. Who goes to the market to purchase everyday stuff for the house?
6. Who went to the market before your husband's migration?
7. If you had to borrow money, who goes out to seek loans?
8. Who took responsibility of getting loans while your husband was here?
9. Do you feel stressed about having to take on these responsibilities in your husband's absence or are you comfortable managing all of these stuff by yourself?
10. Have you participated in any skill-training or awareness raising programs (government or non-government)? Why or why not?

Part 8: Decision making

1. Who makes decisions regarding where to spend money and how much?
2. Who made these decisions before your husband's migration?
3. Who makes decisions on children's health/ education related issues?
4. Who made these decisions before your husband's migration?
5. Do you make smaller everyday decisions by yourself?
6. Do you make more decisions now than you did when your husband was here?

Part 9: General/ open-ended questions

1. What kind of changes have you experienced since your husband's migration?
2. What kind of challenges have you had to face due to your husband's migration?
3. Who is here to help you out if you face any kind of problems?
4. What kind of support you wish to get from the community, local authorities or local organizations?