

# **Increasing Male Migration and Female Unpaid Care Work**

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## **Preface**

The decade long insurgency in the country alongside the political instability created almost zero employment opportunities despite of state level commitment. The aftermath with Preamble of Peace Alliance was more focused on building the infrastructures as roads, electricity, water and irrigational facilities; the state thus was condemned to construct physical requirements at certain level yet failed due to political instability. The state was neither able to re-open or re-establish the industries and companies that had shut down, this further discouraged any new ground of employment. Thus, the employment opportunities rather degraded inside the country as the state could neither properly adopt the advanced technological agro- business nor provide employment opportunities. Similarly, the readymade industries of clothes completely shattered and the same has been for the carpet industries that had once been at height during 1990s. This utterly affected the employment opportunities and driven those populations towards migration in escalating figure.

The Nepalese labor population that had once been dependent on Indian market during 1981 A.D. paved their ways to other countries in large numbers (NIDC and NCCR North South, 2012). The increment in the migrating population is much easier with global work permit in the Middle East countries with 34, 89,365 numbers being approved on August 2014 for foreign employment. However, the state does not have proper documented record of those who returned. Prior to the female migration according to Central Bureau of Statistics 2014, the numbers being 82, 712 in 2001, it doubly increased to 2, 37,400 in 2011. The National Accounting Survey 2011 depicts one of four household are involved in foreign employment. This further clarifies that among 13 lakh 80 thousand household, 25.4 percent of population have migrated for employment opportunities (National Accounting Survey, 2011a). The studies depict that the 18 to 40 years of aged male population has been migrating for foreign

employment that has constantly escalated by 15 to 19 percent every year. (National Accounting Survey, 2011b)

According to Department of Foreign Employment of the year 2013/14, in total 10 lakh 90 thousand Nepalese male have seek foreign employment permission while the female stand with 35 thousand within the end of fiscal year 2013/14, June. The numbers were 1, 38,185 and 4,846 of male and female in the month of June alone (Department of Foreign Employment, Nepal Government, 2014). On the other hand with the increase of male migration for foreign employment, the female headed household has been on ascending as well.

Remittance stands behind agricultural productivity as a major source of national income in our country, thus it holds amp value in the economic venture of the country. Moreover it has contributed in enhancing overall living standard. With reference to Ministry of Labor and Employment, 2016; remittance contributed 28 percent of the GDP in fiscal year 2013/14.

Since remittance contributed in improving the living standard of individual family as well as entire national economic situation; the concerned stakeholders are discussing intensely on the matter. Although voices have been raised and discussions are on ride of the impact of remittance on other aspects as social and following, there is much need to raise concern on the unpaid care work and women involved with increasing male migration for foreign employment. There is subsistence changes in life of female both positive and negative sides due to the unpaid care work loath by absence of male. The article hence attempts to explore the issues recounted.

### **Positive changes and opportunities**

In recent observation, remittance play pivotal role in providing decent lifestyle i.e food, shelter and clothing to the Nepalese citizen. Along it has been huge in providing education, health and social, religious and family activities on day to day basis as affordable services to normal family. While the female are enjoying the economic security, decision making power and leadership opportunities that fit into positive aspect basket.

Many studies take male migration as an opportunity for female empowerment on positive notion. The study further reveals that absence of male impacts on women varies in terms of social, religious and geographical aspects. (Maharjan et.al, 2012; Kulczycka, 2015a) For example, prior to gender indicator; there is evident difference among women of Syanja compared to extreme rural women from Baitadi. To elaborate, women of Syanja who carry unpaid care work demonstrate ability to lessen their burden as hiring agricultural wage laborers while women from Baitadi do not possess the same power with minimum remittance flow on the region. Thus, the women here are intricate on working the same amount of unpaid care work and enjoy zero leisure time for them. (Maharjan et.al, 2012; Kulczycka, 2015b)

Even though remittance has not increased women's participation in income generating activities is not as expected but their participation can be observed. as such, it certainly has increased female participation in public sphere as paying electricity, water and telephone bill, paying school fees of the children, participating in community and school meetings and so forth. Despite being minor activities, it has definitely contributed in improving women empowerment; these activities allocate women to learn and excel themselves further. Remittance has certainly leaped off the living standard of the women and their family for good. The best example to site is that women have been able to migrate in city area and provide ample education facilities in private schools and colleges to their children. This has somehow decreased time spent in household activities of women. They can afford health facilities in private hospitals and benefit proper health facilities. The women can also afford material properties as television, mobile phone, watch, washing machine that has eased their day to day life. They can also have leisure time to entertain themselves and enjoy nutritional food and there have been improvement in health of the women.

#### ***Women changed facade of Amarbasti***

*Amarbasti of Jhapa district has 100 household where large number of male population have migrated for foreign employment. Looking back 20 years, the place did not have access to any facilities as electricity, road, concrete house, telephone services while women talking to any strange men were near to impossible. Women were hesitant to tell their names even in groups. As for now Amarbasti have concrete house, electricity, road ways and mobile in their hands. Women are participating more in public sphere with absence of male in the village and their numbers are rising in various programs; all in all at present Amarbsti relies on woman. (SAFE and Pragati, 2017)*

With family economic security and constructive social situation, not only the life women changes but she also has possession of private property. Women are more capable of ownership, more independent and empowered. They are competent in decision making process for their benefit. In addition, there has been increase in women participating in agriculture business and wage work which in turn has lessened their association in unpaid care work.

In order to amplify and steady the female participation in public sphere, there must be gender friendly environment and prompt actions as raising consciousness through proper trainings. The participation can be stabilized if women can balance the dual activity of household work and public sphere participation. Further there will be noticeable expansion on female empowerment.

### **Negative consequences and challenges**

If we provide a concrete and plausible study, foreign employment survives as threat to economic-social surroundings and huge turnover on an individual life; all behold negative consequences. Though relatively foreign employment has coined new opportunities for society, state and family, it lays more challenges. The data of 2006 depicts 26 percent of married women whose husband are in foreign employment, this has inclined to 32 percent in 2011. The observation alarms that apart from physical and mental violence, emotional violence has risen up with distant relationship between the spouses.

Women are contributing more of their time in household including that of their husband's and are further compelled to face economic, social and familial discrimination as their husbands are not in the picture. Even though female are facing discrimination as mental, physical, sexual and other kinds; this does not seem to imply the same on men of female migrant workers. They enjoy the same

freedom while the situation creates havoc to some other female member of the household with additional work load on absence of other female.<sup>1</sup>

Statistically, Nepal has both male and female migrants on foreign employment with more male population on count. In the year 2014/15 till the end of month of June, the Ministry of Labor and Employment granted permission to a total of 4, 18,713 for foreign employment comprising 3, 99,406 male and 19,307 female. The data does not include those who travelled via India to or are working in India.<sup>2</sup>

The pattern of work varies from nation to nation. In particular, female are involved in informal work as paid household laborers, elderly citizen care, while the men are engaged in formal work as security guard, cleaners, industrial workers, etc. The wage differs prior to their work and on average women earn lesser than men. Although men face violence, women are more prompt to violence as physical, mental, sexual violence as well as wage differences. Although men and women as labor migrant are suffering, the media coverage is higher to women; nevertheless men are equally suffering. Hence, it highly questions the security of women as a whole.

The family of male migrant suffers during the starting phase; at certain point after the remittance flows, there is distinct upliftment of livelihood of particular family befitting positive changes. However, in larger number of families, women cannot spare the money on her interest and need to seek permission from others as eldest member or eldest male member of the family. This instigates that women do not have decision making power in terms of economic aspects and live a dearth life.

Women have been restricted on the public sphere, with the absence of the male, female are compelled to face more restrictions and there upon are also violated physically, mentally, sexually and economically. They are controlled and observed by family, neighbors, relatives as a singleton of migrant husband; they are suspected, threatened to leave, no money are sent, men have sexual

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.academia.edu/22458696/>

Impact\_of\_Male\_Migration\_on\_Contraceptive\_Use\_Unmet\_Need\_and\_Fertility\_in\_Nepal\_Further\_Analysis\_of\_the\_2011\_Nepal\_Demographic\_and\_Health\_Survey

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.dofe.gov.np/new/uploads/article/yearly\\_progress\\_report\\_2072-2073.pdf](http://www.dofe.gov.np/new/uploads/article/yearly_progress_report_2072-2073.pdf)

relationship with other female and few migrant male even have second marriage. Women here are left alone and live a life under threats. In few of the families the women have been raped and sexually exploited by other male members as father-in-law, brother-in-laws. They have been even censured and lashed out, murdered and declared as suicide; thus these goings-on clarify a treacherous relation between husband and wife.<sup>3</sup>

Women who are not aware of their rights and are incapable of fighting for their justice confound the violence in fear of the society and are repressing it. As compared to men, women are also on higher health risk. Nevertheless, the fact that these women have problem to extract the money sent by husband as they are not educated or informed makes them more vulnerable and dependent. The dependency on other male is often assaulted by society and women are mentally strained.

The death of husband, second marriage, jail term or hang to death of the male migrant on foreign land affects the family, the wife, children and parent back

#### ***How to bear the workload?***

*Shova Niraula resident of Shirishe village, Majjogmai municipality, Ilam is a graduate and is married for 6 years to Deepesh Niraula. Deepesh is employed migrant in Qatar since last three years. Although he was rounded as cook by the company but he has not been able to get a job as cook.*

*Shova is mother to four year old daughter and lives with in-laws and grandmother-in-law without proper financial support. She explains that since grandmother-in-law and father-in-law both are ill, it is her and mother-in-laws duty to bear the entire household workload. She states that agricultural work of field and picking tea leaves has become more than a challenge.*

*A year back, Shova was extremely glad to be working as an accountant in local Co-operative as it would support her family financially. However, the happiness remained for few days as she struggled between the work and household work including taking care of her child and other sick members of the family and could not give sufficient time in office. She was obliged to leave the work in four months.*

*While the money Deepesh sent is not enough for loan repayment, he does not agree to come back and work here. Shova says that she tried to convince him that they have field, animals here and to work together and that the child needs her father but he would not listen. "I have to bear all the workload as mother-in-law is also old", says Shova.*

*Foreign employment has become a charm and pressure which have left many women like Shova with work burden and are not empowered.*

Number of studies prove that mothers have tough time raising children on own on unavailability of father; children are disobedient, prey of addiction, educationally behind, daughters are even prom to rape by neighbors and relatives, children are prone to abduction and so forth negativity can be listed. Thus, the wives and other female members of the house are on risk of violence with no male figure present in the house.

In most of the cases, the migrant male seeks sexual alliance to other female, prostitutes which doubly the worries of women and are mentally tortured.

On the other hand, there are fabricated stories to limp off women of the property of the men; women are more concern to save their marriage and under constant pressure of husbands being infected with sexual diseases (Gartaula et.al, 2011). The patriarch society avoids women to express sexual desires while men are not under the same dimension. Women are compelled to push their sexual desires on absence of men and live with the trauma. Hence, women are prone to mental pressure and are dismantled. Moreover, women on the absence of men are on constant watch of the relatives, neighbors and friends through social media and phone

In reference to study by Center for Mental Health and Counseling, Nepal, about 60 percent of women whose husbands are migrant workers are suffering from mental health, 20 percent of mothers and 5 percent of children are under the

same mental hazard. According to Mental health specialist Dr. Kapildev Upadhyaya, women are more prone to mental health hazard as compared to men due to excess work and short of assistance.<sup>4</sup>

Annually among hundreds of male migrant workers several are married meanwhile many are newlywed. The distance soon after marriage intuitively the mental vulnerability among women and ultimately lone them apart from family and society too. They are not expressive enough to share their mental state and the depression might even lead to suicide. Prior to the married women with children, they are underneath additional mental pressure of performing both public and private work chores on own, extreme intervention of society and family, raising care of their children independently and unnecessary supervision of husband, all tend to make them mentally deprived. (Pant, 2018)

The structure of patriarch society dispossess apt health care and nutrition of female and children at most; the work burden creates more havoc where women do not have proper access to nutritional food and health services and make

#### ***Increase in workload; decrease in agricultural productivity***

*A study in various districts of Nepal by Forest Action Nepal clarified that workload not only deprives an individual's right, it also declines the quality of work and reduce production. The study exempted that the involvement of women in agriculture sector has inclined, the productivity has declined. The study points that as women are juggling the workload on absence of their migrant husband, their time has been divided and is unable to dedicate enough time in farm, henceforth resulting the reduction in production.*

*There has been high percent of male population behind remittance and agriculture is becoming more famine. Program Coordinator of Forest Action Nepal, Dr. Krishna Prasad Paudel explains that, "With null presence of male, female headed household have harsh the amount of production."*

*The organization had carried a study in 1 hundred 88 household in various VDCs of Rasuwa, Lamjung, Argakhachi, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Kailali. The study illustrated that women are mere sustaining the agriculture and are having difficulty in receiving agro-loan, grants that has lead to low production.*

*The study elaborates that agriculture is taken as low level work and male are migrating more and more for foreign employment in greed of earning. He explains that the in-migration is a new trend followed that leaves more barren land. The women who are left behind are loath with burden, hence production has highly decreased.*



### **Social harassment**

It is a fact that male migrant will amplify the workload, female are at higher risk as they face physical and psychological burden. They are assaulted to have enjoyed the money sent by husband for personal entertainment whilst they on other hand are not empowered and overburdened with multiple works. Their contribution in unpaid care work remains unrecognized and invisible. They are

shattered with negative commentaries and remarks in mass media and social media; this highly influences the thought of the society in particular. On respite, women are not appreciated or recognized for the work burden they behold effectively on the absence of their male counterparts.

## **Conclusion**

The increasing male migrant workers have pushed the left behind women in public sphere; the steps that were once bound inside the house are stepping out. On one hand women have been opportune to expose themselves and their potential; on the other they are challenged to deduce their workload and participate in communal activities, raise consciousness of their benefits and directly participate in the national development agendas.

In recent years the trend of migrant worker, both male and female is on rise. According to MDG report 2013, remittance has played a pivotal role in decreasing poverty alleviation of the nation (United Nation, 2013).

The positive as well as negative impacts of remittance on the lives of woman in particular cannot be overlooked. The state however must reduce the negative consequences and strengthen the positive impacts through effective program and policies and monitor its implementation. Although the percent of remittance is supposedly mounting, there has not been any significant contribution or investment in creating further employment opportunities as such.

Women are constantly bearing the work burden on absence of men and are being pushed to unpaid care work. Not only are women facing physical, sexual and psychological violence, the children are also under its effect. The challenge hence is to dismantle the negative consequences and promote the positive participation of female mass in the public arena. The state and the concerned stakeholders must be accountable to female empowerment through effective plans, program and policies and implement it. This can ultimately reduce the time spent by female in unpaid care work and economically empower them. It has been rightly said that 'an individual empowered women can empower the entire family.' The social revolution is must to bring the transformation. There is a need of economic development that includes the interest of the unpaid care work of women and the workload created due to male migrant workers. Hereby,

we propose few suggestions to the state for effective plans and programs to address afore mentioned issue on gender analysis:

### **Suggestions**

- A detail survey of division of work between men and women. A separate survey of the male migrant household to identify the impact of unpaid care work on women.
- Plans and programs to address the economic, psychological and social requirements and promote empowerment of women of male migrant household.
- Legal provisions with defined policies to address the physical, psychological and sexual violence and increase access to legal assistance for women of male migrant household.
- Establishment of affordable child care centre and old aged care centre. A separate home based care centre and health centers for HIV infected and sexually transmitted infected family.
- Skilled development training centers and programs to promote cottage industries and to manage and endorse the production in the market.
- Organize interaction and discussion programs on various topics to the family of the migrant labor workers and create job opportunities to them.
- A detail study on larger scale on the positive and negative consequences of male migration for employment and its impact on women and address their issues efficiently.
- Introduction of programs to change the patriarch values on regular basis.
- An effective programs to be introduce to reduce the unpaid care work burden of the women of the male migrant workers collectively by state, family, local level, society, organization, media such as to empower the women.

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