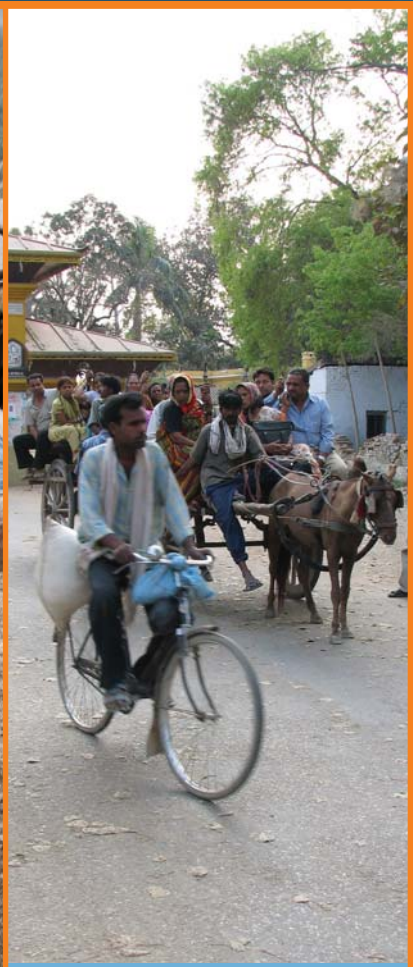
PASSAGE TO INDIA

MIGRATION AS A COPING STRATEGY IN TIMES OF CRISIS IN NEPAL



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WFP

November 2008

PASSAGE TO INDIA: Migration as a Coping Strategy in Times of Crisis in Nepal

December, 2008

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Foreword

Richard Ragan, *Country Director, WFP Nepal*

This report is a sobering, urgent call for action. The study of migration cuts across multiple development disciplines. An understanding of the reasons it happens, and its consequences, demands an inclusive view that embraces the particular strengths of UN agencies and others working to reduce poverty.

WFP has a robust programme in Nepal that is oriented ultimately towards the eradication of poverty and hunger. It uses, among other things, food aid to combat food insecurity and support economic and social development. This report highlights the linkages between food security and migration in Nepal. It examines the reasons that people migrate — especially from poor, rural communities in Mid- and Far-Western parts of the country — and draws conclusions that add to a growing body of empirical knowledge and research findings.

Those conclusions show that migration is an established mechanism that has been used by poorer communities for decades to cope with periodic food insecurity. But, disturbingly, they also show that this tried and once true mechanism is actively facilitating the transmission of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases from some of South Asia's cities and towns to villages in rural Nepal. The threat to those communities cannot be overstated. In some cases, the threat has already metamorphosed into reality, with anecdotal evidence showing distressingly high levels of HIV infection in established migrant communities.

The chilling cry contained in these pages requires a response that brings together the best that each agency working towards poverty eradication in Nepal can offer. Reflecting migration's own multi-dimensional character, there is much scope for inter-agency cooperation.

For our part, WFP reinforces its commitment to targeting food aid to where it is most needed; and to examining ways by which its projects and programmes in Nepal can deliver ever more effective results — particularly in managing the negative consequences of migration.

Foreword

Dr. Nawa Raj Khatiwada, *Executive Director, NDRI*

Migration, particularly to India, remains an important livelihood strategy for millions of food insecure and poor people across Nepal. NDRI together with the World Food Programme (WFP) are therefore pleased to launch this publication given the importance and national significance of the issues. As a non-profit making independent institution with an aim to contribute to the development of Nepal, NDRI is dedicated to carrying out high quality research on contemporary development issues and thus assisting the policy making process.

This publication is an outcome of the joint initiative of NDRI and WFP Nepal. NDRI was involved in the research design, field survey in fifteen districts and ten border points across the country, and analysis and presentation of the findings for the study. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate the contribution made by the field researchers in carrying out the surveys. I would also like to express my gratitude to the survey respondents and focus group discussion participants at the district and community level who provided the vital information contained in this publication. A special note of appreciation goes to the project coordinator, experts and other NDRI staff whose efforts were crucial across various stages of this study. Our special thanks goes to WFP for their excellent cooperation throughout the entire process, and I look forward to our continued partnership in the future.

This publication brings out vital information on migration behavior during crisis and its impact on the overall livelihoods of individuals and households in Nepal, particularly in the Mid and Far Western Regions. It is hoped that the findings of the study will benefit policy makers, development practitioners, academicians and researchers.

Acknowledgements

***Tom Woodhatch**, Study Coordinator/Editor*

The study was commissioned by Richard Ragan, WFP Country Director in Nepal, and by Siemon Hollema, the head of WFP's Food Security Monitoring and Analysis Unit in Kathmandu. Both have been extraordinarily supportive throughout. Other WFP Nepal personnel — notably Christophe Geiser, Dr Krishna Pahari and Sujan Malla — have given generously of their time and expertise, particularly in matters of data processing and mapping. Dominique Hyde, WFP Nepal's Deputy Country Director, offered interest and valued encouragement throughout.

Special thanks go to Dr Nawa Raj Khatiwada, Executive Director, NDRI.

The study was jointly implemented by the World Food Programme and the Nepal Development Research Institute and funded through the Swedish Trust Fund. This fund aims to enhance WFP's capacity in key policy and operational areas that fall within its mandate and the Government of Sweden's priorities for WFP.

The fieldwork was managed and partly conducted by Dr Punya Regmi and Dr Jagannath Adhikari of the Nepal Development Research Institute. These two gentlemen brought their profound knowledge, insight and years of experience and expertise — in agricultural economics and migration respectively — to the task of setting out on paper what has interested many, but has been written about by few. Man Bahadur Kshetri of NDRI prepared all the maps contained in this report.

Thanks go also to Monique Beun and Sara Beysolow Nyanti of UNICEF, to Isabel Tavitian-Exley of UNAIDS, and to others in the UN system in Nepal for their many useful contributions and perspectives.

Mr Tunga Shiromani Bastola, Director General of the Central Bureau of Statistics, kindly made a number of suggestions and provided some valuable background information and data on migration.

WFP's Field Monitors, and the numerous enumerators who walked, climbed and waded to collect data, deserve particular appreciation.

Dr Jack Preger, whose unique understanding of the health problems that poor people face comes from over three decades of medical service to some of South Asia's poorest and most destitute people, many of them migrants, offered valuable insight into the particular challenges of HIV/AIDS and TB.

The photographs, some of them quite superb in the way they capture their subjects and environments, were kindly provided by James Giambrone and Siemon Hollema.

Finally, deepest gratitude goes to Sunil, the fearless WFP driver whose skill enabled the study team to travel up the precipitous Karnali Highway and, more importantly, to return with limb and psyche generally intact.

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Abbreviations

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
DDC	District Development Committee
FSMAS	Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoN	Government of Nepal
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
IRs	Indian Rupees (IRs 1.00 = NRs 1.60)
NDRI	Nepal Development Research Institute
NRs	Nepali Rupees (NRs 1.00 = IRs 0.63)
OCHA	Office of the Coordination for the Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
TB	Tuberculosis
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

Through much of human history, people have moved from one place to another in search of economic and livelihood opportunities; at times attracted by exceptional possibilities offered by a distant place, at other times forced from home by penury, disaster or stress. International migration can offer significant benefit to migrants, their home communities, countries of origin, and of course destination countries, but those benefits may also come at great cost.

This report considers the mass phenomena of migration within Nepal. In particular, it considers the role of migration among poor, rural and often food insecure communities in the Far- and Mid-Western Hills of Nepal, for whom migration to India has become an accepted and widely adopted component of their livelihood strategy. Migration has become so common, that even during harvest season, 44 per cent of households across Nepal have one or more family members absent pursuing distant labour opportunities.

This report provides important information on what motivates migration, who migrates, and where they end up working. It highlights the immense economic benefits of migration, both to individuals and the broader economy, but also discusses and provides recommendations to address the darker impact of migration, including violations of human and labour rights, severe health risk, large disparities in wages, and broader social and economic consequences.

The importance of remittances to the Nepalese economy can not be understated, and it has been commonly identified that remittances were one of the predominant reasons for the fall in poverty from 42 per cent in 1995/96 to 31 per cent in 2003/04. Official figures indicate that migrant remittances make up some 15 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and have grown from US$ 111 million in 2000 to an estimated US$ 1.6 billion in 2007. And these figures include only the officially recorded remittances; the true size of remittances, including

unrecorded flows through formal and informal channels, is believed to be much larger.

Migration to India is a long established practice, and the majority of migrants do indeed end up in either India (40 per cent) or in other areas within Nepal (30 per cent). India is an obvious, and for many, the first and 'cheapest' destination for work. Its booming economy has brought a huge increase in construction in major cities and elsewhere, and that brings with it more jobs for labourers. The border itself is not physically demarcated except at a limited number of official crossings, and citizens of both countries are able to move freely and remain in either country to live and work without restriction.

This study found that many migrants work as porters, security guards, in hotels and restaurants and on construction projects; agricultural labour, driving, factory work and even office work also featured. The quality of labour opportunities, and amount of remittances, was found to be largely dependent on levels of skill and desperation, with the least skilled, most desperate migrants undertaking the most harrowing work. It was found that the level of remittances varied greatly. The average annual remittances sent by migrants from India are the lowest (averaging only NRs 9,800) followed by those sent from Nepal (NRs 14,830). Average annual remittances sent by migrants from other countries are substantially higher at a little over NRs 83,000. Caste was also highly correlated to level of remittance. For instance, the average remittance for those from the Dalit castes is substantially lower — about half — than that of Janajatis and other castes.

Most remittances were found to be used for education and clothing, with food next in importance. The other major use was for health. For about one-fifth of households, remittances were also used for repayment of loans to local moneylenders, taken either to finance migration or in times of hardship.

Seasonal migration patterns are historically linked to the success of local agricultural production and availability or other forms of employment. The survey results from this study demonstrated that a higher number of people migrate during periods of food crisis compared to times of adequate access to food. The three most commonly cited reasons for migration in communities with an established tradition of migration were lack of employment opportunities, insufficient access to food, and debt. This study also identified the more recent impacts of civil conflict on migration; when food and alternative employment became increasingly scarce, and out-migration increased. This was then compounded by many Nepali migrants opting to remain in India, rather than returning to their conflict-affected homes in Nepal.

Two interesting points to emerge from several focus group discussions were the claims of many participants that they would not migrate if (i) they had sufficient access to food, or (ii) they were able to find work in Nepal's villages that paid NRs 1,200 or more per month. A strong relationship was also found between the decision to migrate, lack of access to land, caste/ethnicity and inability to recover from a 'food shock'. The poor and lower castes experience greater difficulty in recovering from shocks than wealthier households and those of higher castes. They therefore more commonly migrate, either immediately following a shock, or to repay a loan which was taken to survive a shock. All in all, for poor households, migration emerges as an established, desperate coping strategy, and is reduced significantly whenever local livelihood opportunities become available.

While the economic benefits of migration are commonly cited, the negative consequences of this phenomenon are rarely discussed in their entirety. The survey and discussion groups conducted for this report highlighted some of the key costs of migration — to the migrants themselves, to their families, and to the wider communities.

The most high profile cases of human and labour rights abuses generally focus on migrants in the Gulf and South East Asia, and often involve women, many of whom work as domestic servants. The longer-term and more mundane abuse of migrants, identified in this study include the payment of lower wages to migrants than their national counterparts, unpaid wages or severely delayed payment, robbery upon returning to Nepal, being made to work excessively long hours, without holidays and in dangerous conditions, and lack of basic health and safety measures.

Most surveyed migrants shared living quarters. Some groups of migrants rented a room or, if they were 'lucky', were provided a room or an animal shed in which to sleep, free of charge, by their employer. Some simply put up a plastic tarpaulin against a wall or the side of a building to provide a degree of shelter from rain. The number of people sharing a room varied. Up to 20 people in one room has been reported, but much depended on the type of work undertaken.

Poor working conditions, crowded accommodation, and migration to cities, such as Mumbai and Delhi, with high rates of infectious disease are found to have major health implications. The spread of two serious conditions, HIV and tuberculosis, are particularly related to migration, and the harm caused by this to the migrant and their broader communities should not be underestimated. UNAIDS figures show that seasonal labour migrants make up more than twice as many HIV cases as any other group.

This study also identified serious wider social issues relating to migration. Particularly striking was the finding of a significant increase in the workload of

women, the elderly and children when a male family member migrates. Focus group discussions revealed the heavy impact on children, and found that school absenteeism commonly increases when a migrant father is away from home.

The impact on migrant wives was also highlighted in discussion groups. The uncertainty of not knowing when husbands will return, when and how much they will send in remittances, the unspoken fear that husbands might not return, and the general absence of conjugal companionship characterised life for many migrants' wives. They are often faced not only with the extra work left by the migrant, but often with very limited means as a result of financing the migrant's journey, either fully or partly from their own resources or from a loan.

Anecdotal reports also highlighted that migration is not the ideal solution to improve ongoing food security; the great variation in remittances means that for some migrant families, the major benefit of migration is a reduced pressure on domestic food supplies. At the broader national level, migration also fosters dependence on destination countries. India has traditionally been the foremost destination for Nepalese people working abroad, but recent years have seen a shift to Middle Eastern countries, which has brought a greater balance to the risk of dependence.

The high risk that accompanies migration for the most desperate and unskilled of migrants, combined with the severe social and health risks to the broader community, highlights the important role of reducing the motivation for this group to travel abroad for work. Furthermore, the low remittances which this group generally receives indicate the low cost at which this could be achieved.

Monitoring data from WFP found that 97 per cent of households from the most at risk communities believe that WFP food aid reduces seasonal migration significantly. Food aid also acts as an inducement for migrants, as well as the internally displaced, to return. When food aid is well targeted — when it reaches those that need it, when they need it — it can be a powerful force with which to inhibit the deepening of poverty. It will help recipients retain assets that they would have sold to buy food, and to remove one of the key factors that may have pushed someone to migrate.

The relationship between migration and food security suggests that it should be incorporated into normal WFP programming. The relationships between the wealth of communities, agricultural seasons and peak periods of mobility offer an opportunity to focus external assistance so that out-migration prompted by food insecurity can be reduced. Specifically, this allows food aid to be scheduled in accordance with anticipated periods of food insecurity. It also allows other assistance — such as health education — to be usefully coordinated with food aid.

Other considerations related to delivery of food assistance and the reduction of out-migration, include (i) the importance of timely delivery of aid immediately after natural disasters or crop failures, and before household members leave to find employment or borrow substantially, (ii) the important role that Food or Cash For Work programmes could play during the agricultural 'off season', and (iii) the importance of considering the considerable needs of women and children who have been left behind by migrant workers.

Initiatives that address the causes of migration — particularly employment and micro credit opportunities, and those that deal with its negative impact, should be developed urgently. Given the interrelation of migration with issues such as food security, health, education and impact on women and children, serious consideration should be given to the possibility of forming a representative group of UN and other agencies. This group should lead collaborative efforts to address the causes and impacts of migration, to ensure that where possible, enhanced economies of scale and inter-agency cooperation, strengthen the impact of initiatives, making them wider, deeper and more effective in delivery.

1 About This Study: Objectives, Scope & Methodology

This publication explores the phenomenon of migration, a subject of increasing interest in the study of development, as it applies to poor people who move from rural areas of Nepal to India in search of employment. It looks briefly at the history of human mobility in Nepal, and at the role of remittances in supplementing household income. It examines food security in rural communities and its relationship with migration. It considers the benefits of migration, and attempts to balance those with the very real risks, uncertainties and the negative consequences for both migrants and their communities. And, based on the findings of exhaustive data collection, it makes recommendations for responses by the World Food Programme.

Migration is widespread in Nepal. According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey (2003/04), it involves 25 per cent of the adult male population. Results of WFP's Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (September 2005) find that even during the harvesting period, 44 per cent of households have one or more family members away to pursue labour opportunities. Many poor households consider labour migration to be the only option available to provide for their basic sustenance during lean periods. The economy for nearly all the Far- and Mid-Western Hills and Mountains seems to depend on the seasonal migration of many men from poor households, particularly those in inaccessible areas who go to India to find work as unskilled labourers. Migration is also a common livelihood strategy for those living in poor Terai communities.

Although migration has long been an integral part of the Nepali rural economy and society, it has increased significantly during the past ten years of civil conflict. WFP conducted a rapid assessment on internal migration in March 2005. It showed that after 2000, internal migration increased sharply. WFP's Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System finds that out-migration increases

significantly in communities hit by natural or man-made disasters, e.g. drought, flood and civil conflict. The most popular destination for labour migration is India at 40 per cent, followed by Nepal at 30 per cent and third countries at 22 per cent. However, anecdotal reports suggest that migration is not the ideal solution to improve food security; migrants are poorly paid and often cheated. Some report that the only benefit from migration is the fact that it reduces pressure on domestic food supplies. During increased hardship, migrants tend to stay longer in India or elsewhere in order to be able to pay their debts back at home, or to earn additional savings to support their families' basic food needs for a further couple of months. All in all, migration emerges as an established desperate coping strategy for poor households, and is reduced significantly whenever local livelihood opportunities become available. Monitoring data from WFP find that 97 per cent of households believe that WFP food aid reduces seasonal migration significantly. Availability of food aid may therefore be a significant factor in influencing people's decision to migrate, and the presence of food aid in home areas may encourage migrants or displaced people to return.

It is generally believed that the high mobility rate in Nepal is one of the root causes of the recent increase in HIV/AIDS infections. Mapping out key migration routes, main destinations and areas of origin will assist in guiding the Government of Nepal's HIV/AIDS awareness campaign.

A World Bank report, Resilience Amidst Conflict, suggests that poor, landless and illiterate households have the highest probability of migrating and obtaining remittances[1]. In addition, Muslims and Dalits, ethnic minorities generally found to be among the poorest population groups, are more likely to receive remittances than better-off households. However, the resulting remittances that they receive are much lower than those received by other groups. In short, asset-poor households are most likely to migrate. They also constitute the target group for WFP food assistance. In addition, based on indicators of poverty and malnutrition, the main geographical focus of WFP food aid is the Hill and Mountain areas and the Far- and Mid-Western Regions and possible nutrition interventions in the Terai, where the level of acute malnutrition is alarming. These areas have the highest incidence of migration. It is therefore important to understand the role of migration and remittances as a household livelihood strategy, how viable a coping strategy it is during times of food crisis and what are the implications for providing food aid to these populations.

Apart from anecdotal reports and studies focusing on the macro-level benefits of migration, evidence-based knowledge on households' short-term migration

[1] *Resilience Amidst Conflict, An Assessment of Poverty in Nepal, 1995-96 and 2003-04*, Central Bureau of Statistics (Government of Nepal), The World Bank, UK Department for International Development, Asia development Bank, September 2006.

strategies, when caused by natural or man-made disasters, seasonal food shortages or lack of employment is limited or non-existent. This study aims to help fill important knowledge gaps, including linkages between migration and food security, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, and food aid, with the overall aim to improve the design and targeting of food aid programmes and other humanitarian interventions.

The objective of this study is to assess the importance of short-term migration and its benefits as a viable coping strategy during times of food crisis, and the implication this will have for food aid programming and humanitarian interventions. It also examines the reasons, outcomes and benefits of remittances to the local economy, and the risks associated with migration — with particular reference to HIV/AIDS.

Methodology

Primary data for this study were collected through extensive questionnaire surveys and focus group discussions. The data were analysed by NDRI and WFP Nepal. The background material was compiled through desk study and consultation with experts in migration, food security, government institutions and other UN agencies in Nepal.

Study Sites

Food insecurity and vulnerability is higher in the Far- and Mid-Western Regions of Nepal than in other development regions. This formed the basis for selecting the districts for this study, along with consideration of areas where conflict has been most intense and where the impact of natural disasters has also been severe. A total of 15 districts — one fifth of the country's districts — were selected for the household survey and community focus group discussions (Table 1).

A total of 447 households were consulted and interviewed, in samples of 30 households per district. Discussions with District Development Committees (DDC) contributed to the selection of Village Development Committees (VDC) taking part in the exercise. The four key criteria in the VDC and ward selection process were accessibility for researchers, food insecurity, vulnerability to natural hazards and other crises/shocks, and ethnic diversity. Individual households were selected using a snowball sampling technique (Table 2).

TABLE 1 Study Sites by District, Ecological Zones and Development Regions

DEVELOPMENT REGIONS	ECOLOGICAL ZONE			
	TERAI	HILLS	MOUNTAINS	TOTAL DISTRICTS
East	Saptari, Sirha	Udayapur Okhadunga (Control)		4
Central		Nuwakot		1
Western		Baglung		1
Mid-Western	Banke (control/ flood affected)	Dailekh Rukum	Dolpa Kalikot	5
Far-Western	Kailali (control/ poverty)	Achham	Bajhang Bajura	4
Total Districts	**4**	**7**	**4**	**15**

TABLE 2 Districts and VDCs with Sample Size

DISTRICTS	TOTAL NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	VDCS AND NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Nuwakot	30	Rautbensi-10, Betini-10, Gaunkharka-10
Achham	30	Devisthan-15, Khaptad-15
Banke	30	Bankathi-15, Betani-15
Bajura	30	Jagganath-10, Jukot-10, Wai-10
Udayapur	30	Lekhani-10, Mayakhu-10, Sorung Chhabise-10
Okhaldhunga	30	Thakle-15, Toksel-15
Baglung	30	Chhisti-10, Argal- 10, Dhamja -10
Dolpa	30	Majphal-10, Kalika-10, Narkhu-10
Kailali	30	Phulbari-15, Sripur -15
Bajhang	30	Rayal-15, Bhairabnath-15
Dailekh	29	Awalparajul-10, Jambukandh -10, Chamunda-9
Kalikot	29	Odanku-10, Chhapre-10, Manma-9
Siraha	30	Siswani-10, Sitapur Pra Da.-10, Siraha Municipality-10
Saptari	29	Gobargaruda-10, Rampur Malahania-9, Maleth-10
Rukum	30	Athbiskot Dandagaon-10, Athbiskot -10, Mangma-10
Total	**447**	**40 VDCs**

Household Migration: Basic Respondent Features

The survey was conducted in 15 districts with 447 respondents. Around 86 per cent of households were headed by a male. A majority of households were Brahmins and Chetri (40 per cent) followed by Janajatis (19 per cent) and Dalits (30 per cent). About 30 per cent of households had some formal education, with 26 per cent having had informal education. About one third had no education at all and was illiterate. A substantial proportion of respondents (over 44 per cent) lived in a

thatched/bamboo house, followed by slate/local tile roofed house and mud house (11 per cent). Only 15 per cent owned no land or livestock. Access to sanitation facilities remains very poor in these communities. About 44 per cent still use the open field as a toilet, and 22 per cent use rivers and lakes. Around 18 per cent had a pit latrine and 10 per cent owned a closed latrine. About 45 per cent use a public tap for their supply of drinking water, 13 per cent use private taps, 17 per cent use a tubewell/borewell, 10 per cent a protected well, 6 per cent an unprotected well, and 4 per cent use open water sources such as ponds, lakes and rivers.

Wealth Categories

Household wealth categories used respondents' self assessment, as well as the interviewer's assessment of housing conditions and general impressions. Both assessments produced similar results, so the respondents' self-assessment was used to rank wealth. The results show that about 34 per cent were 'very poor', 43 per cent were 'poor', 18 per cent 'average', 4 per cent 'above average', and just 1 per cent were 'rich'. About 77 per cent of households were therefore below the poverty line. This figure appears high in comparison to the national average of 31 per cent, but it reflects this study's selection of poor regions that suffer from food insufficiency and insecurity.

Very Poor

Survey results show a strong correlation between wealth and caste at the lowest level. About 65 per cent of those in this category are Dalits, with Janajatis making up 24 per cent of this total. Typically, people in this category have sufficient access to food for less than three months in the year, and are functionally landless. They are, for the most part, agricultural wage labour. They live in houses built of thatch/bamboo or mud, with no fixed or sanitary latrines. Most also do not have access to a private water source, using public taps and wells instead. Many children in these households generally do not go to school. They make up around one-third of all respondents.

Poor

This group contains the highest number of respondents — about 43 per cent of all respondents. The relationship between caste and wealth here is less certain, with almost half of those interviewed being Brahmins/Chetris[2]. Dalits make up slightly less than one-third of the total. They are also defined by food sufficiency for between three and six months in the year. The quality of accommodation for poor households is marginally better than for the very poor, but they depend too on public water sources.

[2] This is most likely due to the choice of districts for this survey, including Dolpa, Kalikot, Bajhang and Bajura where the predominant caste are Brahmin/Chettris, but which are nevertheless.

Average

Typically, households of average wealth live in stone houses with well-constructed roofs, probably of slate or iron sheet. Dalits are scarcely represented in this group, making up just 3 per cent of the total. The remaining 97 per cent is fairly equally distributed between the other castes. They have sufficient access to food for between six and nine months of the year. They also depend largely on public sources of water, and also use public spaces for toilet purposes. They account for around 18 per cent of all respondents.

Above Average

Of all respondents, around five per cent have above average wealth. Of these, Dalits make up less than five per cent. They are typically food secure for more than nine months of the year. They typically live in slate/stone or concrete houses, and most have either a pit/closed latrine or use open spaces for toilet purposes. They may own their own water taps, but will use a public tap, with tubewells and private taps also important. Most are Brahmins/Chetris, followed by Janajatis. The more prosperous live in well constructed houses of slate or concrete, with roofs of tile or corrugated iron sheeting, and have closed latrines.

TABLE 3 Respondent Households, by Wealth Category

	TOTAL		WEALTH CATEGORY							
	NO.	%	VERY POOR		POOR		AVERAGE		ABOVE AVERAGE	
			NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
All	447	100.00	151	33.78	190	42.51	82	18.34	24	4.47
Brahmin/Chhetri	190	42.51	33	21.85	92	48.42	49	59.76	16	66.67
Janjati	91	20.36	22	14.57	42	22.11	21	25.61	6	25.00
Dalit	140	31.32	91	60.26	42	22.11	5	6.10	2	8.33
Others	26	5.82	5	3.31	14	7.37	7	8.54		
Total	**447**	**100.00**	**151**	**100.00**	**190**	**100.00**	**82**	**100.00**	**24**	**100.00**

Source: *Household Survey (December 2007)*

Focus Group Discussions

The first batch of focus group discussions were conducted during the household survey. Two focus group discussions took place in each district — one at the district (DDC) level, the other at the village (VDC) level. The second batch took place during the individual survey of returnees in five districts (Table 4).

TABLE 4 Location of Survey and Focus Group Discussions Among & With Recently Returned Migrants

DISTRICTS	LOCATIONS
Banke	Holiya, Atthaisghare,Gadarahi
Jumla	Jumla Bajar, Airport, Talichaur, Kholikot, Bharatiwada, Bijayanagar, Daniwada, Nuwakot
Jajarkot	Syapi, Chedya, Khurpa
Dailekh	Rakam, Dandimandi, Bhurti, Sota, Kuikana, Bestada, Kharigaira
Acham	Bayalpata, Baradadevi, Binayak

Border Point Survey

Migrants were surveyed at 11 main border points between Nepal and India. The first survey took place over one week just before the Dasain festival in 2007, and the second also over one week in December 2007, just after harvesting and planting. A short questionnaire plus a separate sheet to record head counts were used.

Data Entry and Analysis

WFP developed data sheets for entering data using its advanced food security database information system. This programme is web-based, allowing WFP users worldwide to access an increasingly comprehensive database of food security studies.

All data obtained through household surveys and border point surveys were entered, analysed and summarised. Using many of the independent variables, cross-tabulations and correlations were made.

Study Team

The team responsible for the study consisted of Dr Punya Regmi, Dr Jagannath Adhikari and Tom Woodhatch. The study team liaised closely with the WFP Nepal Country Office team and with external agencies, including the Government of Nepal's Central Bureau of Statistics, UNICEF, UNAIDS and other UN agencies in order to develop a broad perspective of migration as it relates to food security. Dr Punya Regmi and Dr Jagannath Adhikari of the Nepal Development Research Institute (NDRI) designed and managed implementation of the household surveys in Nepal and at border points. They also analysed the survey data and prepared the first draft of the survey data analysis sections. Overall coordination and technical guidance was provided by Siemon Hollema (WFP Nepal).

2 Migration : A Global View

Summary

- Globalisation has increased the speed of the world economy, expanded nations' boundaries and provided unprecedented conditions for the movement of populations.
- Migration offers benefits for migrants, for their communities, for their country of origin and for their destination country.
- The potential gains to development from migration are substantial.
- There are about 175 million migrants worldwide: roughly 3 per cent of the world's population.
- Since the 1980s, migration has increased by around 3 per cent per year; experts believe it will continue at that rate for at least another 20 years.
- Despite the many positive aspects of migration, it can also entail significant risk.

Through much of human history, migration has been the norm rather than the exception. People have moved from one place to another in search of economic and livelihood opportunities; at times attracted by exceptional possibilities offered by a distant place, at other times forced from home by penury, disaster or stress.

Since the end of World War II, migration has intensified dramatically throughout the world. Some social scientists have gone so far as to describe this trend as "the age of migration". In many ways, migration was the precursor to the phenomenon of globalisation which, powered by rapid advancements in technology, has itself brought unprecedented and increasing human mobility over the past two decades.

The global assembly line that emerged during the second half of the 20th century paved the way for the development of a global capitalist market. Today, that market embraces virtually every country in the world; and, knowingly or otherwise, almost every human on the planet is in some way involved in an increasingly interdependent world economy. Globalisation has increased the speed at which this world economy operates and has expanded the boundaries of nations and of the developing and developed worlds. But it has also broadened the gulf that separates rich nations from poor and has reinforced the position of global cities in the developed world as centres of command in the world economy. One consequence of this new world order is that conditions exist today for the movement of populations that were unimaginable just 20 or 30 years ago.

Neoclassical economics suggest that countries with a large pool of labour relative to capital generally have low wages, while those whose labour pool is shallower relative to capital have higher wages. When this is combined with the rapid population growth of recent decades, there is the obvious potential for increasing streams of migration from poorer countries to wealthier ones.

International migration offers significant benefits for migrants, for their home communities, their countries of origin and, of course, for the destination countries. UN estimates suggest that there are around 175 million migrants worldwide: about 3 per cent of the world's population. Geographical proximity has long been, and remains, a key determinant of the patterns of migration around the world. Colonial ties are also significant in some regions.

The number of people migrating, particularly from poor to rich countries, has increased by around 3 per cent annually since the 1980s. Experts believe that numbers will continue to increase in the next two decades at least. Substantial diasporas have been established in destination countries. This has reduced the costs and risks of migration for new migrants. The demand for migrant services, be it for skilled, semi-skilled or for unskilled labour, is likely to be fuelled further by a combination of changing demographics and increasing levels of foreign direct investment.

In high income countries, the number of people of working age is expected to peak in 2010 at around 500 million. But by 2025, this figure is expected to have reduced to around 475 million. In this same timeframe, a further one billion workers are expected to be added to the global labour force by developing countries.

The potential gains to development are substantial. As well as offering a route out of poverty, remittances from migration can significantly increase the income of migrants' households, communities and, ultimately, countries. But the picture

is not all rosy. Despite these and other gains, most countries can offer examples that will attest to the real and, at times, costly risks of migrating. The human and labour rights of migrant workers — particularly unskilled workers — are often ignored, working conditions can be dangerously poor and unhygienic, disease spreads more readily and, most common of all, migrant workers' wages may be delayed or remain unpaid.

The potential gains that international migration brings to development are substantial, but the risks — to poor and unskilled migrants especially — can be high

3 The Historical Role of Migration in Nepal

Summary

- There is an historical trend of eastward migration in Nepal and beyond its boundaries.
- Historical political and military changes have prompted people to migrate.
- The tea plantations of Darjeeling and the establishment of Gurkha regiments in the British Indian Army drew many thousands of Nepalis to India in the 19th century.
- India has been the first choice international destination for most Nepali migrants, although the Middle East and South East Asia have attracted an increasing number of migrants in recent years.

Throughout the past millennium, there has been a steady trend of eastward migration both within Nepal and beyond its national boundaries. The political unification of the country in the 18th century led to the Gorkhalis conquering areas as far from their heartland as Darjeeling and parts of Sikkim, which they held until 1816. During this period of Shah dominance, farmers were encouraged to move to more fertile and less densely populated areas of eastern Nepal. Discrimination against peasants, along with a system of forced labour and extremely high taxes levied to finance multiple wars caused real hardships for many and acted as a significant push factor. An inevitable consequence of this migration was the appropriation of indigenous peoples' ancestral land, which in turn pushed them to Darjeeling and beyond, with some groups migrating as far as Assam and Bhutan.

As the British established their colonial presence in India, the hilltop village of Darjeeling developed quickly in the first half of the 19th century into a popular

destination for British civil servants to exchange the steamy perspiration of sea level Bengal for the cooler option of the hills. They soon realised that the area was ideal for tea cultivation. By the end of the century, tea was being grown on 45,000 acres of land. More than 90 per cent of tea garden workers had been recruited from the eastern Nepal. A similar proportion of Nepali workers were employed to construct and maintain roads in Darjeeling District.

A second major pull factor resulting from the colonial presence in India was the development of Gurkha regiments in the British Indian Army. Impressed by the fighting skills of their opponents during the Anglo-Nepalese Wars of 1814-16, the British actively recruited Nepali men — mostly Gurungs and Magars — into their ranks. Later they also brought in Limbus and Rais. In north-west India, the Sikhs also established a Gurkha Corps within their army. They used Lahore as their principal recruitment centre. (This explains the word Lahure, which has come to be widely used to describe a Nepali soldier serving in a foreign army.)

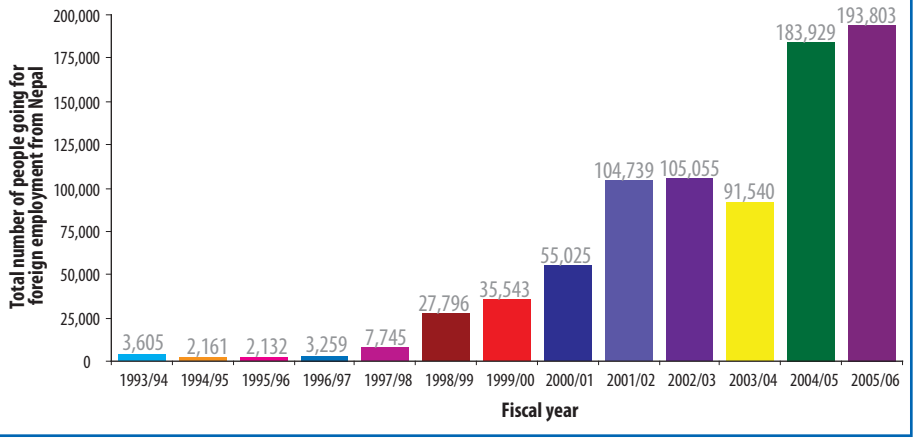
For centuries, Nepal has been at the crossroads of trade between India and Tibet. Nepal itself has also traded with its neighbours. In particular, traders from the Kathmandu Valley and elsewhere sold metalware, wool, herbs and handicrafts to India. From the 18th century, this trade expanded and extended to Tibet.

These phenomena are distinct from migration between Nepal and India, which has gathered pace since the early years of the 20th century. Unpredictable rainfall and harvests, particularly in the western middle hills where slope cultivation depends heavily on rain-fed irrigation, have given a strong incentive for men to migrate during the off-season in search of employment in other parts of Nepal and, increasingly, in India.

India receives by far the largest number of Nepali migrants by virtue of its proximity, established networks and the relatively low cost of migrating. Increasingly, however, better educated Nepalis, and those able to afford the not insubstantial costs of migration further afield, have found employment in the Middle East and South East Asia in ever growing numbers.

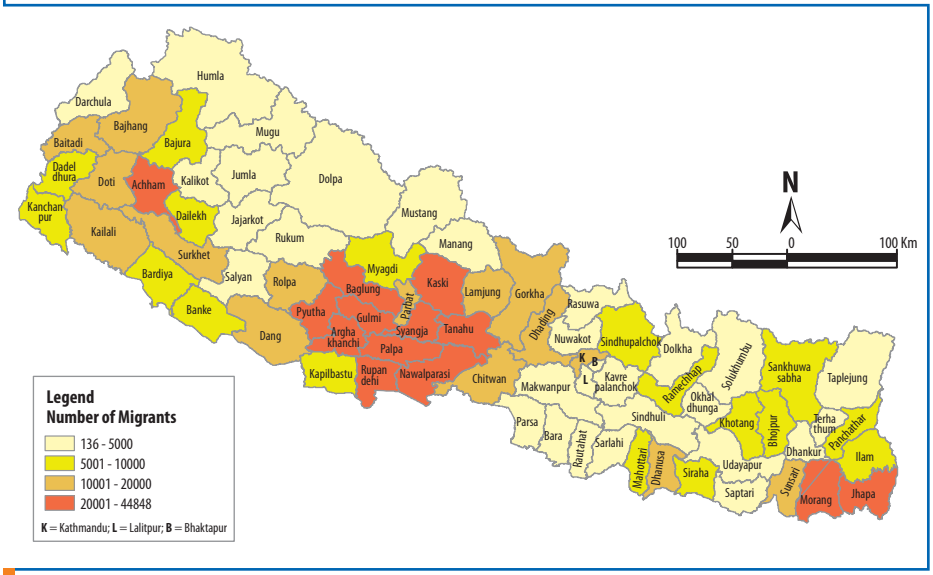
India receives by far the largest number of Nepalis migrating abroad

FIGURE 1 Out-Migration, Nepal, 1993 – 2006



Source: Economic Survey 2005-06, Government of Nepal

MAP 1 Foreign Out-Migration from Nepal, by District of Origin



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population, 2001

4 Population, Ethnicity and Demographics

Summary

- Nepal has a very young population, with 43.1 per cent aged below 14.
- Around 90 per cent of the population lives in rural areas.
- Nepali society has an extraordinary diversity of ethnic groups and languages.
- Annual population growth rates have ranged between 2 per cent and 3 per cent for much of the 20th century.
- Population growth is fastest in the Terai and slowest in the Mountains.

Nepal's population is characterised by a high birth rate (30 per thousand), a declining death rate (8.7 per thousand), high infant mortality (48 per thousand live births), a high total fertility rate (3.1), high dependency ratio (87.1), and a low life expectancy (63 years). It has a very young population, with 43.1 per cent below 14 years of age.

The country covers an area of 147,181 square kilometres. Population distribution is strongly influenced by topography and by the ability to cultivate land. The Mountain region alone covers over 50,000 square kilometres. This is 35.2 per cent of the country's total area, but is home to just 7.8 per cent of its population. The middle Hill region accounts for 45.5 per cent of the total population in 41.7 per cent of the area, while the Terai (plain lands along the border with India) accommodates 46.7 per cent of the population in just 23.1 per cent of the area.

Population Growth

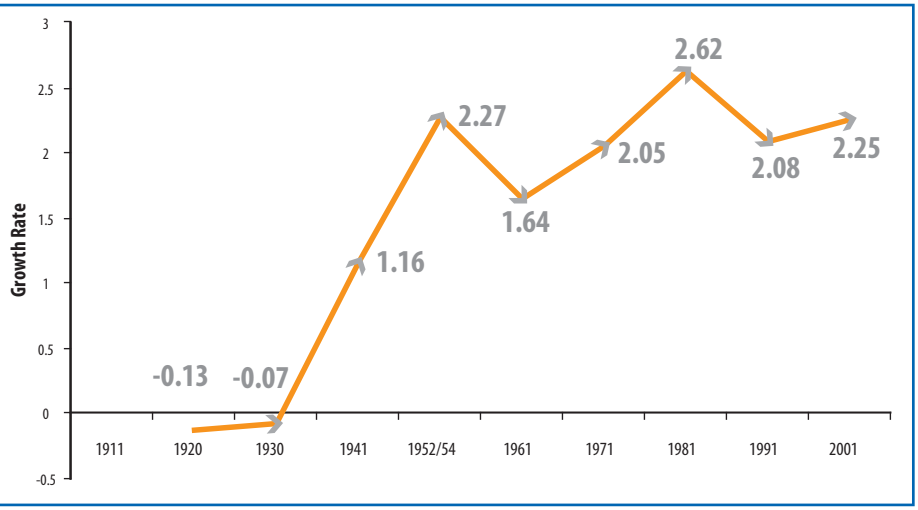
Between 1941 and 1952/54, Nepal's population grew at 2.27 per cent annually. That figure fell to 1.64 per cent between 1952/54 and 1961, but increased to 2.05 per cent between 1961 and 1971. It increased again over the following decade to 2.62 per cent, but fell again to 2.08 per cent between 1981 and 1991. During the period 1991 to 2001, the population growth rate increased to 2.25 per cent.

TABLE 5 Population Size and Growth, 1911 – 2001

CENSUS YEAR	TOTAL POPULATION	ABSOLUTE CHANGE
1911	5,638,749	-
1920	5,573,788	-64,961
1930	5,532,574	-41,214
1941	6,283,649	751,075
1952/54	8,256,625	1,972,976
1961	9,412,996	1,156,371
1971	11,555,983	2,142,987
1981	15,022,839	3,466,856
1991	18,491,097	3,468,258
2001	23,151,423	4,660,326

Source: Department of Statistics (1957, Table 2) CBS (1967), Vol. III, Part 2, Table 2: CBS (1975), Vol. I, Table 2, CBS (1984), Vol. II, Table 4: CBS (1993a), Vol. 1 Part ii, Table 8; CBS (2002), Vol. 1, Table 1

FIGURE 2 Annual Population Growth Rates in Nepal, 1911 – 2001



Source: Department of Statistics (1957, Table 2) CBS (1967), Vol. III, Part 2, Table 2: CBS (1975), Vol. I, Table 2, CBS (1984), Vol. II, Table 4: CBS (1993a), Vol. 1 Part ii, Table 8.

An interesting distinction exists between growth rates in the Terai plains and those in the Hill and Mountain regions. The Terai experiences the highest growth rates of the three ecological zones (Table 6), but has seen the rate of population growth fall between 1971 and 2001. The Hill and Mountain zones, meanwhile, both witnessed falls between 1971-1981 and 1981-1991, before rising significantly in the following decade.

TABLE 6 Population Growth Rates, by Ecological Zone

	1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001
Mountains	1.35	1.02	1.57
Hills	1.65	1.61	1.97
Terai	4.11	2.75	2.62

Source: Department of Statistics (1957, Table 2) CBS (1967), Vol. III, Part 2, Table 2: CBS (1975), Vol. I, Table 2, CBS (1984), Vol. II, Table 4: CBS (1993a), Vol. 1 Part ii, Table 8.

Urbanisation

Nepal's level of urbanisation is very low by regional standards. At around 10 per cent, it is much lower than that of India (26 per cent), Bangladesh (17 per cent), the Maldives (31 per cent), Pakistan (33 per cent) and Sri Lanka (22 per cent). Of course, this is largely explained by the country's topography, and around 60 per cent of the country's urban population is unsurprisingly found in the Terai.

Peoples and Ethnic Groups

Nepali society is characterised by its extraordinary diversity of ethnic groups and languages. And that diversity is characterised by a history that has generally seen ethnic and religious groups co-existing peacefully. The society is governed by a sophisticated system of rules and behavioural norms. The caste system has been and remains strong. It often defines access to resources and opportunities. Upward mobility within the caste system is extremely limited and at each level in the caste system or within the ethnic group, women generally (but not always) occupy a lower position in the social hierarchy than men.

The 2001 Census records 103 ethnic/caste groups, most of which are Indo Aryan or Mongols in origin. Nearly 30 per cent of Nepal's population belongs to either the Chhetri or the Brahmin caste. Magar, Tharu and Tamang come next, accounting for approximately 20 per cent of the population. The remaining 50 per cent falls into various castes and a small percentage are also of non-Nepali ethnicity — Muslims, for example, and others of Indian origin. The caste system is divided by four major groups: the Brahmins (originally scholars and priests),

the Kshatriyas (warriors and protectors), the Vaishyas (traders) and the Shudras (occupational castes).

People living in the Terai and Churia Hills are collectively referred to as Madeshis. Tharus are the Terai's largest and oldest ethnic group. Their main occupation is agriculture, followed by business. They speak in a language also called Tharu and their religion has elements of both Hinduism and Buddhism. Brahman and Chhetris predominate in the Western and Eastern Churias, and Gurungs in the Mid-Western Hills. Rajbansis are dominant in the Far-Eastern Terai areas of Jhapa and Morang. Traditionally, farmers follow both Hindu and Muslim religions, and they have their own local practices. Other ethnic groups in this area include the Danuwars, Majhis and Darias, who live in the Eastern Churias and Central and Eastern Terai. The Majhis are fisherman, while the Danuwars and Darias are mostly farmers. They practice Hinduism and speak in a language of Sanskrit origin, which is different from Tharu.

The middle, hilly regions are dominated by Tamangs, who are believed to have originated in Tibet. More than one million Tamangs live in the hills surrounding the Kathmandu Valley. Their social practices and customs are based on Buddhism and they have their own language, Tamang. They work mainly as farmers, labourers and porters. Newars are concentrated in the Kathmandu Valley and in major trading centres throughout the country. They have their own language and script, Newari, which is believed to have Tibeto-Burmese origins.
Rais and Limbus together make up the Kirantis. These people are well known for their courage and bravery and made up the bulk of those recruited into the Gurkha regiments of the British and Indian armies. The Kiranti religion combines elements of Animism, Buddhism and Hinduism. The Gurungs are present in the higher parts of the Central Hills. They earn their living predominantly from agriculture and nomadic pastoralism, although many have also served in Gurkha regiments. Their religion is a combination of Lamaist Buddhism and Hinduism and they have their own language. Magars, found in Hill regions of Western Nepal, are one of the largest ethnic groups of the middle zone. Their major occupations include farming, weaving, hunting, and fishing, although again many have served in Gurkha regiments. The Thakalis, who mainly live in the southern half of Mustang, are known for their hospitality and adept salesmanship. Their religion is influenced by both Buddhism and Hinduism. Before the tourism boom in Nepal, many earned their living from farming and salt trading.

TABLE 7 Nepal's Major Languages

LANGUAGE	PER CENT OF POPULATION
Nepali	48.61
Maithili	12.30
Bhojpuri	7.53
Tharu	5.86
Tamang	5.19

Source: Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis, WFP, 2006.

People living in the sparsely inhabited higher Himalayas are mostly of Tibetan origin. The Sherpas originally came from Tibet about 500 years ago and have a close affinity with the Tibetan language and culture and its Buddhist religion. Their major occupations include agriculture, animal husbandry and trade. They have, of course, also become renowned as trekking and mountaineering guides. The Dolpawas, people of Dolpa, reside in the remote areas north of Jomsom and Muktinath. They follow Buddhist customs and earn a living as traders and weavers. Lopas, the people of Lo in Mustang, often trade with Tibet. They are Buddhist and have their own local language. Manang bas, the people of Manang, also have their own language and scripts and maintain their own local religious practice. Many are traders.

5 The Nepal Economy

Summary

- Nepal's economy has always been dominated by agriculture.
- More than three-quarters of the country's households are agricultural.
- The average size of holdings has reduced in recent years.
- There has been a move away from agriculture, with employment in trade, manufacture and services leading the way.
- Remittances are an important and increasing part of the Nepal economy, and tripled between the mid 1990s and 2003/04.

Nepal's economy has always been dominated by agriculture. It is only relatively recently that non farm activities, including trade, manufacturing and services, have started to play a more important role in the national economy; but agriculture still rules the economic roost.

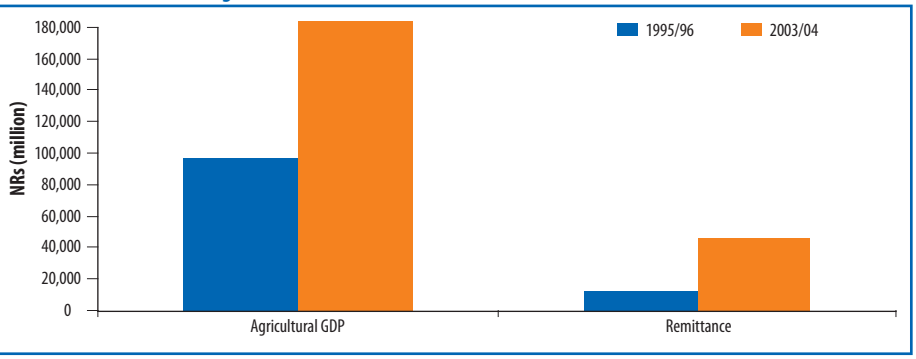
Agriculture

Government data show a reduction in both the percentage of agricultural households from 83 per cent in 1995/96 to 78 per cent in 2003/04[3] and, significantly, in the average size of holding. Over this same period, irrigated land as a proportion of potentially irrigable land rose from 40 per cent to 54 per cent. Currently, about 57 per cent of potentially irrigable land is under irrigation. Of this, only 38 per cent has year-round irrigation. In other words, only one-fifth of total irrigable land is under full year-round irrigation. Agriculture contributed

[3] *Nepal Living Standards Survey*, Government of Nepal (2003/04).

about 38 per cent of GDP by the end of 2007. It is characterised by relatively low productivity and traditional methods. It is particularly vulnerable to periodic floods and drought, both of which substantially impact production and can leave millions of people at risk of food insecurity. Domestic agriculture supported about 80 per cent of the country's basic needs in 2007, which makes international trade — especially with India — important for the remaining 20 per cent and for non-basic foodstuffs[4]. A comparative analysis of the growth in agricultural GDP and remittances shows that while the agricultural GDP doubled between 1995/96 and 2003/04, remittances more than quadrupled over the same period (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3 Growth in Agricultural GDP and Remittances



Source: Nepal Living Standard Survey, Government of Nepal (2003/04).

Consumption

Consumption grew, in nominal terms, in the same eight-year period, rising from NRs 6,802 to NRs 15,848 per capita. It almost doubled in the population's poorest quintile, and nearly trebled in its richest. In terms of total consumption, the proportions are more dramatic — radically so, with the poorest quintile accounting for just 6 per cent, while the richest consumes 53 per cent of the total. The trend shows this gap increasing. Government data attempt to ameliorate that rather stark picture with the observation that self-reported inadequacy in food consumption by poor people fell by 21 per cent in the eight years to 2003/04.

Employment

The proportion of people employed has grown over much the last decade, increasing from 67 per cent in 1995/96 to 74 per cent in 2003/04. Around half of all employed people work more than 40 hours in a typical week. The most

[4] FAO/WFP Food Security Assessment Mission to Nepal, July 2007.

striking trend is the significant fall in the number of people depending on agriculture for employment, while those employed outside the agriculture sector have increased almost as much. A further notable change sees an increasing preference for employment on piece rate or contractual bases over daily wage work. By its nature, employment in agriculture is highly seasonal and is regularly affected by flooding, drought and crop failure.

> ***Unemployment in the 15 to 24 year age group is high at 6 per cent***
>
> *Nepal Living Standards Survey, GoN*

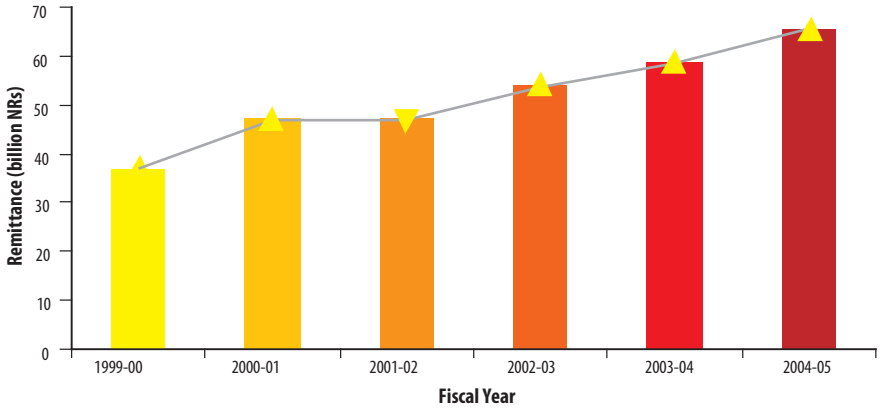
The Non-Farm Economy

The non-farm economy has seen a steady rise, with increased trade leading the way. Manufacturing and services, including the tourist industry, are also significant. Nominally, both the expenditure and revenue of these enterprises show major upward trends, suggesting reduced dependence on agriculture.

Remittances

There have been several interesting changes in the patterns of remittances in recent years. Almost one third of all households in Nepal received remittances in 2003/04, up sharply from less than a quarter in the mid 1990s. Just as significant is the fact that the average amount of remittances that each household received had more than doubled in the same period.

FIGURE 4 Remittances, 1999 – 2005



Source: Economic Survey 2005-06, Government of Nepal

In the mid 1990s, more than three-quarters of all remittances came from India and from within Nepal. That figure has fallen to less than half, with remittances from the Middle East becoming increasingly important. According to data from the Nepal Living Standard Survey, the total official remittances received by Nepali households tripled between 1995/96 and 2003/04 to exceed NRs 46 billion.

Total official remittances received by Nepali households tripled between 1995/96 and 2003/04 to exceed NRs 46 billion

Nepal Living Standards Survey, GoN

6 The Nepal-India Border

Summary

- The Nepal-India border extends over 1,400 km.
- The 'Nepal-India Peace and Friendship Treaty' of 1950 gave citizens of both countries the right to unhindered passage across the border and equal employment rights in the other country.
- There are 22 official check-posts along the border, but travel documents are not required by Nepalis or Indians.

Nepal is surrounded to the south, east and west by India, and to the north by China. Nepal and India share an open border system in which people of both countries may readily cross the border through any point and at any time without producing an identity document. Citizens of both countries are also able to move freely and remain in either country without restriction. The border is spread over 1,400 km, with only 22 check posts patrolled by police or military force. The absence of record-keeping systems of Indian and Nepali people crossing the border actively facilitates migration between the two countries.

Nepal-India Peace Treaty

The open border is a result of the Nepal-India Peace and Friendship Treaty, signed in 1950. The Treaty gives similar rights to the citizens of both countries, notably in respect of employment and leave to remain.

Prior to that, the border was effectively open during the colonial period. It is often assumed that the British Government had two main reasons for this. The first was

to maintain unrestricted migration of the Nepalese hill people to India, allowing a ready supply of what they saw as well-built, honest, loyal Nepali people to employ in trades within India as well as in the army's Gurkha. The second factor was to allow easy and free access of British and Indian manufactured goods into Nepal and Tibet, and to secure an easy supply of raw materials such as timber and forest produce, herbs and medicinal plants, hides and skins from Nepal into India.

> ***"The Governments of India and Nepal agree to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other, the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce"***
>
> *Article 7, Appendix 8 of the Nepal-India Peace and Friendship Treaty*

Porous Border

The open border system has advantages as well as disadvantages for both countries. The positive implications include convenience for movement and travel across the border, continued political friendship that strengthens mutual ties, and supply of labour. Nepal has gained positively through the immediate supply of food grains during times of crisis, the regular supply of consumer goods, and access to better medical facilities in India. The negative implications include cross border encroachment and crime, lawlessness, trafficking of people, arms and drugs, and revenue leakage and loss.

Trade Relations

The Treaty of Peace and Friendship established a formal framework for the unique ties between the two countries. Since the early fifties, India has contributed to Nepal's economic development, focussing initially on infrastructural projects, including the construction of roads, bridges, hospitals and airports. The governments of India and Nepal have recently agreed to review this treaty.

Formal trade relations between India and Nepal were established in 1951 with the signing of the Treaty of Trade, under which most goods of Indian and Nepali

origin are allowed to move unhampered to Nepal or India respectively without being subjected to any quantitative restrictions, licensing or permit system. The Treaty was revised in 2002.

Major exports to India include jute goods, polyester and acrylic yarn, pulses, hides and skins, herbs, cardamom, rice bran oil, ginger, oil cakes, toothpaste and, curiously, noodles. Major items imported by Nepal from India include mechanical equipment and spare parts, medicine, vehicles and their spare parts, cotton textiles and thread, cement, chemicals, electrical equipment and goods, rice, baby food, agricultural equipment and parts, tobacco, vegetables, coal, paper, synthetic textiles, cumin seed, pepper and sugar.

Crossing the Border

The border itself is not physically demarcated, except at a limited number of official crossing points that are patrolled and manned by the Nepali and Indian armies. Crossing the border for Nepali and Indian people is unimpeded by formality, and people cross daily in their hundreds and thousands on foot or by bus, car, motorbike, cycle, cycle-rickshaw, auto-rickshaw, horse and cart, donkey and cart, buffalo and cart, large trucks, small trucks, four-wheeled trucks, three-wheeled trucks and by virtually any other of South Asia's bewildering assortment of surface transport options. Goods and supplies travel without hindrance in both directions and vehicles piled improbably high with pots, pans, equipment and provisions are as common as young men walking across with only a heavy backpack that might include a small stereo system or school books or clothes or shoes; and local people leading livestock or carrying enormous bundles of straw on their backs — possibly from their field of work in one country to their home or to a local market in the other.

The perception of the border is as informal as its traffic. In most people's minds, it happens to represent the place where one country's territory ends and where the other's begins. Its political openness, and the cultural and economic integration of communities on either side, means that is widely viewed not as a bureaucratic obstacle, but as a location as incidental to daily life as the lines that divide one district from another.

Although the Nepal-India agreement allows this freedom of movement, it can potentially instil complacency. In the past, India has placed severe restrictions on the free movement of goods, albeit temporarily, and there is no guarantee that similar restrictions will not be imposed again in the future.

In the mid 1990s, there were occasional media reports of a small insurgency in isolated areas in the far west of Nepal. The reports spoke of a group of

7 Conflict and Migration

Summary

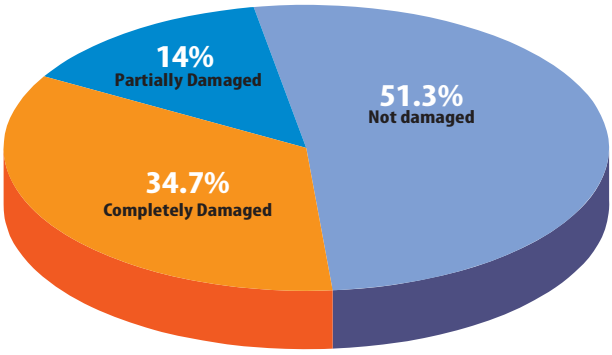
- Conflict has had a major impact on Nepal's infrastructure, economy and its people's livelihoods.
- The Far- and Mid-West Hills experienced the worst damage to VDC buildings and agricultural service centres, inhibiting delivery of vital services.
- Food availability and access to markets was severely inhibited.
- Increasing numbers of families joined the male migrant in India.
- Despite — or, perhaps, because of — the conflict, remittances increased during the conflict and helped keep the country's economy afloat.

subversives, origin unknown, that were using violence to further their ambitions for a Maoist form of communism to replace the feudalism that had kept people in poverty for generations. The reports stressed the localised nature of the problem, and they rarely covered more than a column inch in the newspaper's inner depths. But had editors given greater consideration to the global history of major socialist revolutions, and to the context in which this insurgency was taking place, they might have treated that local problem with more gravitas. In the subsequent years, the acorn that was planted in remote western Nepal grew rapidly, spreading with force and often painfully throughout the country. In April 2008, a general election gave the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) the largest number of parliamentary seats. Their message had been compelling, their means bruising but effective. And in the wake of this astonishing electoral success lay a country licking the many wounds of a decade-long civil war.

Its impact and consequences were widespread and devastating. More than 13,000 people were killed. Much of the country's infrastructure — roads, public

buildings, schools, telecommunications, bridges, service centres, health posts and even temples — had been damaged or destroyed. Infrastructure projects that were planned and those already underway were brought to a standstill. The Far- and Mid-West Hills experienced the worst damage to VDC buildings and other structures, reflecting the main areas in which the conflict was concentrated. Many agricultural service centres were damaged, and many of those that were not rarely functioned because their (government) staff had difficulty working there. This, of course, inhibited the provision of vital services, technical advice and agricultural inputs to rural farmers.

FIGURE 5 Percentage of VDC Buildings Damaged



Source: Impact of Conflict and Priorities for Assistance, WFP/OCHA, August 2007

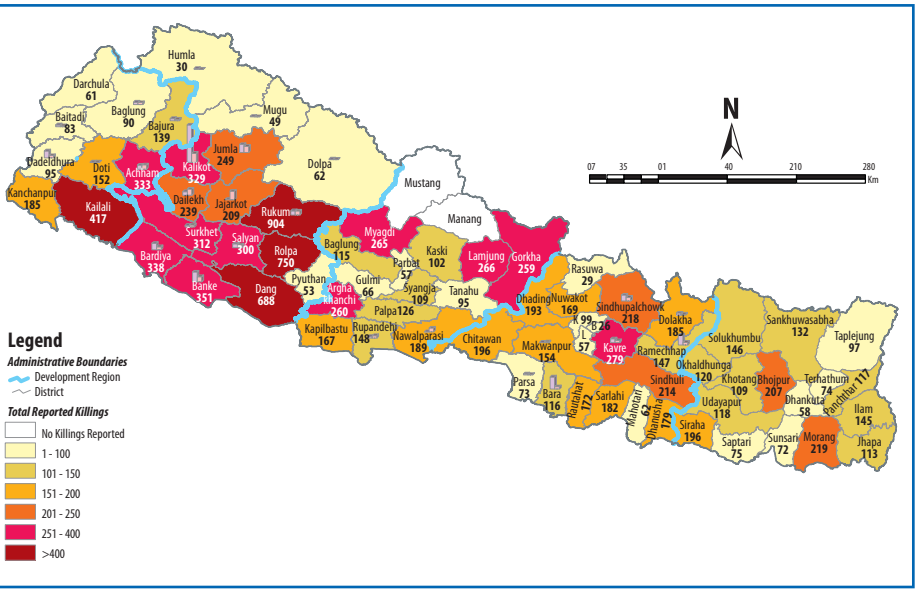
The impact on livelihoods was severe. Development work was reduced, income from construction wage labour decreased, and assets were lost to forced confiscation. Food availability and access to markets were seriously affected, as were crop cultivation and harvesting. With food and alternative employment increasingly scarce, out-migration increased and there were reports of many Nepali migrants in India remaining there instead of returning to their conflict-affected homes in Nepal. Difficulties in travelling from one district to another were exacerbated by an informal system of 'visas' being operated by some Maoist groups in

some districts, and this would have increased the logistical challenges for migrants wishing to return home. It was also reported that migrants carrying their own and their colleagues' remittances were subject to extortion at border points and along their routes. Estimates of the number of people who migrated to India are, at best, inexact, but range from the hundreds of thousands to the millions. It was also observed that an increasing number of families were joining the male migrant in India instead of staying at home in Nepal. An unofficial Maoist practice of encouraging at least one child from each family to join their struggle may have contributed to this.

The impact of conflict on livelihoods was severe. Food availability and access to markets were seriously affected, as were crop cultivation and harvesting

Despite the many difficulties and hardships that the conflict has brought, remittances actually increased and contributed in no small way to keeping Nepal's economy afloat during those years.

MAP 2 Human Casualties due to the Conflict



Source: Impact of Conflict and Priorities for Assistance, WFP/OCHA, August 2007

8 Who Migrates?

Summary

- The average age of the surveyed migrants was about 30 years.
- Over 70 per cent of surveyed migrants were poor or very poor. Less than 5 per cent were more than averagely wealthy.
- Almost all migrants were male.
- Around three-quarters of households in the survey area had one or more migrants.
- With more members of a household migrating, it is more likely that the subsequent migrant is younger and female.
- Nearly four out of every five recently returned migrants had other family members that have migrated for work — almost all of whom migrated to India.

Age

The household migrant survey found a wide range in migrants' ages, from 10 to 65 years old. The average age was 30.5 years. Respondents in the below 18 years of age group made up 12 per cent of the total, with almost 75 per cent between 19-44, and another 13 per cent above 44 years. The more members of a household that migrate, the younger the subsequent migrants are likely to be (Figure 6).

Wealth

More than 7 out of every 10 migrants surveyed were poor or very poor. Those of above average wealth accounted for around 5 per cent of migrant age groups.

Caste

Dalits made up 31 per cent of migrant households while 19 percent were Janajatis. Brahmins and Chhetris made up nearly 44 per cent. The survey was conducted in overwhelmingly Brahmin and Chhetri areas, which reflects the very high proportion of Dalits in migration to India from here.

Gender

Most surveyed migrants were male — just 5.9 per cent (27 out of 457) were female. Most were between 19 and 44 years of age however almost one third of female migrants were found to be below the age of 18. The more members of a household that migrate, the more likely it is that the subsequent migrants are female (Figure 6).

Education

The general education level was typically low. A substantial majority (57.1 per cent) were just literate, i.e. able to read and write. A further 22.3 per cent were illiterate, and only 20.7 per cent had attended secondary school.

Extent of Migration

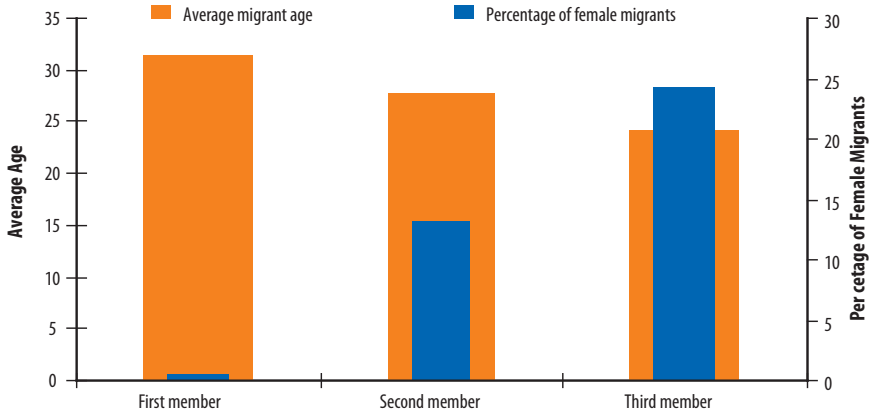
More than 76 per cent of households in the survey areas had at least one member working away from their community. About 13 per cent of households had two migrant members, six per cent had three, and 2.4 per cent had four members.

TABLE 8 Migrants, by Age and Gender

AGE	TOTAL		GENDER			
			MALE		FEMALE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Below 18 Yrs.	55	12.0	47	10.9	8	29.6
19-44 Yrs.	342	74.8	325	75.6	17	63.0
Above 44 Yrs.	60	13.1	58	13.5	2	7.4
Total	**457**	**100.0**	**430**	**100.0**	**27**	**100.0**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

FIGURE 6 Age, Gender and Number of Migrants in a Household



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Among recently returned migrants, 78 per cent had other family members that had migrated for work — of which 97.5 per cent had also gone to India. Almost 22 per cent said that they migrate to India every year, while a strong majority — over 66 per cent — are continuously in India, and 12 per cent migrate on a one-off or 'as-needed' basis.

The findings of the survey seem to support the World Bank's assertion that poor, landless and illiterate households have the highest probability of migrating[5].

Table 9 shows that migration occurs in all wealth groups — although it is most common among people below the poverty line. While most migration seems to occur in line with established or planned patterns, more than one-third of migrants in all wealth categories migrate in response to unplanned needs or circumstances.

[5] Central Bureau of Statistics (Government of Nepal), The World Bank, UK Department for International Development, Asian Development Bank (September 2006): *Resilience Amidst Conflict, An Assessment of Poverty in Nepal, 1995-96 and 2003-04.*

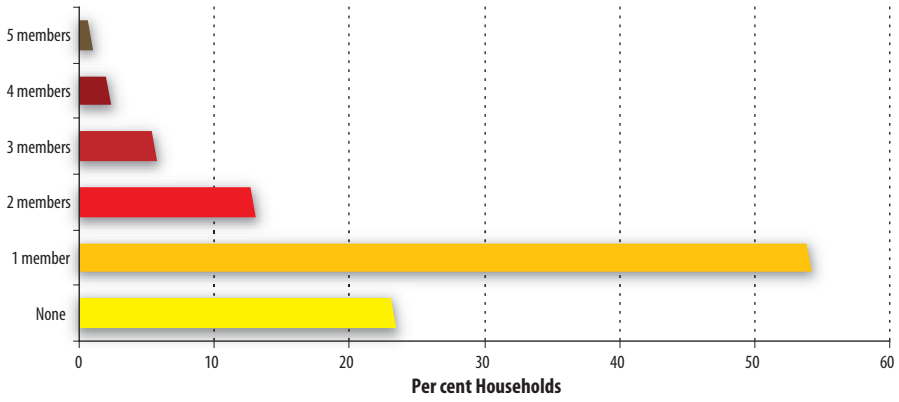
TABLE 9 Frequency of Migration

FREQUENCY	TOTAL		WEALTH CATEGORY							
	NO.	%	VERY POOR		POOR		AVERAGE		ABOVE AVERAGE	
			NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
One-off or when needed	194	42.08	66	42.31	73	38.83	39	44.32	16	55.17
Every year	244	52.93	83	53.21	106	56.38	43	48.86	12	41.38
Long term / continuous	23	4.99	7	4.49	9	4.79	6	6.82	1	3.45
Total	**461**	**100.00**	**156**	**100.00**	**188**	**100.00**	**88**	**100.00**	**29**	**100.00**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Figure 7 illustrates the importance of migration in the communities studied. More than three quarters of all households surveyed had at least one migrant and a significant proportion had multiple migrants. Less than a quarter of all households surveyed had no migrants. Around 10 per cent of all households had between three and five migrants, which further reinforces the key role played by migration in these communities' livelihoods and a high degree of dependence on migration for household income.

FIGURE 7 Number of Migrants per Household



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

9 Why People Migrate: Push and Pull Factors

Summary

- Lack of employment is the most important reason to migrate, followed by food insecurity and debt.
- Seasonal migration patterns are determined by agriculture.
- Conflict — particularly in the Far- and Mid-Western Hills — has helped deepen an already food insecure environment.
- Migration to India is a well-established practice.
- For many migrants, India is the first choice and 'cheapest' destination for work.
- Migrants from the Far- and Mid-Western Hills typically pay between NRs 2,300 and NRs 3,000 for their journey, and most borrow money from a local moneylender.
- Borrowing money to cope with shocks is common, but local moneylenders charge extortionate rates of interest.

Migration for employment can be seen as economic osmosis. But instead of molecules, it is people that permeate through a membrane (in this case, an international boundary) from a place of higher concentration (of poverty, for example) to a place of lower concentration. Push and pull factors work together to stimulate mobility and determine direction.

Table 10 offers a number of revealing insights. It shows that food shortages and lack of employment are by far the two most important reasons for migration among the surveyed groups. The lack of employment opportunities is the single most important reason for migration across all wealth categories. Lack of access to food is also important, especially for the very poor, poor and below average wealth groups — it is not a reason for above averagely wealthy people to

migrate. Natural disasters are less important than the need to repay loans. The direct impact of conflict was a reason for migration for a small percentage of the surveyed population.

TABLE 10 Reasons for Migration

REASONS FOR MIGRATION	TOTAL		WEALTH CATEGORY							
	NO.	%	VERY POOR		POOR		AVERAGE		ABOVE AVERAGE	
			NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Food shortage	57	29.84	24	36.92	25	34.25	8	21.62	-	-
Lack of employment	99	51.83	28	43.08	30	41.10	26	70.27	15	93.75
Natural disaster	9	4.71	4	6.15	4	5.48	1	2.70	-	-
Conflict and bandhs	2	1.05	-	-	1	1.37	-	-	1	6.25
Need for additional income	15	7.85	5	7.69	9	12.33	1	2.70	-	-
Debt	5	2.62	1	1.54	4	5.48	-	-	-	-
Others	4	2.09	3	4.62	-	-	1	2.70	-	-
Total	**191**	**100.00**	**65**	**100.00**	**73**	**100.00**	**37**	**100.00**	**16**	**100.00**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

It should be noted that lack of employment is both a push factor and a pull factor. The established nature of migration in the surveyed communities suggests knowledge of the employment opportunities elsewhere and, consequently, allows a more planned approach to migration as part of a wider livelihood strategy. It is therefore not surprising that most migrants intend to migrate again in the future (Table 11).

TABLE 11 Intention of Returning Migrants to Migrate Again

DOES THE MIGRANT INTEND TO MIGRATE AGAIN IN THE FUTURE?	PER CENT
Yes	84.3
No	14.6
Undecided	1.0

Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

Food shortages may also be expected, particularly by poorer respondents, but the intensity of shortages may vary year by year. The timing and duration of migration may therefore vary in response to the impacts of such shortages. This suggests that food security interventions may be more precisely targeted with ongoing understanding of actual seasonal variations in food availability.

Seasonality

Seasonal migration patterns have long been determined by agriculture. Table 12 shows the cropping calendars for the main crops in the Terai, Hills and Mountains, along with key migration and food insecurity patterns.

Table 12 shows clear relationships between sowing/harvesting and migration patterns. The timing of sowing, harvesting and festivals is a major determinant of migration in both directions for many migrants. So intricately is the cropping calendar linked to migration that an old saying in Jumla has it that 'if a migrant does not return by the time of rice sowing and seed bed preparation, he may as well be dead'.

> ***'If a migrant doesn't return in time for sowing, he may as well be dead'***
>
> *(Local Jumli saying)*

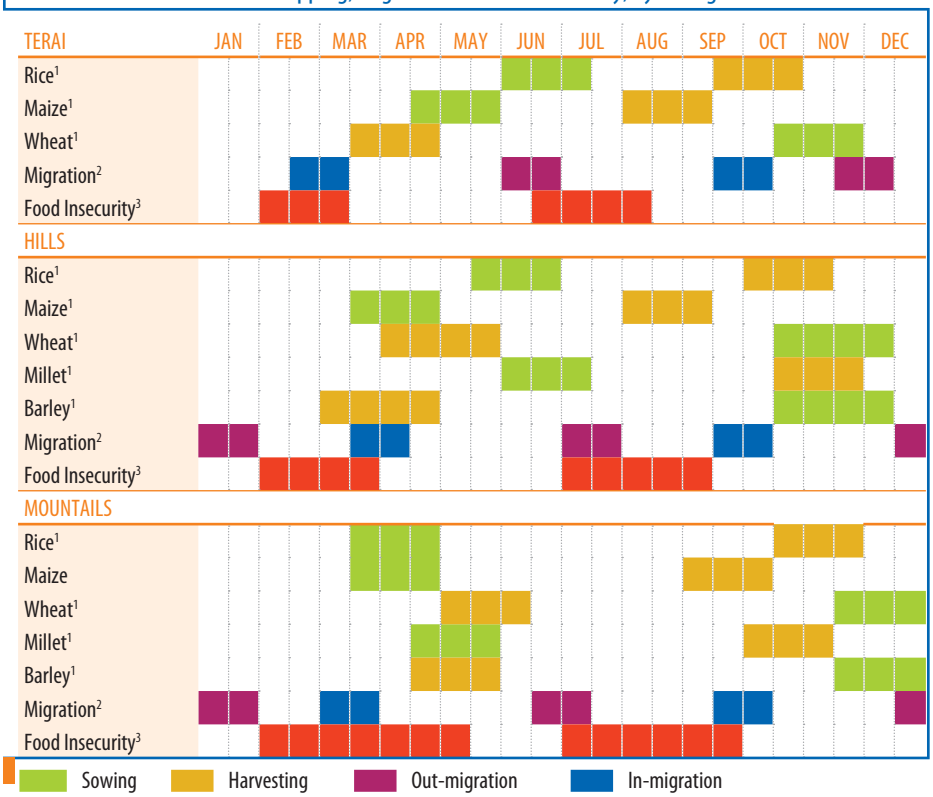
The window of opportunity for both planting and harvesting is smallest in the Mountain zone, because of rapid drops in temperature. Temperature changes in the Middle Hills are more gradual, allowing more time for planting and harvesting, while the seed-to-seed duration is shortest in the Terai. The table illustrates that the variety and frequency of crops that can be grown reduces with altitude. When combined with an increasing population, reduced average size of landholdings and frequent crop failures that characterise parts of Far- and Mid-West Nepal, the potential for chronic food deficits is clear — as is the problem of seasonal underemployment and lack of income. The lean periods are longer and more prominent in the Mountain and Hill regions than in the Terai.

The main periods of out-migration seem to be less related to times of food insecurity than to agricultural seasons and festivals. Migration from the Terai occurs throughout the year, but is concentrated in June, as sowing gets under way, and in November — December, after the main annual religious festivals. Migrants tend to return in greatest numbers in time for harvesting in February — March, which also coincides with one of the two main periods of food insecurity; and again in time for both rice harvesting and the festivals in October.

In the Hills, in-migration in September and October is also closely associated with the festivals and the planting and harvesting months. The other main period for returning migrants is March and April, in time for wheat harvesting and maize and rice sowing. Out-migration occurs in greatest numbers towards the end of the monsoon sowing months, early in a period of food insecurity; and in

January, after an intensive period of sowing and harvesting, and as the other main months of food insecurity begin.

TABLE 12 Main Months of Cropping, Migration and Food Insecurity, by Ecological Zone



Data sources: [1] FAO /WFP, Special Report, Food Security Assessment Mission to Nepal ; [2] Focus group discussions (March 2008); [3] WFP Nepal, Food Security Bulletins

The relationship between agricultural seasons and migration is apparent also in the Mountains, where most out-migration takes place in December and January, after the festivals and the harvesting. Most migrants return as the sowing season gets under way and leave after the harvesting of the barley and wheat crops.

The common theme in all ecological regions, then, is an association between migration and agricultural seasons. It is a pattern that makes use of surplus labour during agricultural off-seasons to provide additional income that will contribute, inter alia, to a reduction in periodic food insecurity. Focus group discussions suggested that migration is one response to seasonal unemployment. A number of migrants claimed that they would not have migrated, or would be less likely to migrate in future, if predictable and reliable employment opportunities were available during agricultural off-seasons.

Shocks and Crises

Nepal regularly faces both drought and flooding. Variations, both temporal and spatial, can be immense, with one area perhaps receiving torrential rainfall for three or four months, followed by further months without rain. Some Hill and Mountain areas, however, often receive no rain at all even during the monsoon. Irrigation for much of the region's terraced cultivation is rain fed. When there is insufficient rainfall — as there has been over recent years — crops fail and the fields remain largely barren. In a region where food self-sufficiency has been a traditional norm, the consequences are clear. Paradoxically, landslides and soil erosion is common in the Hills, with flooding frequently affecting the Terai. Caused by excessive seasonal rainfall upstream, rivers breach their banks, bringing landslides, soil erosion and, all too often, they destroy crops cultivated in the fertile valleys.

The death of a family member, particularly if he or she is the household's main earner, is also a common shock that affects many households and can encourage migration. The situation is exacerbated by the scarcity of proper health care services, their cost and the availability and expense of medicines. It is likely to be exacerbated further in the coming years if HIV/AIDS develops into an epidemic (see Chapter 13). For a more extensive discussion on the impact of shocks and crises, see Chapter 15.

Conflict

A decade of insurgence, violent political strife and ultimately the legitimisation of the Maoist movement through the ballot box have brought hope for some; but death, destruction and loss of income for others. In areas of greatest strife, which include the Far- and Mid-Western Hills, it has inhibited access to markets. That has helped deepen an already food insecure environment, and has resulted in more people looking to India for employment and income.

Traditional Practice

Migration to India, as well as to other parts of Nepal, is a long established practice. So common has it become that it is often seen as a mark of pride for a household to have a member who is working abroad and supporting the

Migration to India, as well as to other parts of Nepal, is a well established practice

family through remittances. For some households, migration has become almost expected of a young man. It is, therefore, not only a coping strategy in times of shock and crisis, but an established, accepted and expected activity.

What does India Offer Nepali Migrants?

India is an obvious — and, for many, the first choice and the 'cheapest'– destination for work. Work opportunities are plentiful and legal, travel costs are low, official travel documents are not required, the cost of living is low, and rates of pay are generally higher than for the same work in Nepal. Potential migrants also do not have to go through recruiting agencies for work in India, which reduces the cost and organisational logistics of migration. India's booming economy has brought a huge increase in construction in the major cities and elsewhere, and that brings with it more jobs for labourers. Table 13, below, illustrates the economic advantages of migration by comparing rates of pay using data collected during a 2003 study. India also offers the opportunity to learn new techniques and technologies, which some migrants bring back with them and introduce into their own communities.

It is noted that migration is not exclusively in one direction. Every year, a large number of Indians from neighbouring border areas — especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar — migrate the short distance to Nepal's Terai to work as seasonal labourers. This reflects the close relations between communities on either side of the border. Given the large number of Indian migrants to Nepal, the possible differences in wages as suggested by the data in Table 13 is not the only factor data determines migration flows.

TABLE 13 Comparison of Average Daily Wages, Nepal and India

COMPARISON	VARIABLE	AVERAGE DAILY RATE (NRS)	DIFFERENCE
Cross-border vs in-country migration	Within Nepal	126.80	
	Nepal to India	186.10	+47%
Agricultural wage rates	Nepal	106.30	
	India	191.30	+80%
Non-agricultural wage rates	Nepal	151.40	
	India	183.00	+21%

Source: Adapted from Gill, 2003[6].

[6] Gill, Gerard (2003): *Seasonal Labour Migration in Rural Nepal: A Preliminary Overview*. ODI, London.

A Migrant's Voice

"There were so many problems at home. There were three consecutive years of drought. Then a bullock died. I also got married. We had to buy food, which is expensive. My parents became sick and the cost of medicines was very high. We were poor, so every time one of these problems came our way, we had to take out a loan to pay for it. We had debts of NRs 35,000.

"There was nothing I could do, but leave for India. I went to Kulu and Manali in Himachal Pradesh. I started working as a labourer, splitting stones for a construction project. Then I learned to drive a tractor and managed to get a job as a driver.

"I've now paid off the loan. I also bought a colour television. The trouble is that our village has no electricity, so I bought a solar battery to power the TV. That cost another NRs 25,000 and I took out another loan of NRs 25,000 for this — at 5 per cent interest per month.

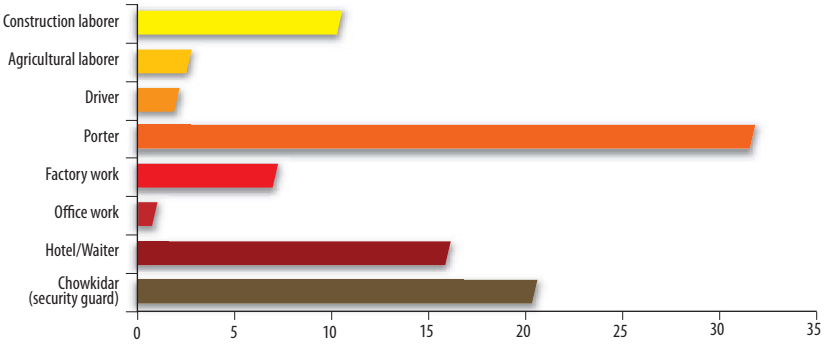
"I will go back to India to earn money to repay that loan. I'll go back to the same place and drive the tractor again. I've just returned home today and I've found out that another loan was taken out while I was away. That also has to be repaid. I'll stay until I've earned enough to pay off the loan."

Santosh Nepali (A 29 year old male from Nuwakot 6, Kudari VDC, Jumla)

Migrants' Work in India

The survey found that the highest proportion of migrants (32 per cent) work as porters, with security guards (21 per cent) being the next major occupation. Other jobs attracting significant numbers of migrants included work in hotels and restaurants, and in construction projects. Agricultural labour, driving, factory work and even office work also featured (Figure 8).

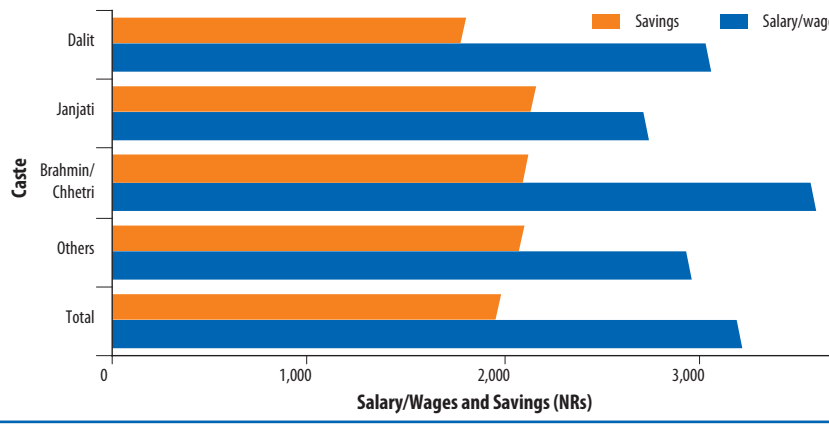
FIGURE 8 Migrants' Occupations in India (Per centage of Response)



Source: Returning Migrant Survey (March 2008)

Little variation in income was found across caste, other than slightly higher income and savings by Brahmins and Chetris. Janajatis had marginally lower income than Brahmins and Chetris, yet managed similar levels of savings. A possible explanation for this lies in the fact that many Janajatis work as security guards, a job that usually includes their accommodation.

FIGURE 9 Migrants' Monthly Income and Savings in India, by Caste



Source: Returning Migrants Survey (March 2008)

The average time the interviewed migrants spent in India on their most recent trip was about five months, during which they were employed for all but an average of 17 days. There is little variation across groups in this respect.

It is also common for migrants' relatives to temporarily replace the migrant in his job while he returns home.

Benefits of Migration

The benefits of migration are both financial and non-monetary.

Salaries vary. Hotel work was found to pay between IRs 800 and IRs 4,000 per month, depending on experience. Migrants working as porters can earn well — up to IRs 500 per day, if they are fit and strong. Domestic migrants, such as those from Bihar, often follow similar migration routes in India and no major differences in pay rates between Nepalis and Biharis was found. Starting rates for unskilled workers are generally very low.

Making New Learning Pay

Brikha Bahadur Saud, 23, left his Accham village in December 2005 to work for a year in a hotel in Karnataka, India. While there, he used part of his savings to enrol on a six-month course on repairing and maintaining radios, watches, tape-recorders, televisions and house wiring. When he returned to Accham, he used those new skills in his community and now earns more than NRs 5,000 per month. He has no plans to return to India.

Non-monetary benefits include new skills, knowledge and techniques learned by migrants. For example, migrants who have found work in a factory learn to operate machinery. Those working as apprentice electricians or carpenters learn how to wire and to work wood, and those picking apples and other fruit in Punjab learn new agricultural techniques.

Many focus group participants said they would not migrate if they were guaranteed three months' full employment

Many focus group participants in Jumla and Jajarkot claimed that if they were able to find work in Nepal's villages that paid NRs 1,200 per month, they would

not migrate to India. It is likely that food for work and similar programmes could reduce migration to India and elsewhere. A significant number of participants also said that if they were guaranteed three months' full employment in such programmes, they would not migrate. Indeed, areas where such programmes exist have seen a fall in the number of people migrating to India.

Paying for Migration

The financial cost of migration varies considerably. The survey found strong regional variations, with migrants from Central, Western and Eastern regions found to be paying more than those from the Mid-west and Far-West. Figures vary, of course, with the migrant's destination, and affordability is a determinant of the migrant's choice of route and mode of transport. Table 14 shows that average cost of migration among the surveyed migrant households is higher for a destination in Nepal than in India.

TABLE 14 Average Cost of Migration, by Destination

MIGRATION	COST (NRS)
Within Nepal	3,750
To India	2,553
To a third country	89,847

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Around 70 per cent of migrants borrowed money to pay the expenses incurred to travel to India. There are also caste-based variations within that figure, with 87 per cent of Dalits borrowing money, while 67 per cent of Brahmins and Chetris and 60 per cent of Janajatis borrow. Table 15 shows the sources of funding for migration purposes for different wealth groups.

Moneylenders Rarely Migrate

Most migrants from the Far- and Mid-Western Hills will borrow money to finance their journey to India. Interest rates range between the upper and mid levels of extortion. In one Dailekh village, migrants typically take out loans in Nepali Rupees, but must repay them in Indian Rupees* plus monthly interest of around 5 per cent. At that rate, over NRs7,000 will be repaid on a one-year loan of NRs2,500.

*(*IRs 1.00 = NRs1.60)*

TABLE 15 Source of Funds to Pay for Migration, by Wealth Category

SOURCE	TOTAL		WEALTH CATEGORY							
	NO.	%	VERY POOR		POOR		AVERAGE		ABOVE AVERAGE	
			NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Own savings	89	21.45	8	5.67	41	24.40	28	35.90	12	42.86
Borrowed from formal bank	10	2.41	1	0.71	2	1.19	4	5.13	3	10.71
Borrowed from moneylender	296	71.33	127	90.07	113	67.26	43	55.13	13	46.43
Borrowed from other source	12	2.89	2	1.42	8	4.76	2	2.56		
Selling assets	2	0.48	2	1.42						
Others	6	1.45	1	0.71	4	2.38	1	1.28		
TOTAL	**415**	**100.00**	**141**	**100.00**	**168**	**100.00**	**78**	**100.00**	**28**	**100.00**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Without access to formal credit institutions, traditional moneylenders are the only source of loans for poor people without collateral. The interest rates that these moneylenders charge grossly exceed the bounds of reason and fair profit, and focus group discussions suggest that they typically range from 30 to 60 per cent. The interest can soon surpass the original loan, but both must be repaid. In this way, the cycle of poverty is deepened, because the need to resort to such usury requires the borrower to be very poor to start with and therefore unable to build reserves during periods of adequate food security and income. Under those circumstances, they are unlikely to be able to save enough to repay the loan and interest, and live and eat sufficiently, when conditions return to normal. Debt can readily become a chronic companion that passes from one generation to the next.

Traditional moneylenders' interest rates grossly exceed the bounds of reason and fair profit — they typically range from 30 to 60 per cent

A small number of very poor people have resorted to selling assets to finance migration, possibly because they were too poor even for the moneylender's risk profile. Above averagely wealthy migrants tend to rely more on their own savings than on borrowing. Access to formal sources of credit by poor and very poor communities is very limited, which helps explain the extortionate rates that are consistently charged by local moneylenders.

10 How People Migrate: Routes and Logistics

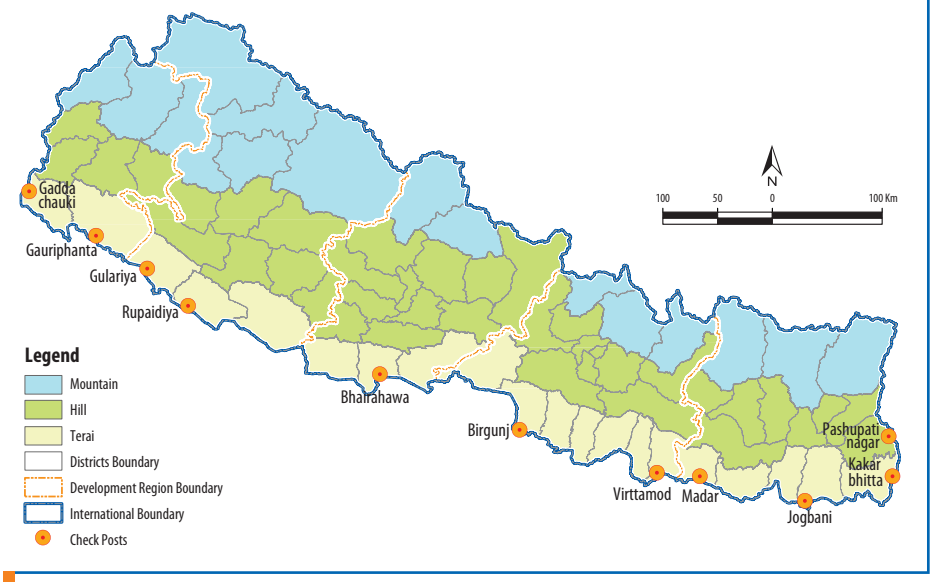
Summary

- Rupaidiya, Gaddachauki and Bhairahawa are the most popular border crossing points among surveyed migrants.
- Most migrants travel in groups, using a combination of bus and train for their journey, and spend their nights on a bus or train.
- Festivals are the most important reason to return home among surveyed migrants.
- Most surveyed migrants intend to migrate again.
- Mumbai, Delhi and India's North-West are among the most popular destinations for migrants from the West, Mid-West and Far-West Hills

Nepal-India Border Points

The 11 border points surveyed were Pashupatinagar, Kakarvitta, Jogmani and Madar in the Eastern Development Region; Vittamod and Raksaul in the Central Development Region; Bhairahawa in the Western Development Region; Rupaidiya and Gulariya in the Mid-western Development Region; and Gaurifanta and Gaddachauki in the Far-Western Development Region. The survey was conducted in two stages, the first in November 2007 just before the Dasain festival; and the second in December, just after the summer crops had been harvested and the winter crops planted. The first targeted returning migrants, the second those on their way out. Both took place over one week and were conducted simultaneously at all eleven border points (Map 3).

MAP 3 Surveyed Border Points



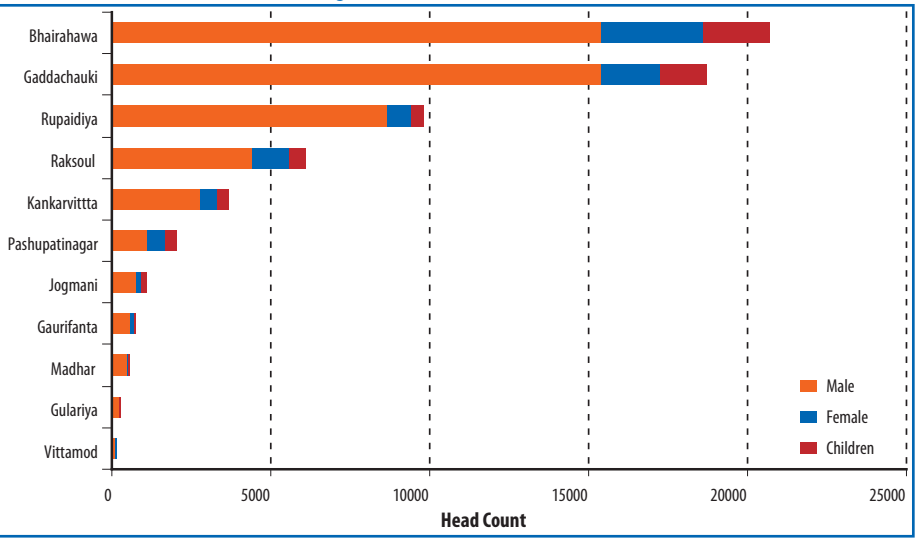
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

Migrants' Routes

Enumerators began the count at 0700 and ended at 1900 on each day. One hour was taken for lunch, from 1200 to 1300. The highest number of migrants recorded left through the Bhairahawa border (>20,000), followed by Gaddachauki (>15,000), Rupaidiya (c. 10,000) and Rakshaul (>5,000). For returning migrants the largest number was recorded in Rupaidiya and Gaddachauki (>9,000), followed by Bhairahawa (>3,000) and Gaurifanta (c. 2,000).

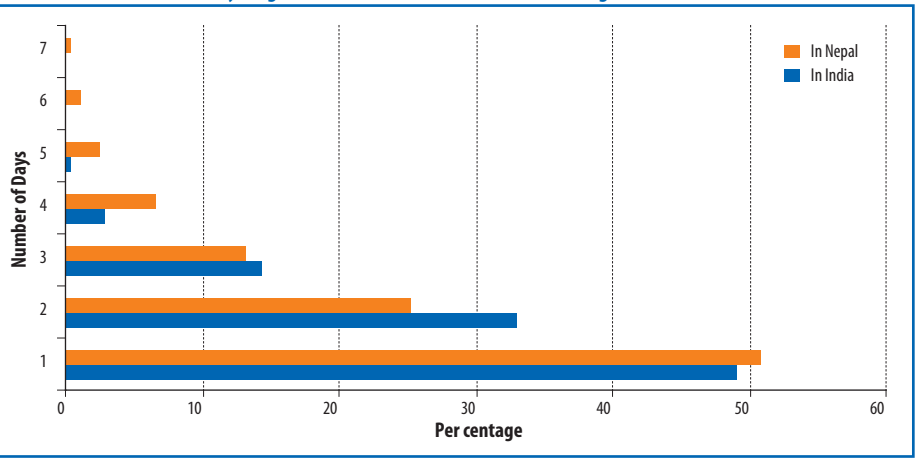
Figure 11 shows that approximately half of all migrants to and from India started their journey within one travelling day of the border. Most use bus and/or train as the main mode of transport.

FIGURE 10 Number of Outbound Migrants Within One Week Period (December 2007)



Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

FIGURE 11 Time Taken by Migrants to Travel to the Border Crossing



Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

Within Nepal, most migrants stay overnight in a hotel or hostel. An overwhelming majority of Nepali migrants travelling in India spent their nights on board the train or bus on which they are travelling.

TABLE 16 Overnight Accommodation

ACCOMMODATION	% OF MIGRANTS	
	IN NEPAL	IN INDIA
Hotel/hostel	53.8	9.5
Relatives/friends	18.4	2.9
Open air	2.3	2.0
On bus/train	15.6	78.3
Bus or train station	8.2	4.7
Others	1.6	2.7

Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

The majority of Nepali migrants travel in groups as shown in Table 17. The average size of the group is 7 to 8 people for migrants leaving Nepal and 5 to 6 people for those returning to Nepal from India. Almost half of the migrants travelling in groups travel together with family members.

TABLE 17 Migrants Travelling Alone or in a Group

TRAVELING	PER CENTAGE OF MIGRANTS	
	OUTGOING	RETURNING
Alone (%)	22.7	23.8
Group (%)	77.3	76.2
Average group size (no.)	7.5	5.7

Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

Passage to India

Migrants whose journey begins in the Mountains and Hills have a walk of several hours — or several days — before they reach a functional road. From there, they usually take a bus to the border point. Once they are in India, bus or train is the usual form of transport. The primary destination for the first-time migrant is often a contact within the migrant's network. There, friends, neighbours and other contacts can assist in finding work. The total cost of the journey ranged from NRs 2,300 to NRs 3,000 for the migrants interviewed, the variations being a function of distance travelled and the form of transport that was used (see also Chapter 9).

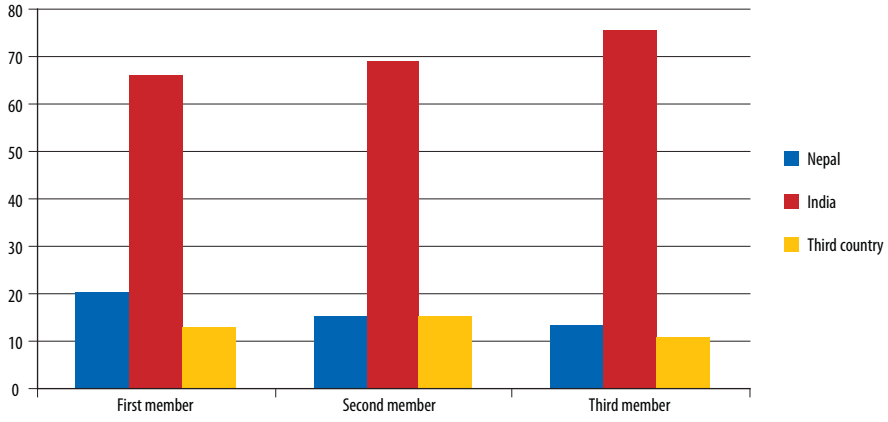
Choice of Destination

In households with more than one migrant, India is the first-choice destination for an overwhelming majority (Figure 12). Indeed, the more household members

migrate, the more likely they are to choose India. Around one-fifth of a household's first migrants will go to other parts of Nepal, with fewer than one in seven electing to migrate to a third country. These proportions reduce further for second and subsequent migrants in a household.

The choice of destination is influenced heavily by opportunity cost and by the experiences of previous migrants. India requires the least financial outlay of any place outside Nepal, travel options are flexible, and established routes, destinations and job markets all combine to influence choice. Focus group discussions revealed a further reason for the choice of destination within India. Migrants working as security guards explained that when they wanted leave for a month or longer, it was granted only when they were able to provide a replacement for their absence. Therefore, many migrants contacted their families in Nepal to ask them to find a locally trusted person to work during the permanent job holder's leave.

FIGURE 12 Migrants' Destinations (Percentage of Migrants)



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

The main destinations for migrants from the Central, Western, Mid-Western and Far-Western regions of Nepal are Maharashtra, Mumbai, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and Ahmedabad. Migrants from the Eastern region, meanwhile, favoured Meghalaya, Shillong, Assam, Delhi, Kashmir and Himachal

Migrants working as security guards in India are often asked to provide a replacement while they take extended leave.

Pradesh. Many of the respondents that had recently returned from Maharashtra confidently reported that 'few' Maharashtran households are without a Nepali worker. Those workers came mainly from Dailekh, Accham, Bajura and Jajarkot districts. Only a small number had migrated with their families. The choice of Maharashtra was determined by existing migrant networks and an established route for migrants from their localities.

Reliable, permanent employment at home can inhibit migration

During one focus group discussion at Rakam Karnali, in Dailekh, only two non-Dalit participants had never gone to India, and that because they had permanent jobs as postmen. As stated previously, this would suggest that reliable, permanent employment at home can inhibit migration.

TABLE 18 Migrants' Origins and Main Destinations in India

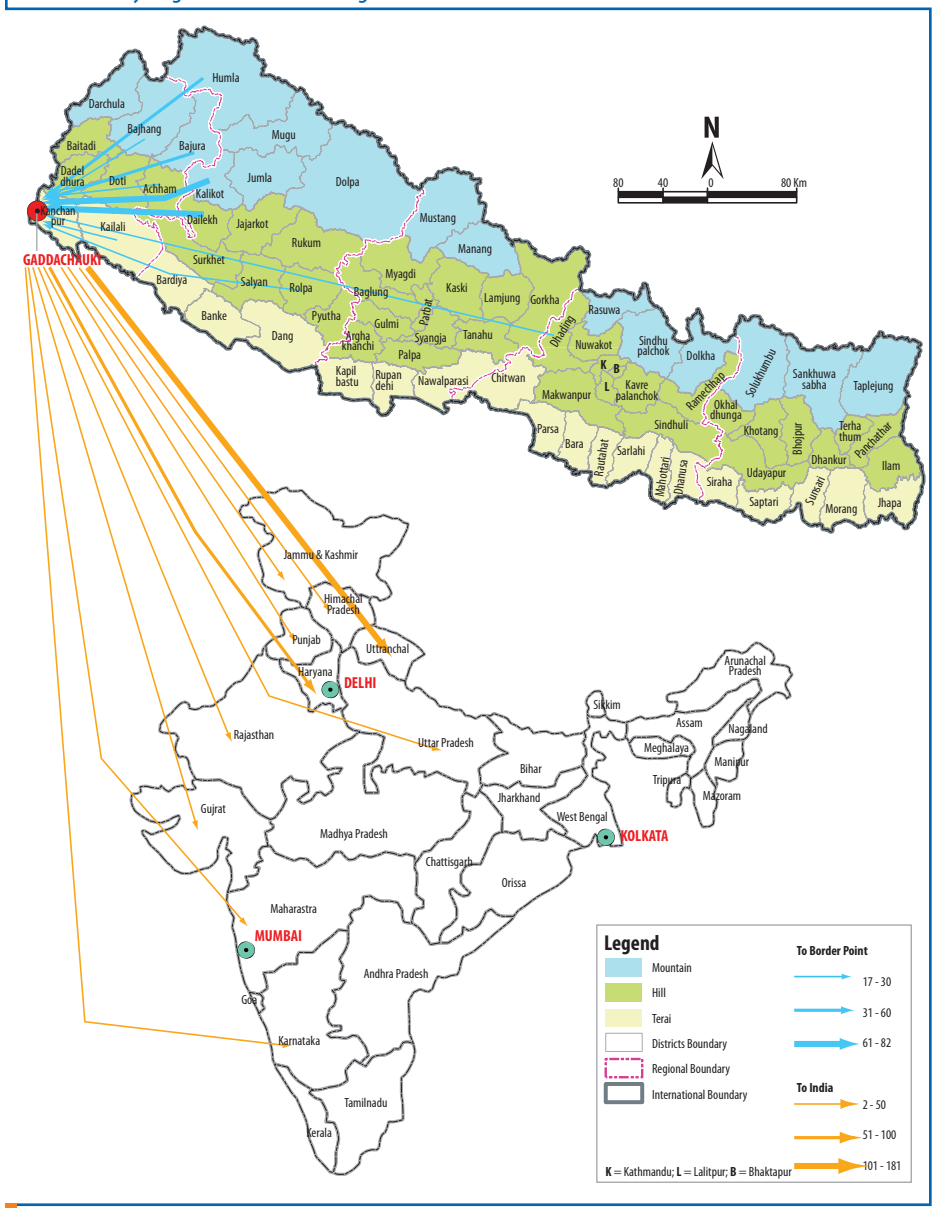
ORIGIN			
DEVELOPMENT REGION	ECOLOGICAL ZONE	FGD HELD	MAIN DESTINATION OF MIGRANTS IN INDIA
Far-Western	Mountain	Bajura	Garawal, Delhi, Mumbai
		Bajhang	Bangalore, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh
	Hill	Achham	Maharastra, Mumbai, Surat, Delhi, Hyderabad, Nagpur, Pithouragad, Punjab
	Terai	Kailali	Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Madras, Mumbai
Mid-Western	Mountain	Jumla	Utranchal, Himachal Pradesh
		Kalikot	Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Ahmedabad, Maharashtra, Mumbai
		Dolpa	Delhi, Kalapahar, Mumbai
	Hill	Dailekh	Uttaranchal, Himachal, Ahmedabad, Maharashtra, Mumbai, Kalapahar, Delhi, Nagpur, Garawal, Kumau, Rishikesh, Kargil, Almoda
		Jajarkot	Garawal, Mumbai
		Rukum	Simla, Kargil, Kolkata, Mumbai, Kalapar, Goha, Delhi, Bangalore
	Terai	Banke	Delhi, Mumbai, Simla, Garawal, Kashmir, Gujarat
Western	Hill	Baglung	Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai
Central	Hill	Nuwakot	Mumbai, Himachal Pradesh, Kashmir
Eastern	Hill	Okhaldunga	Kolkata, Meghalaya, Assam,
		Udayapur	Meghalaya, Assam, Delhi, Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh
	Terai	Saptari	Delhi, Punjab
		Sirha	Delhi, Punjab, Luddhiyana, Kolkata

Source: Focus Group Discussions (March 2008)

The maps on the following pages show the key routes taken by surveyed migrants at each border point. Thicker arrow indicate more frequented migrant routes. The maps suggest that migrants tend to choose the border crossing that is closest

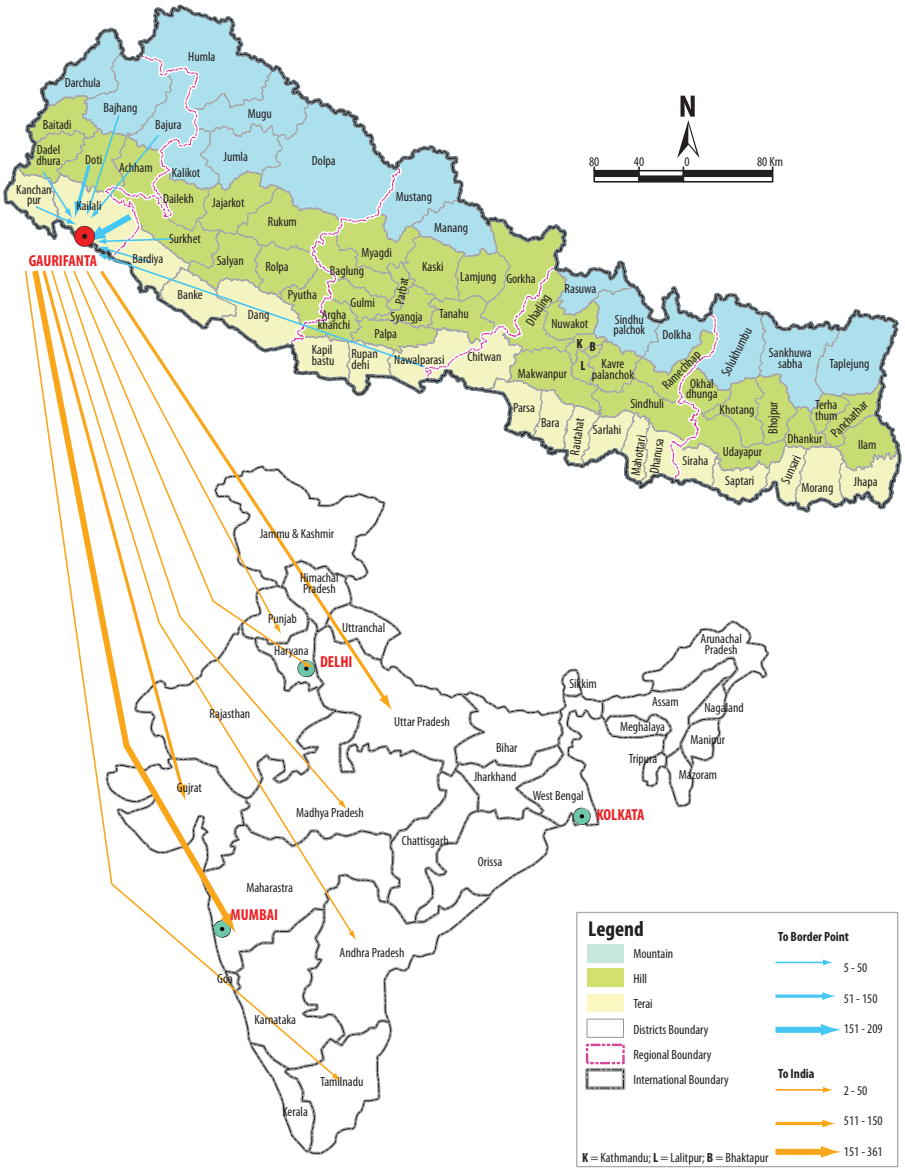
to their home, and that destinations are determined by proximity, by established migration patterns, and by the pull of major local economies such as those in Maharashtra, North-Western Indian States and West Bengal. These maps may also help inform the design of potential health education initiatives targeted at migrants and aimed particularly at increasing understanding of HIV/AIDS.

MAP 4 Key Migration Routes through Gaddachauki



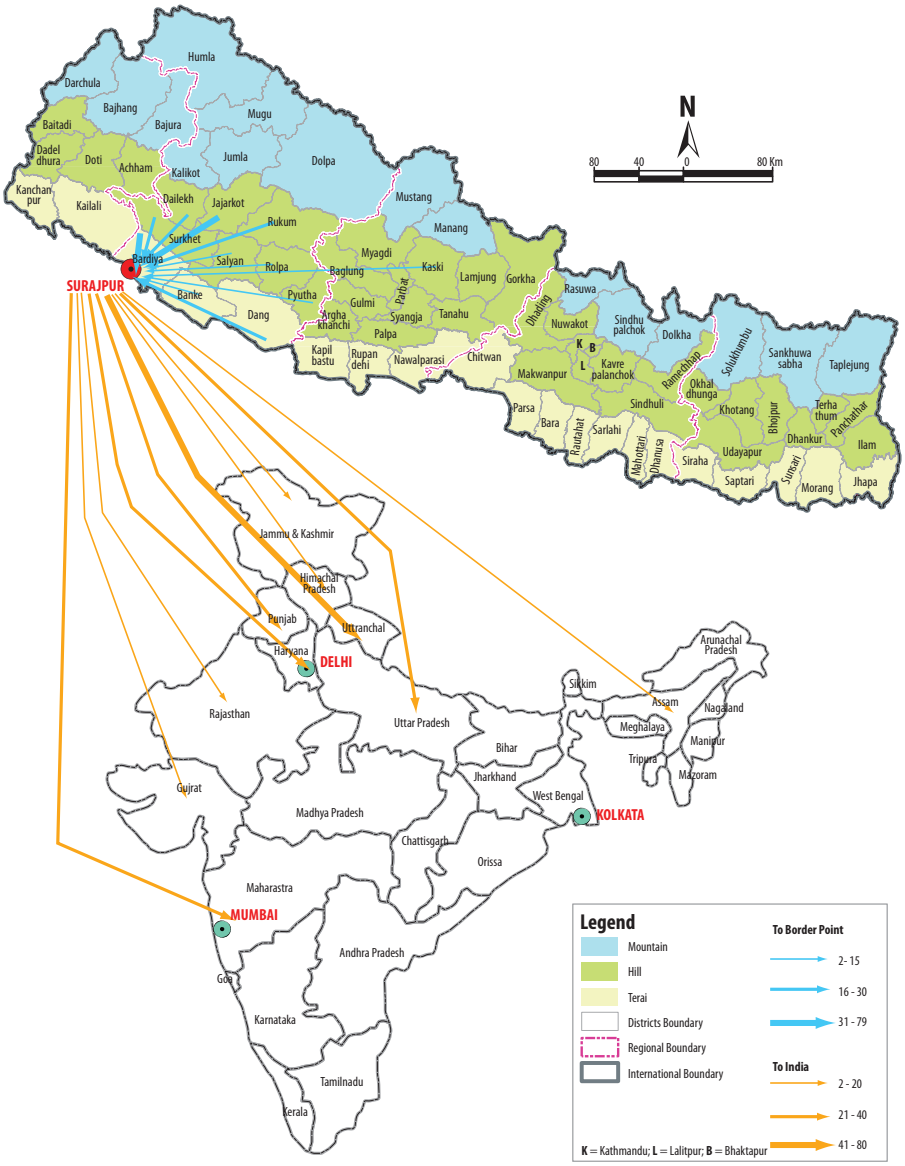
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 5 Key Migration Routes through Gaurifanta



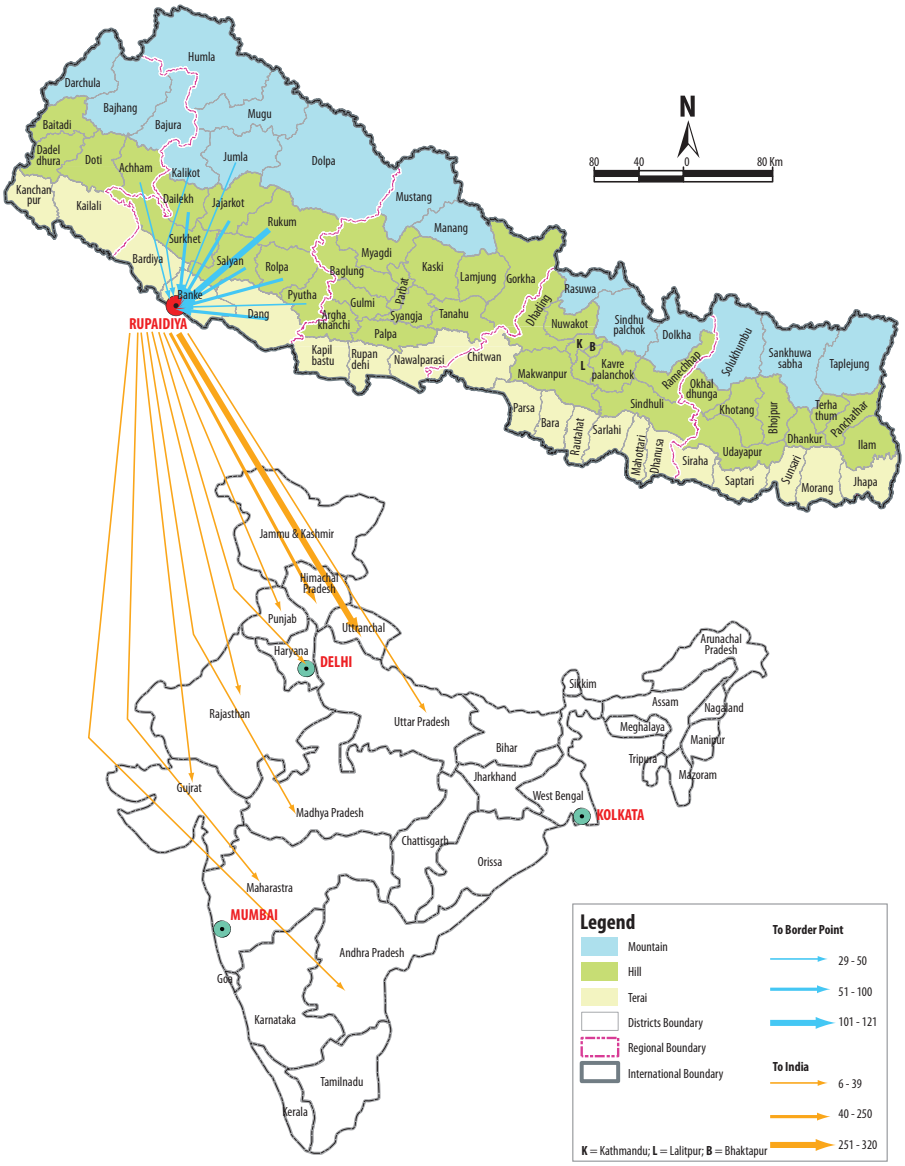
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 6 Key Migration Routes through Surajpur



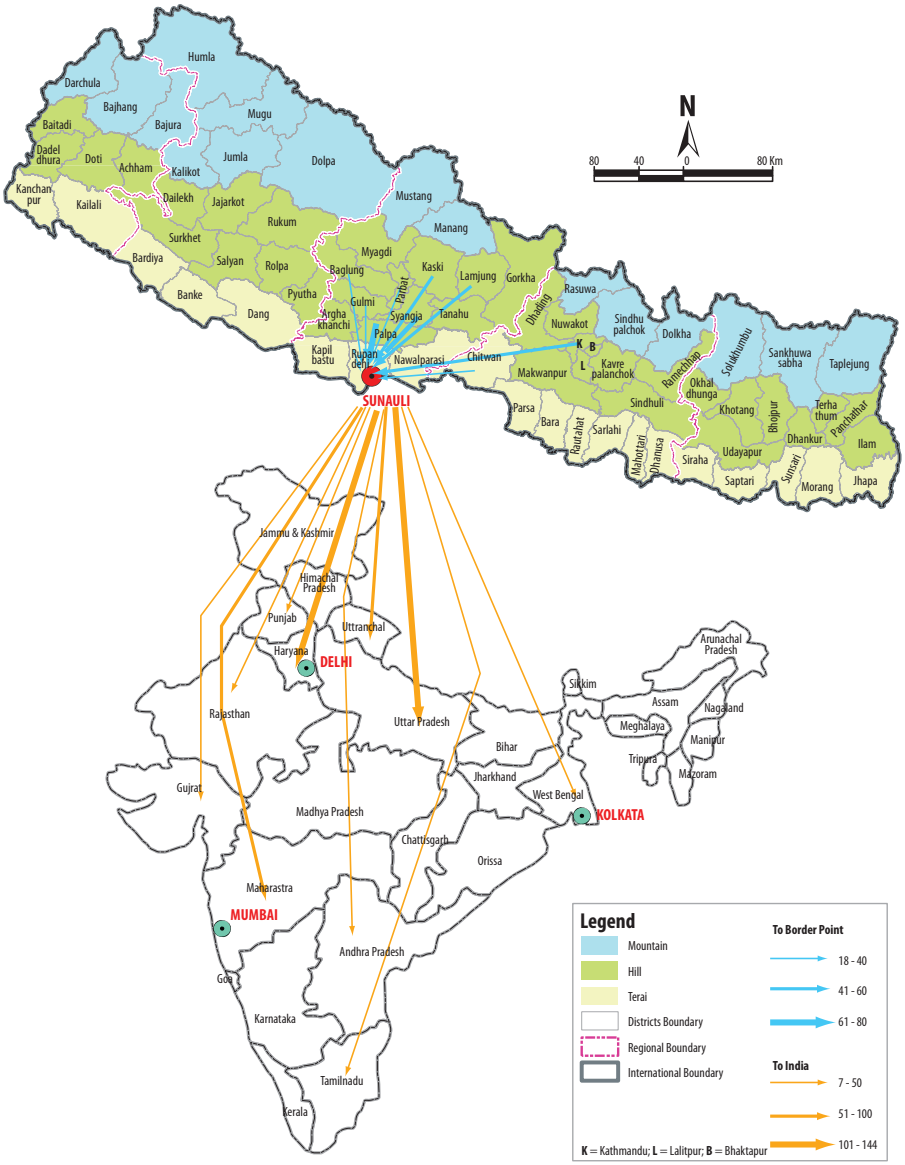
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 7 Key Migration Routes through Rupaidiya



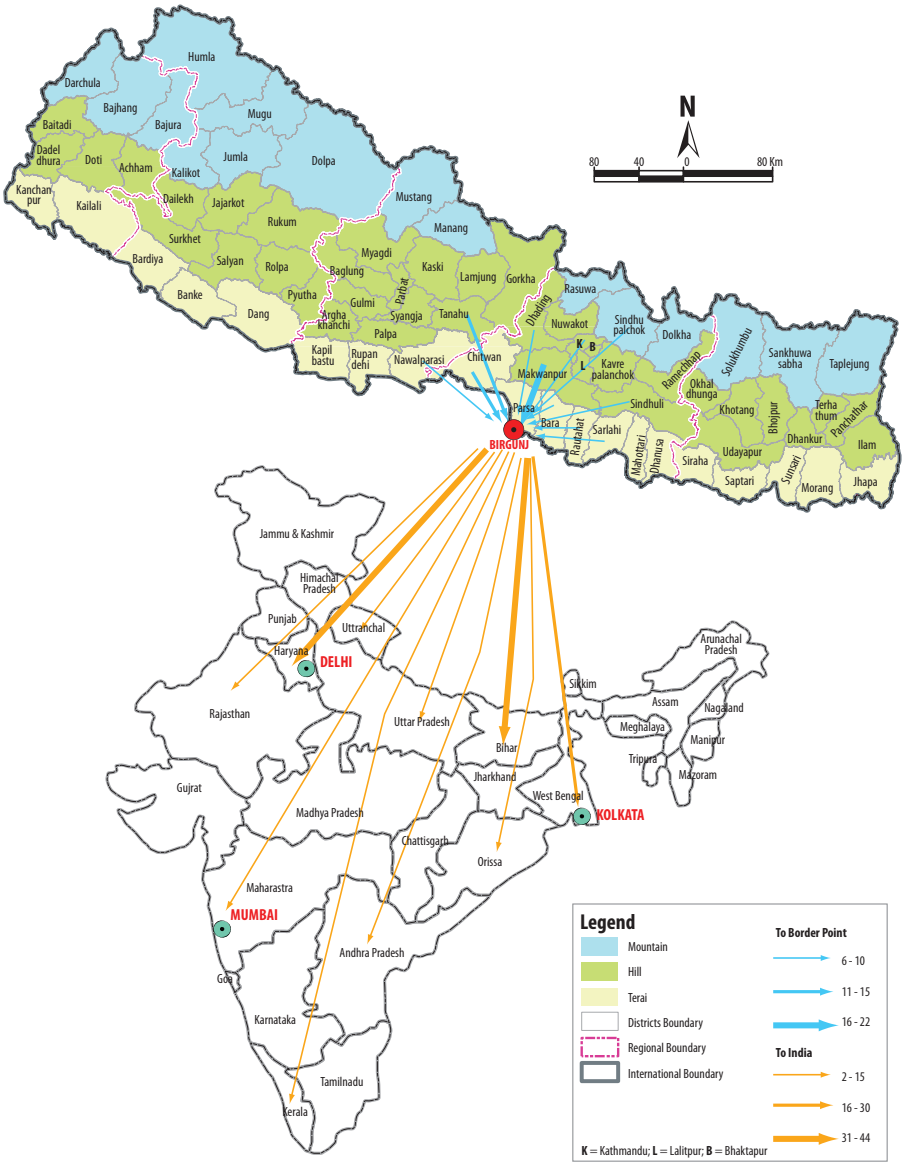
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 8 Key Migration Routes through Sunauli



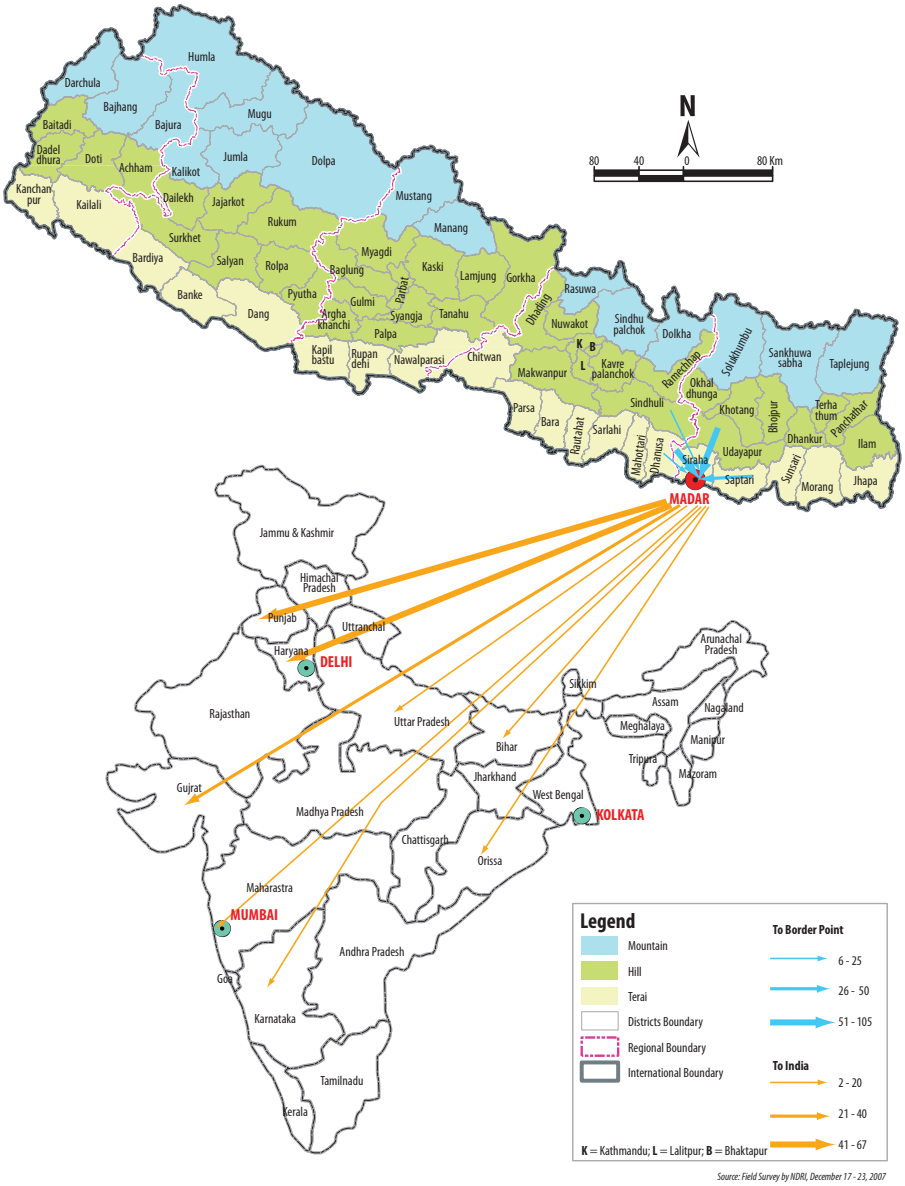
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 9 Key Migration Routes through Birgunj



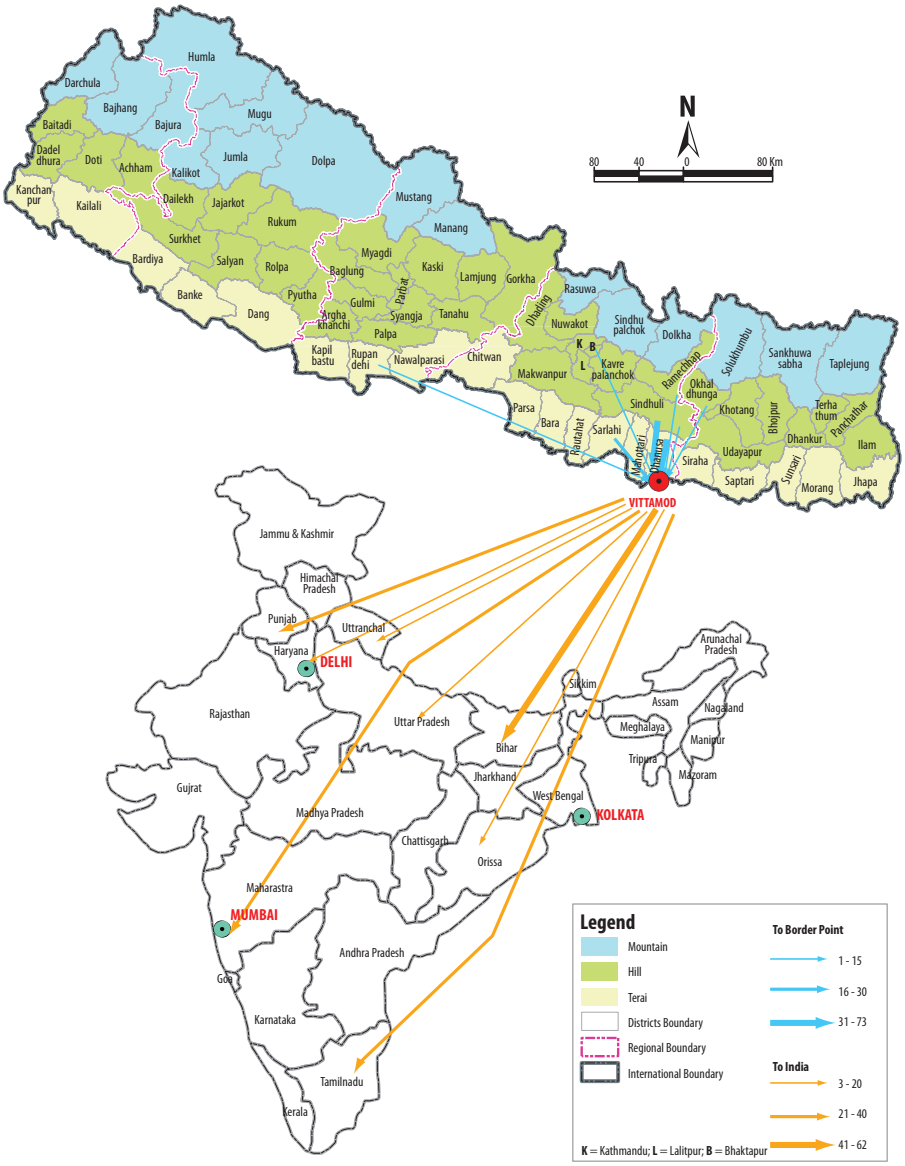
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 10 Key Migration Routes through Madar



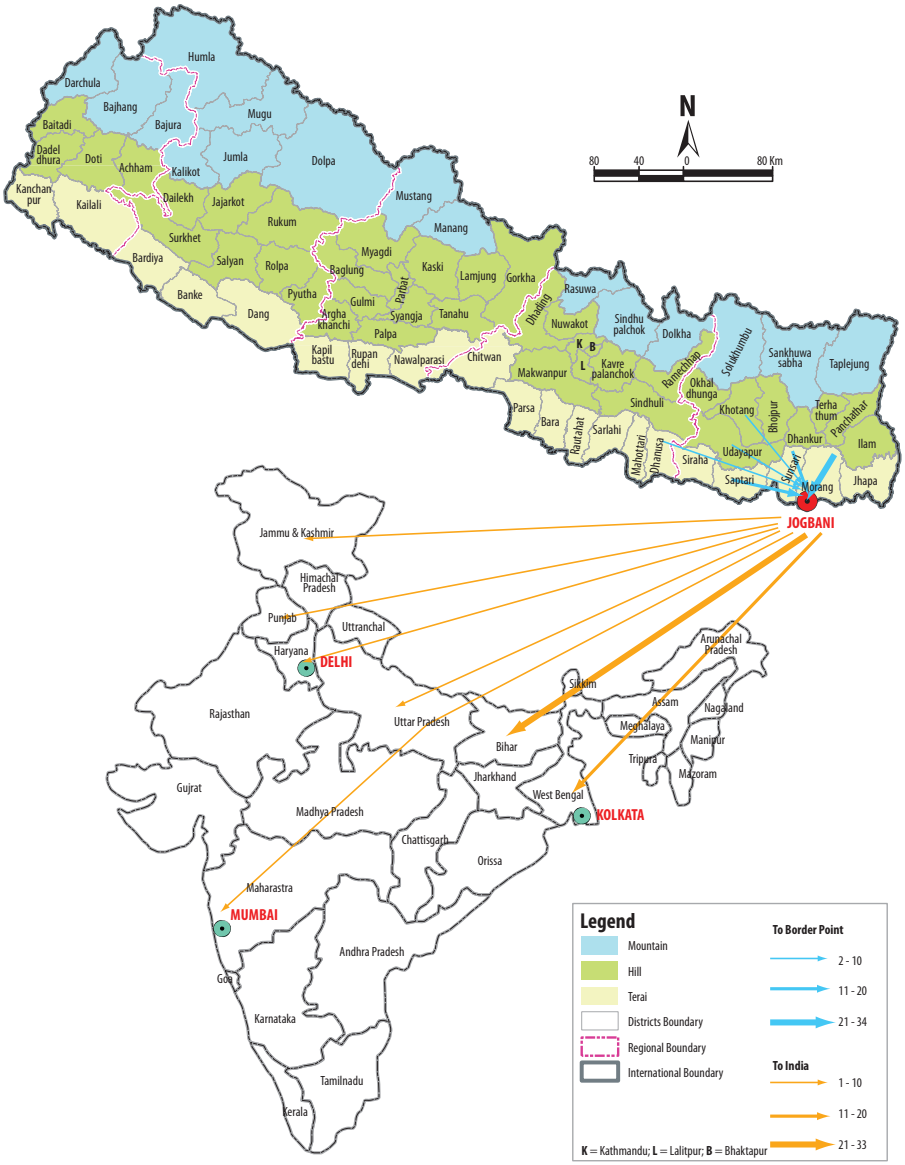
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 11 Key Migration Routes through Vittamod



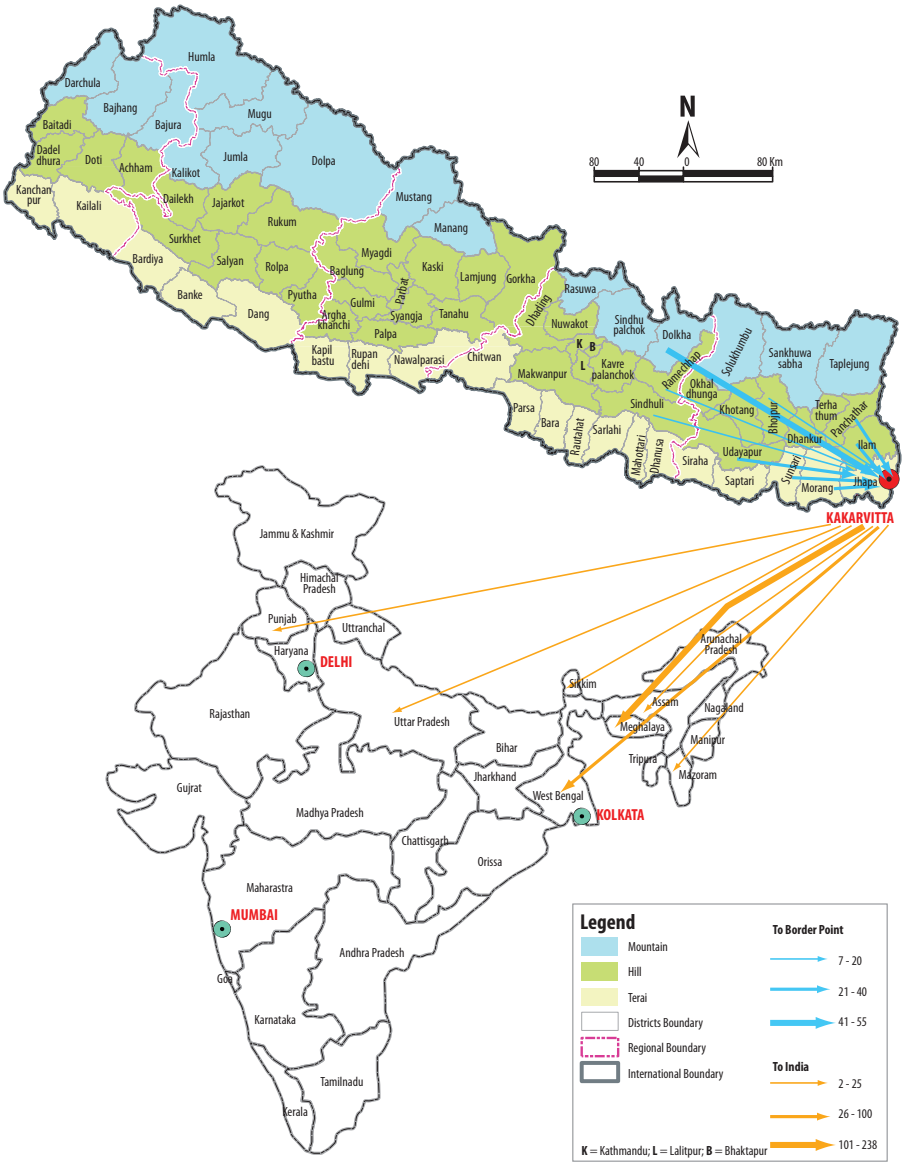
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 12 Key Migration Routes through Jogbani



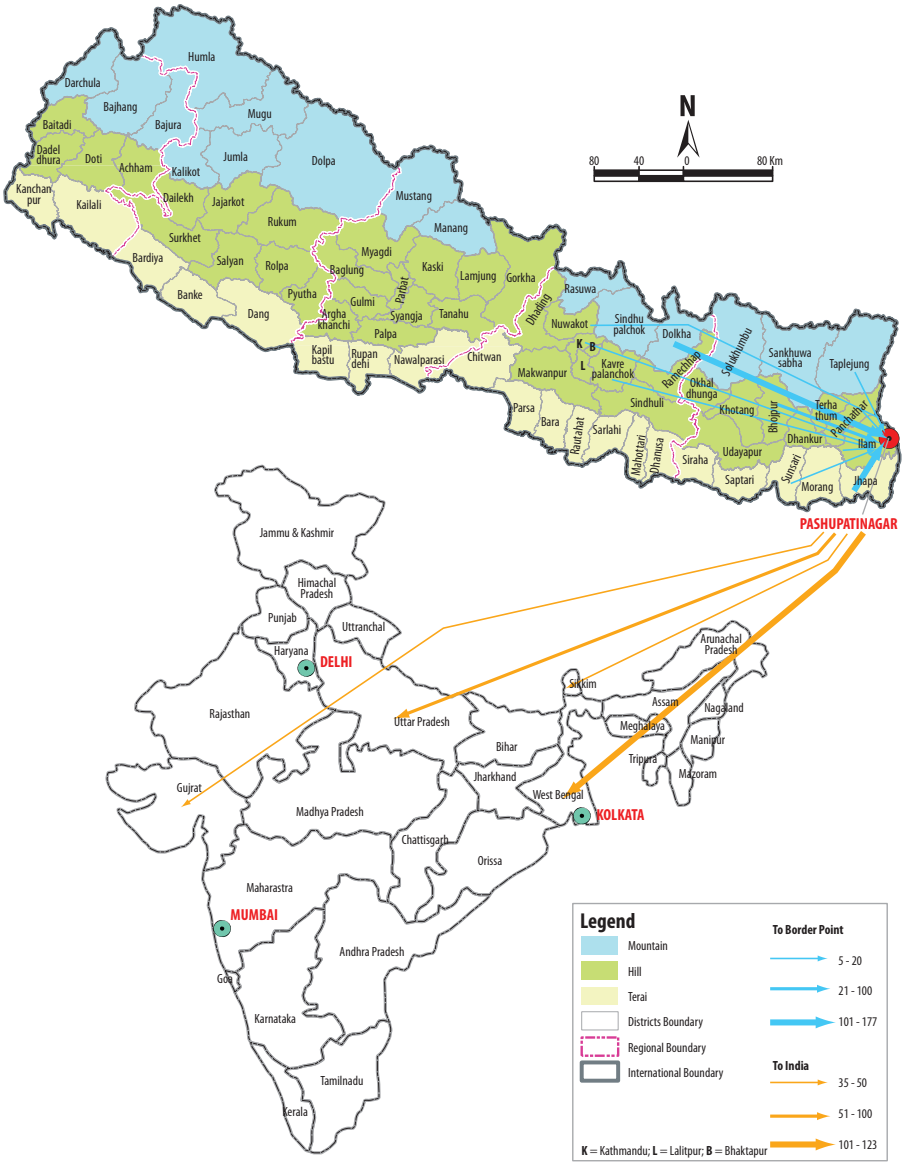
Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 13 Key Migration Routes through Kakarvitta



Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

MAP 14 Key Migration Routes through Pashupatinagar



Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

11 Migration and Remittances

Summary

- Almost one-third of Nepali households receive remittances.
- The amount of remittances from India has reduced, but still accounts for about one-quarter of the total.
- There is a clear east-west progression in Nepal's receipts from India, with the East receiving the least and the West the most.
- Carrying money home is the favoured means of remittance in the study area.
- The peek in receipts of remittances from India coincides with the main period of in-migration in March and April and before the start of the October festivals.
- Remittances sent by migrants from India are the lowest (approximately NRs 9,800) followed by Nepal (NRs 14,800). Annual remittances sent by migrants from third countries are substantially higher at a little more than NRs 83,000.
- The bulk of remittances is used for education and clothing, followed by food.
- Basic foodstuffs appear to be the most important in-kind remittances, with rice particularly important. This suggests significant food insufficiency among migrant households.

Remittances are the income received by a household in one place from a member of that household living in another place. Globally, remittance flows are hugely significant and are growing steadily. In 2006, official remittances were estimated to be worth $268 billion, of which around three-quarters goes to developing countries. Research suggests that informal, unrecorded remittances might increase that figure by another 50 per cent[7]. If that is the case, remittances

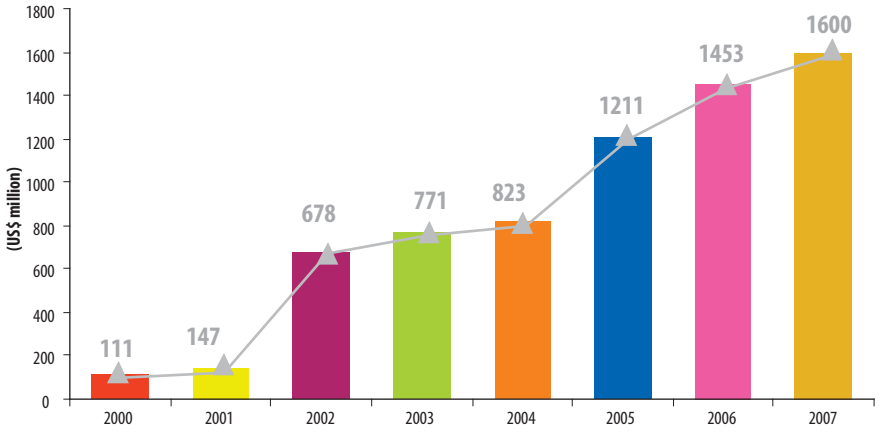
[7] ODI (2007): *Remittances During Crises: Implications for Humanitarian Response.*

around the world are more than double the total of official development aid and are worth more than foreign direct investment. Remittances can and do support development, because they contribute directly to the recipient households. They can also play an important role in managing or recovering from shocks and crises.

In Nepal, official figures indicate that remittances make up some 15 per cent of Gross Domestic Product and have grown from US$ 111 million in 2000 to an estimated US$ 1.6 billion in 2007. These figures include only the officially recorded remittances. The true size of remittances, including unrecorded flows through formal and informal channels is believed to be much larger.

Remittances were one of the predominant reasons for the fall in poverty from 42 per cent in 1995/96 to 31 per cent in 2003/04[8].

FIGURE 13 Official Remittances (US$ million)



Source: Development Prospects Group, Migration and Remittances Fact Book, World Bank

Data from the Nepal Living Standard Survey show that almost one-third of all households receive remittances. There has been an interesting change in the source of remittances in recent years. In 1995/96, about one-third of all remittances received in Nepal came from India. By 2003/04, this had reduced to less than one-quarter, with more than half coming from other countries. This shift is due largely to increasing systematic migration to Middle East countries, where earnings are generally higher. Of course, many migrants to India carry some or all of their remittances with them when they return to Nepal and those sums may not be included in official data.

[8] CBS (2006): *Resilience Amidst Conflict" An Assessment of Poverty in Nepal 1995-96 and 2003-04.*

TABLE 19 Summary of Remittances Received in Nepal, 1995/96 – 2003/04

DESCRIPTION	1995/96	2003/04	CHANGE (%)
Percentage of households receiving remittances	23.4	31.9	+ 36.32
Average remittances per recipient household (Nominal Rs)	15,160	34,698	+ 128.88
Share of remittances received by households within Nepal	44.7	23.5	- 47.43
Share of remittances received by households from India	32.9	23.2	- 29.48
Share of remittances received by households from other countries	22.4	53.3	+ 137.95
Share of remittances in households' total income among recipients	26.6	35.4	+ 33.08
Per capita remittance amount for all Nepal (Nominal Rs)	625	2,100	+ 236.00
Total amount of remittances received (Nominal Rs)	12,957,840,907	46,365,466,726	+ 257.82

Source: Nepal Living Standards Survey, Government of Nepal (2003/04)

It is also interesting to note the geographical distribution of households receiving remittances from external sources (Table 20). A clear east-west progression can be seen in receipts from India, with the East receiving least and the Far-West receiving most.

TABLE 20 Geographical Distribution of Remittances, by Source

DEVELOPMENT REGION	INTERNAL (%)		EXTERNAL (%)			
	URBAN NEPAL	RURAL NEPAL	INDIA	MALAYSIA	SAUDI/QATAR/UAE	OTHER COUNTRIES
East	22.8	29.2	21.6	6.0	17.1	3.4
Central	34.7	28.6	23.9	1.7	6.1	3.7
West	16.8	19.9	42.4	3.6	11.1	6.2
Mid-West	11.1	24.4	59.5	2.0	2.5	0.0
Far-West	13.4	21.1	62.9	1.6	0.0	0.0

Source: Nepal Living Standards Survey, Government of Nepal (2003/04)

Remittance Behaviour

The frequency with which a migrant sends money home varies considerably. There is no pre-determined period for sending a remittance — it might be as frequent as every month or as infrequent as every two years when the migrant brings the money home with him. Problems in sending money safely and reliably can also impact frequency. If a migrant experiences difficulty with one sending method, he might wait longer before sending the next tranche by another method. The amount of each remittance can also vary, depending on variables such as availability of work, on-time receipt of wages, living costs and any medical expenses he might incur. Such unpredictability makes it hard for recipient households, particularly poor households that depend on remittances for daily living, to budget for routine expenses with any degree of certainty. This becomes more problematic still in times of acute crisis.

The 'hand-carry' system is, by far, the most commonly used method of remitting money by Nepali migrants in India

Three main remittance methods are commonly used by Nepali migrants. The most commonly used by those in India, and the simplest, is for the migrant to carry the money with him when he returns to Nepal — the 'hand-carry system'. This is used by more than 97 per cent of migrants interviewed through this study, with a further two per cent sending money through returning friends and colleagues. The great advantages of this method are its simplicity, the absence of transaction charges and that when the migrant carries the money himself, he retains control over it at all times. The downsides are that the migrant is exposed to the risk of theft or loss, and incurs some travel costs. It also means that recipient households might receive remittances infrequently, which is mainly when the migrant returns home. Rotating credit systems are also used, particularly by migrants in the Middle East and those in the army. Several variations exist, but typically it involves a group of migrants contributing equally to a pool of money, which goes to one migrant's household only in each transfer. This gives the recipient household a larger amount, but they receive it less frequently.

The hundi system is widespread, but illegal. It involves migrants transferring their remittances to a hundi merchant in the place where they live. That merchant pools remittances and transfers them to the intended recipient. The transfer process is typically characterised by a complicated web of conspiracy in which the money is transferred from place to place, or is transfigured into gold or other commodities before returning to its original cash state in the destination country. This system carries transaction charges of up to 10 per cent. Despite the apparent risk that its illegality and complexity suggests, few migrants experience loss, because it is in the hundi merchants' interest to retain satisfied customers. Its main advantages are convenience and speed — the process typically takes just a few days, because vast sums of money continuously circulate within the system and the recipient does not, therefore, have to wait until the money completes its elaborate physical journey through the system. But if a migrant loses his money to an unscrupulous hundi merchant, he loses it all; his sole redress thereafter will usually reside in the wish for divine wrath to be visited on the peculator. The hundi system is, however, more favoured by migrants in East Asia, the Americas and Europe than by those in India.

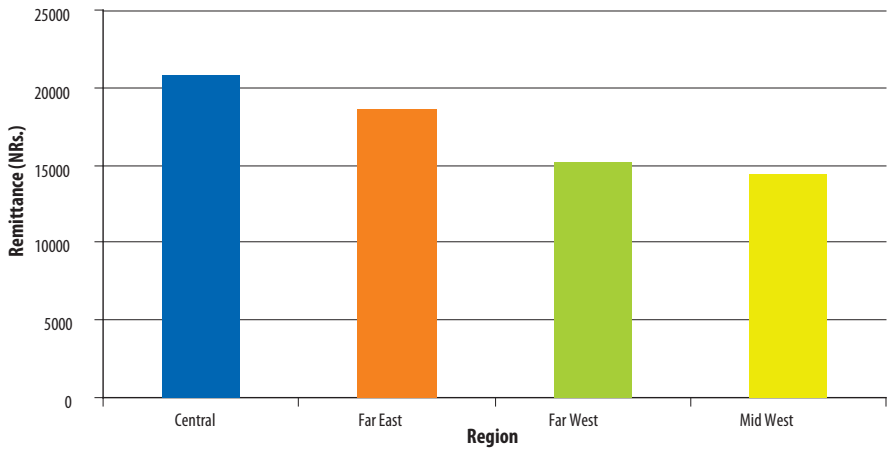
Remitting through banks or other financial institutions is the other main method of transferring money. Its advantages are its legality and safety. But few migrants

— and fewer still of those in India — use banks to remit. Less than one per cent of this study's respondents used banks to remit. Many recipients live in remote areas, often several days walk from the nearest bank. And the wives and mothers of poor migrants may well be illiterate and are, for the most part, certainly not equipped to navigate the manifold forms, certifications and other bumf typically required by banking bureaucracy. Similar bureaucratic deterrents exist in painful abundance in most Indian banks, and these may offer a further disincentive for migrants to remit in this way.

Household Remittances

The amount of remittances received by households varied widely. Average annual household receipts was around NRs 36,000 — or NRs 3,000 per month — from all countries (Figure 14). This figure is probably boosted by remittances in Baglung, which has many migrants in Japan, in other developed countries and in the Indian Army. Theirs is not seasonal or forced migration, whereas a greater number of poorer people in the Mid and Far-Western Hills migrate to India. The figure is considerably lower in these regions — averaging around NRs 15,000 per year in Far- and Mid-West Nepal.

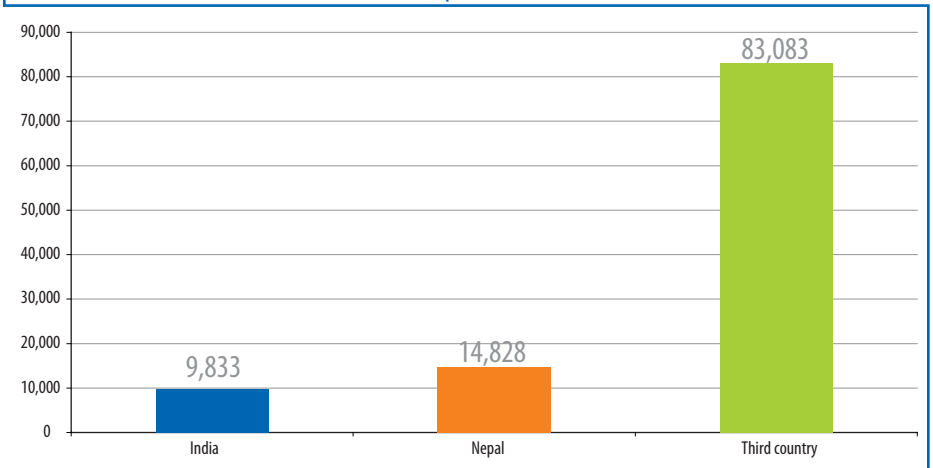
FIGURE 14 Remittances Received by Households, by Region



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Figure 15 shows the mean annual remittances received by households with migrant family members in India, Nepal or elsewhere. Mean remittances sent by migrants from India are the lowest (approximately NRs 9,800) followed by Nepal (NRs 14,830). Annual remittances sent by migrants from third countries are substantially higher at a little over NRs 83,000.

FIGURE 15 Mean Annual Remittances from Nepal, India and Third Countries



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Analysis of remittances by wealth categories and destinations shows that very poor migrants send the smallest amounts of money, irrespective of destination. This suggests the higher remittances are positively correlated with the knowledge, education and employability of the migrants.

TABLE 21 Remittances Received by Households, by Wealth Category and Destination

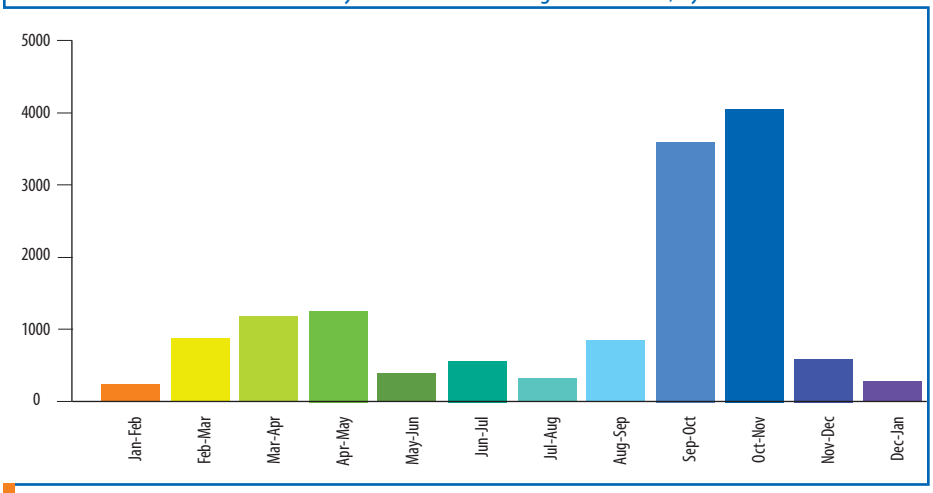
	MEAN ANNUAL REMITTANCES		
WEALTH CATEGORY	NEPAL	INDIA	THIRD COUNTRY
Very poor	6,219	6,177	46,545
Poor	6,637	8,209	38,929
Average	25,238	22,824	108,810
Above average	48,750	23,286	117,357

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Caste seems to play a role in the amount of remittances a migrant sends. The average for Dalits is substantially lower — about half — than that of Janajatis and other castes. This may be attributed to Dalit migrants' level of confidence, or their levels of education and literacy, or to caste-based discrimination in India.

Figure 16 shows the timings of remittances received by households from migrants in India. This offers a useful indicative guide, particularly when viewed with the main months of cropping, migration and food insecurity (Table 12, page 42). As most migrants hand-carry their remittances, the peek in receipts from India coincides with the main period of in-migration in March and April and before the start of the October festivals. During the main lean season in July and August, the average receipts of remittances by households are at their lowest levels.

FIGURE 16 Remittances Received by Households from Migrants in India, by Month



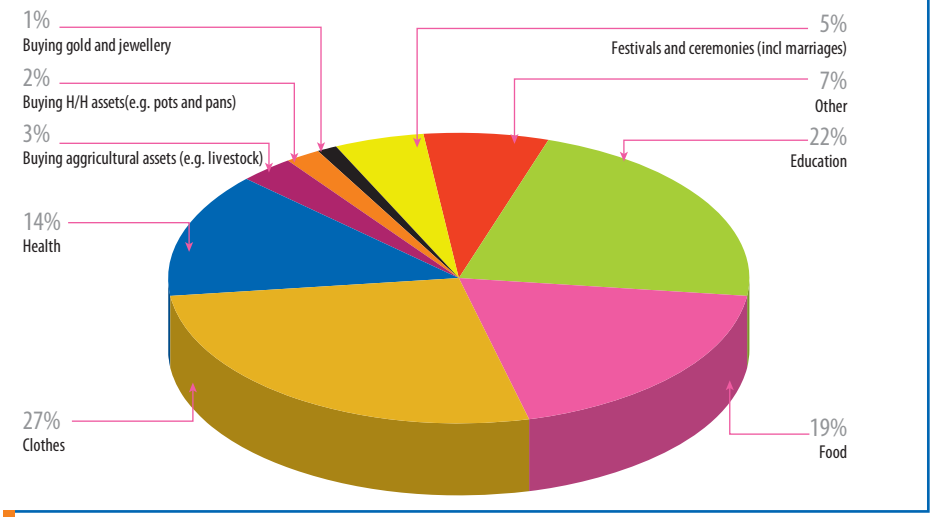
Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Use of Remittances

Most remittances are used by the poor for food, clothing and education

The survey found that the bulk of remittances was used for education and clothing, followed by food. The other major use was for health and treatment expenses. Fewer than five per cent of migrant households were able to use remittances for savings or accumulation of assets, which emphasises the importance of migration as a livelihood strategy in the surveyed regions. Focus group discussions underpin these findings, with many respondents stating that non-food essentials must be bought and migration is the only option, as the local economy does not generate sufficient cash (Table 22).

FIGURE 17 Households' Use of Remittances



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Non-Monetary Remittances

Returning migrants typically bring goods and foodstuffs with them. For the most part, these are items that are unavailable locally or are significantly cheaper or of a better quality. They include ornaments and jewellery, cooking utensils, soap, shampoo, tools, molasses, tea, oil, salt, spices, clothes, shoes, match boxes, sugar and biscuits. Migrants from very poor households brought back an average total of NRs 2,251 in in-kind remittances; those from poor households brought NRs 2,937; those from average wealth households brought NRs 3,025; and those from above average wealth households brought NRs 8,235. Dalits seem to bring more goods in terms of value, than other castes.

Basic foodstuffs appear to be the most important in-kind remittances for most groups, with rice particularly important. This suggests significant food insufficiency among migrant households in the study areas, even in households of above average wealth. Clothes were the highest value items brought home by migrants of every wealth category, reflecting low availability and a relatively high cost of clothing in the study areas. The large amount spent on clothes by migrants from above averagely wealthy households is probably more to do with luxury than basic necessity, in line with the amounts spent on other luxury items such as gold, jewellery and watches. The average value of all in-kind remittances by the wealthiest migrants is more than the total of all other wealth categories of migrant.

TABLE 22 Average Value of in-Kind Remittances, by Wealth Category (NRs)

	WEALTH CATEGORY			
	VERY POOR	POOR	AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE
Clothes	849	1,244	1309	4,031
Rice	829	863	696	1,250
Shoes	296	305	243	415
Wheat flour	87	58	10	0
Cooking utensils	63	73	59	0
TV/radio/electric appliances	56	53	150	1,092
Watches	37	83	186	758
Other food items	30	53	77	22
Other non-food	3	10	276	0
Jewellery	1	195	18	667
Total	**2,251**	**2,937**	**3,025**	**8,235**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Around 70 per cent of interviewed migrants also referred to other benefits from migration, including an improved social status, better patterns of nutrition, new social and business contacts, improved entrepreneurship and learning new technology.

12 Risks

Summary

- Migration involves risk to the migrant, to the migrant's household and wider community.
- The workload of women, children and the elderly increases significantly after a household member migrates.
- The incidence of sickness in adults also increases dramatically following the migration of a household member.
- Migrants' absence can leave their households living with reduced income, leading to lower quality of nutrition.
- The risk of poor health increases for the children of migrant households; children and women sometimes experience psychological effects from the migration of their husband or father.

For all its advantages, for all the money and resources it brings to communities chronically on or beyond the precipice of poverty and food security, for all its cultural acceptance and established tradition, migration involves risk: risk to migrants themselves, to their communities and, potentially, to their country.

Much of the literature on migration focuses on its economic aspects; little concerns itself with its risks and there are few data or measurements of risk. Discussions of risk must, therefore, rely to an extent on anecdotal evidence.

Media reports frequently highlight alleged violations of the rights — human and labour — of migrants. The most high profile cases seem to focus on migrants in Gulf countries and in South East Asia and often involve women, many of

whom work as domestic servants. The longer-term and more mundane abuse of migrants, however, rarely makes the spotlight. The payment to migrants of lower wages than their national counterparts is a common allegation, as is unpaid wages or severely delayed payment. This impacts the ability of migrants not only to live in the host country, but to send money to their households in their home country. Some migrants report that they are made to work excessively long hours, without holidays and in dangerous conditions where even basic health and safety measures are unobserved. If an unskilled migrant has a work-related accident — as is common on construction sites, for example — he will be fortunate if his employer organises or pays for treatment, or compensates him for loss of earnings.

A migrant will seek to maximise the amount he can save from his earnings and will do as much as he can to minimise his expenses while abroad. For the unskilled, poor migrant, this typically involves unimaginably sorry living conditions, perhaps sharing cramped and unhygienic quarters with many of his co-workers or fellow migrants. The health risks are all too clear. In major urban centres, such as Mumbai and Delhi, the risk of contagious disease — including tuberculosis, an insidious and increasing scourge of the urban poor — is highly significant. Many migrants are young men for whom the combination of lengthy separation from their families and a plentiful supply of brothels in towns and cities represents a further major risk — see Chapter 13 for more detailed discussion.

Delayed, or unpaid, wages impacts the ability of migrants to send money home

Theft of savings and other assets, at the workplace or in their living quarters or during the journeys between Nepal and their destination, is also reported.

A migrant's absence may coincide with reduced income for his household during the initial period, for instance, or when he is between jobs. In these times, poor households in particular are more vulnerable to food insecurity. Most at risk are women and children, who may skip meals, consume cheaper items or become dependent on the generosity of neighbours for food and other essentials. Their nutritional status can be severely compromised, with concomitant implications for their general health status. Frequent or longer-term absences of a migrating household member can also have social consequences

insofar as routine family life is disrupted and the bonds that bind family members together can weaken. The emotional impact of migration on both the migrant and his household is rarely considered, but is relevant to the social lives of migrant households. For the migrant, the potential for developing another relationship while away from home is ever present. The consequences for the household are probably more serious. In many communities, a woman's identity is defined in part by her role as a wife. She typically depends on her husband to lead the household and to provide for her and the family. The uncertainty of not knowing when her husband will return, when and how much he will send in remittances, whether it will be enough to meet the household's basic needs, the unspoken fear that her husband might not return, and the general absence of conjugal companionship all contribute to what Shrestha and Conway[9] describe as "life in the shadow" for many migrants' wives. Apart from the financial benefits, the only compensation for communities with high levels of migration is the solace of common experience.

At the broader national level, migration brings foreign exchange, but it can also foster dependence on destination countries. India has traditionally been the foremost destination for Nepalis working abroad, but recent years have seen a shift to Middle Eastern countries, which has brought a greater balance to the risk of dependence. Nevertheless, India remains the major destination for poorer migrants. The open border between the two countries allows and encourages this, but a major bilateral dispute or significant change in the political realities of either country could jeopardise continued free movement. An important additional risk, which is discussed further in Chapter 13, is epidemiological. Migrants are widely believed to be in the higher risk groups for contracting HIV/AIDS. The potential for a serious epidemic of HIV — or of tuberculosis or other contagious diseases in poor rural communities throughout the country — is therefore high.

What Problems do Migrants Face?

Many migrants are employed by contractors — middle men — rather than by the main employer. These contractors, sometimes reportedly in remunerative collusion with a migrant group leader, are known to pay less than the going rate

[9] Shrestha, N & Conway, D (2001): *The Shadow Life of a Migrant's Wife, in Aspects of Migration and Mobility* (Eds von der Heide, S & Hoffman, T).

to migrant workers, and to pay late. In some cases, they have also been known to disappear without paying wages. Lack of sick pay is also a risk faced by many unskilled migrant workers.

Some migrants described being robbed of money and possessions in both India and Nepal on their way home. With well-trodden routes and peak periods of return — for festivals — migrants who travel by the cheapest means make obvious targets for thieves. The risk is reduced when returning migrants travel in groups, as most do.

Focus group discussions and direct observation at the border points revealed a disturbing threat commonly faced by returning migrants. Highly organised gangs of criminals on both sides of the border regularly attack migrants travelling alone or in groups, stealing their money and possessions. This is an established phenomenon that preys on the vulnerability of poor migrants. The gangs are said to enjoy official protection locally, particularly from the police. That, of course, diminishes the protection that migrants and other citizens of both countries should be able to expect from those charged with ensuring an environment of safety and security.

During the years of conflict, there were occasional reports, unsubstantiated by this study, of migrants being charged informal tolls by both sides of the struggle to pass from one point to another on their journey. Also during those years, the government established a temporary system of registration that required migrants to produce formal documentation from their VDCs that confirmed their identity and intention to migrate to India. Registration offices were established at border points to record and distinguish bona fide migrants from those regarded to have a more sinister reason for their presence at the border. This registration office system started in around 2002 and ended in 2006.

There are few social organisations dedicated to protecting the interests of Nepali migrants in India. Those that do exist — the names 'Nepali Shiv Sena' and 'Jana Sampark Samiti' were mentioned by some migrants — tend to be either politically affiliated or effectively non-functional.

Communicating with Home

Post has traditionally been the principal means by which migrants communicated with their families at home, but this has largely been overtaken by phone. Many Nepali villages now have at least one phone, and the cost of calling from India has reduced dramatically in recent years. A large number of migrants said that they phoned home once a week, often at a pre-arranged time. Those that wish to

write reportedly favour personal delivery — through a friend or colleague who is returning home — over the postal system. Migrant families often also take the opportunity of a migrant from their village, or a neighbouring community, who is leaving for India to take quantities of post and perhaps small gifts with them.

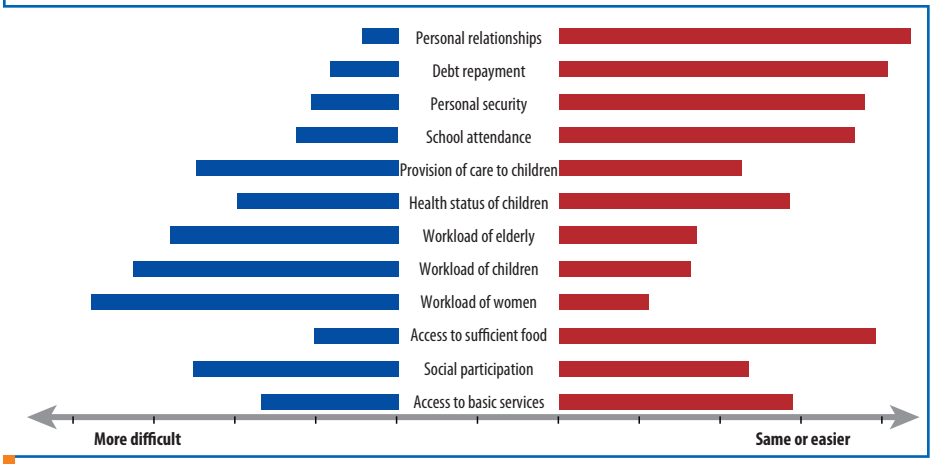
Impact of Migration on Migrant Households

What happens to the families the migrants leave behind? It is usually the strongest, most able-bodied person in the household that is the first to migrate — either as part of a normal livelihood strategy, or in times of shock and crisis. That, of course, typically leaves women, children and the elderly at home. They are faced not only with the extra work left by the migrant, but often with very limited means as a result of financing the migrant's journey, either fully or partly from their own resources or from a loan. Finances are, therefore, frequently very stretched for migrant households until they receive the first remittance and during long gaps between remittances.

Coping mechanisms include reduced food intake — perhaps by reducing the number of daily meals, or by substituting their normal diet with lower-quality or less preferred food items. In some cases, women from migrant households are known to gather food from the forest.

In all cases, the negative impact is greatest on the poorest households. The ability to cope seems to increase with wealth, which further underlines the extraordinary vulnerability of poor people.

FIGURE 18 Social Impact of Migration



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Figure 18 provides some insight into the impact of migration on the household. Particularly striking is the additional increase in the workload of women, elderly and children. This is an important finding that should be taken into consideration when designing food for work programmes in areas characterized by high numbers of migrant families.

The impact on children can be particularly severe. Inadequate food intake can lead to stunted growth and increased vulnerability to disease. In such cases, it is unlikely that funds will be available to the household for medical care. A decrease in the provision of proper care to children is also an important factor that could lead to increase malnutrition.

Focus group discussions revealed that school absenteeism increased while the migrant father is away from home. It was also reported that children often become "less sincere" during their father's absence. Participants referred specifically to difficulties in social relationships experienced by some migrant households' children, and problems in interacting in the locally accepted manner during weddings, funerals and other social gatherings.

Migrant households commonly report increased difficulty in accessing services. If the migrant has been the family's main link with government and its services, it can be difficult for someone not accustomed to such dealings to effectively navigate bureaucracy.

The psychological impact of migration is not widely discussed in development literature, but it certainly affects both the migrant and — arguably to a greater extent — the migrants' households. Absence risks the stability of relationships — between husband and wife, and between father and child — the more so when those absences are extended or frequent. In communities where migration is common, informal systems of community support exist. The extent to which they offer material help when needed is unclear, but the experience of previous

migrants and their families is likely to provide a measure of psychological benefit. Health and disease are among the greatest challenges to both migrants and their communities. In addition to the health risks faced by households while the migrant is away, communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis represent a major threat to the migrant and, by extension, to their families when they return home. This is discussed further in the following chapter.

13 Health

Summary

- The danger posed by HIV/AIDS to migrants as well as to their families and communities cannot be overstated.
- The major HIV/AIDS hotspots are concentrated in the Mid- and Far-Western parts of the Terai.
- Tuberculosis also presents a major health risk, particularly to migrants sharing cramped sleeping quarters.
- Figures suggest that seasonal labour migrants to India make up more than twice as many HIV cases as any other group.
- An adequate nutrition status is required to properly metabolise some TB and HIV drugs.
- Knowledge of how HIV is spread is very limited.
- HIV/AIDS and TB introduce a major new variable into a cost-benefit analysis of migration.

Of the many challenges to the health of poor Nepali migrants in India, HIV/AIDS is probably the most threatening and disturbing. Its menace is worsened by the typical migrant profile: young, unaccompanied males with low levels of literacy and understanding of the causes and means of transmission of HIV. Some may never have heard of it. Big cities at the centre of an economic boom attract migrants in construction, service and related jobs. And like all big cities, they also offer 'entertainment services', as well as cramped and unhygienic living quarters. Accommodation is often in large slum areas where environmental sanitation verges on the hazardous, where disease is rife and where conditions for the spread of disease are ideal.

Most surveyed migrants shared living quarters. Some groups of migrants rent a room or, if they are 'lucky', will be provided a room or an animal shed or other space where they sleep free of charge by their employer. Some simply put up a plastic tarpaulin against a wall or the side of a building to provide a degree of shelter from rain. The number of people sharing a room varies. Up to 20 people in one room has been reported, but the average is less than 10. Much depends on the type of work they are doing — if they are working on a construction site, up to 40 people may have to share tent-like quarters. But a security guard in a private home might have a small room to himself. Living in such close proximity to other people, particularly in hot, humid and often unhygienic conditions, allows disease to spread easily.

Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the greatest nemeses of South Asia's urban poor. It thrives where people live in numbers in confined, poorly ventilated spaces, and it affects particularly those that are malnourished or whose immune systems are weakened. A migrant who is exhausted after a day's work, for example, or who has not eaten sufficiently, has reduced resistance and is therefore more vulnerable to contracting TB. Treatment for the disease can take up to 18 months, depending on the drugs used. After a few weeks, the patient often starts to feel better. At this time, there is a temptation to stop taking the drugs. Many do stop — but the TB bacterium remains. It can develop into a form that is resistant to drugs and can re-emerge as a new infection in the carrier. This is known as multi drug resistant TB and when it infects another person, it is the resistant mutation that is transmitted. Second- and third-line treatment is expensive and its efficacy uncertain. It is conservatively estimated that a person with multi drug resistant TB and who is not being treated will infect about 15 people per year.

TB is a common, opportunistic infection for people with HIV. But there are problems in treating both diseases. One of the basic drugs used for TB works against the effectiveness of the current HIV drugs. A well coordinated treatment plan, therefore, usually waits until the TB is under control before beginning HIV treatment. That, of course, does not stop the progress of the HIV. Resistant TB makes the situation more complicated still. Its treatment lasts two years and, when discounted, the drugs alone cost around NRs 5,600 per month (c. US$90 in mid 2008), which is well beyond the means of most migrants. Furthermore, a reasonable nutrition status is required for the drugs to metabolise properly.

HIV/AIDS and multi drug resistant TB are both deadly, but can combine to give a life expectancy of around six months

First-line drugs used to treat HIV cost upwards of NRs 10,500 per month (c. US$155 in mid 2008), which is also beyond most migrants' means. It is, of course, taken indefinitely and, if the patient stops taking them for a period, the virus can mutate to develop resistance to those drugs. It is estimated that around one-third of registered HIV patients in India are resistant to first-line drugs[10].

HIV and multi drug resistant TB, which are both individually deadly but can combine to give a life expectancy of around six months, represent a very real risk to poor migrants in Indian cities. Both diseases are readily transmitted to the sufferer's immediate family, which presents many of Nepal's Hill communities with the potential for an epidemic. A 2002 study among migrants from Nepal's Far Western Hills who had migrated to Mumbai had an HIV prevalence of over 8 per cent[11]. During informal discussions in a village in Dailekh in March 2008, a local health worker claimed that HIV tests among migrants from that village who had migrated to Mumbai indicated an infection rate of over 30 per cent[12]. Independent verification of that figure was unavailable, however a large scale survey among labour migrants in August 2006 found HIV prevalence of 1.1 per cent and 2.8 per cent in Western and Mid-Far Western Nepal. These figures suggest that the HIV epidemic has made way into the Western Hill populations. This growing concern is underlined by UNAIDS:

> *"A different epidemic pattern has emerged in parts of Nepal, particularly among labour migrants. Males from Far Western Hills migrate as seasonal labourers to India and almost one third (27%) of them get involved in unprotected sex with female sex workers. They are likely to be infected as condom use is limited and this infection is directly brought to the villages from where these migrants originate. As a consequence, spouses of these migrants who are ignorant of their partner's sexual behaviour abroad are getting infected. Of the total 70,000 estimated adult HIV infection in Nepal in 2007, about 41 per cent are estimated to be labour migrants."*

Using a UNAIDS/WHO methodology, data from the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control show that seasonal labour migrants make up more than twice as many HIV cases as any other group. The study[13] conducted in August 2006 found that 17.2 per cent of sampled returnee migrants in Western districts, and 26.9 per cent in the Far- and Mid-Western districts, had sex with a sex worker while they were in India. The number of sex workers visited by respondents ranged from

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10 Source: Dr Jack Preger, specialist in street medicine, during personal discussion in Calcutta, India.

11 UNAIDS et al (December 2006): Epidemiological Fact Sheets on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Nepal.

12 This discussion took place with members of the WFP team responsible for this report.

13 Family Health International, Nepal (August 2006): *Integrated Bio-Behavioural Survey among Male Labour Migrants in 11 Districts in Western and Mid-Far Western Regions of Nepal.*

one to 25 for migrants from Western areas, and from one to an astonishing 60 for those from Far- and Mid-Western districts. More than 60 per cent in both areas used a condom — which also means that over 30 per cent did not. More than 90 per cent of respondents in both areas had heard about HIV/AIDS, but knowledge of how HIV is transmitted was substantially lower.

Map 15 shows night-stop locations used by migrants returning from India.

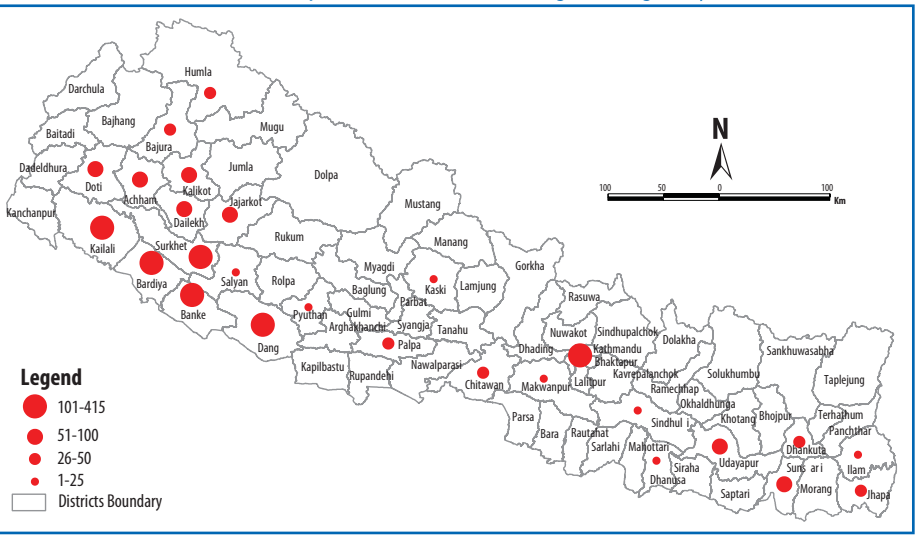
No Longer A Threat, But A Reality

"The prevalence of HIV and AIDS is one of the greatest health concerns facing Dailekh District. There are currently 173 positive cases tested at the District Hospital - however, this is not indicative of the actual number of infections. In at least six VDCs, over 80 per cent of men are in India for employment. That is related to the poor agricultural production and the increased food insecurity. This is no longer the 'usual migration', as numbers have significantly increased year round. Reports indicate a clear correlation between economic migration and the prevalence of HIV and AIDS, for this reason the number of economic migrants from this District and the already high number of tested positive cases is particularly concerning."

(Communication from a UNOCHA field visit to Dailekh)

Locations hosting the highest number of migrants are also likely to present the highest risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, because they are typically on main transport routes where associated services have been developed. The map may help to inform the design of potential health and HIV awareness campaigns along high-risk routes and in identified towns.

MAP 15 Potential HIV/AIDS Hotspots (Based on Returnee Migrants' Nightstay from India)



Source: Border Point Survey (October and December 2007)

For innumerable poor and food insecure communities throughout Nepal, migration offers a tried and tested strategy with which to cope with crisis and chronic food insecurity. It provides income for communities that are frequently without practical access to other sources of income. But it also brings HIV/AIDS, TB and other infectious diseases. And that introduces a major new variable into any analysis of the costs and benefits of migration.

Local Understanding of HIV/AIDS

Although a large majority (85 per cent) of surveyed migrants had heard of HIV/AIDS, many have a very inadequate understanding of the disease and how it is transmitted. For example, more than one-third believes that it can be spread by sharing food or through a mosquito bite.

The reported risk behaviours of many male migrants suggests that they are at high risk of HIV infection. Many spoke of fellow migrants visiting sex workers without the use of a condom. Many also said that condoms were not available, but that seems to contradict the otherwise wide availability of condoms in India. Most migrants said they did not know where to go to be tested for HIV in India.

The danger of HIV/AIDS not only to migrants, but to their families and wider communities at home in Nepal, cannot be overstated. Taken in combination with a generally poor understanding of the disease and how it is transmitted (Table 23), plus the practical problems in delivering health education, reliable testing and accessible, affordable treatment to remote hilly and mountainous areas, HIV/AIDS arguably poses one of the greatest ever threats to the health of the regions studied in this report.

A Snapshot of HIV/AIDS Infection Rates in Achham and Dailekh

One Volunteer Counselling and Testing exercise tested 3,826 people in Achham. It found 403 positive results (10.5%), of which 73 per cent were women. In March 2008, a total of 51 affected people (35 women) were taking anti-retroviral therapy.

In one of Dailekh's western villages, 80 returning migrants were tested, of whom 22 (27.5%) were HIV positive.

(Sources: District Health Offices, Accham and Dailekh)

TABLE 23 Migrants' Knowledge of HIV/AIDS (%)

INDICATORS	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
Have you heard of HIV/AIDS?	84.8	15.2	-
Knowledge of HIV/AIDS			
• Can having sex with only one faithful, uninfected partner reduce the risk of HIV Transmission?	53.8	25.9	20.3
• Can using condoms reduce the risk of HIV transmission?	71.3	15.3	13.4
• Can a healthy looking person have HIV?	63.1	16.6	20.4
• Can a person get HIV from mosquito bites?	46.5	39.5	14.0
• Can a person get HIV by sharing a meal with someone who is infected?	35.7	48.4	15.9
Comprehensive knowledge* 27.8%			
Access to HIV/AIDS prevention/protection services			
• When in India did you know where could you go for an HIV test?	40.4	59.6	-
• During the last 12 months in India, were you given condoms?	30.6	69.4	-

Source: Returning Migrant Survey (March 2008)
** Per centage of migrants who correctly answers all five questions.*

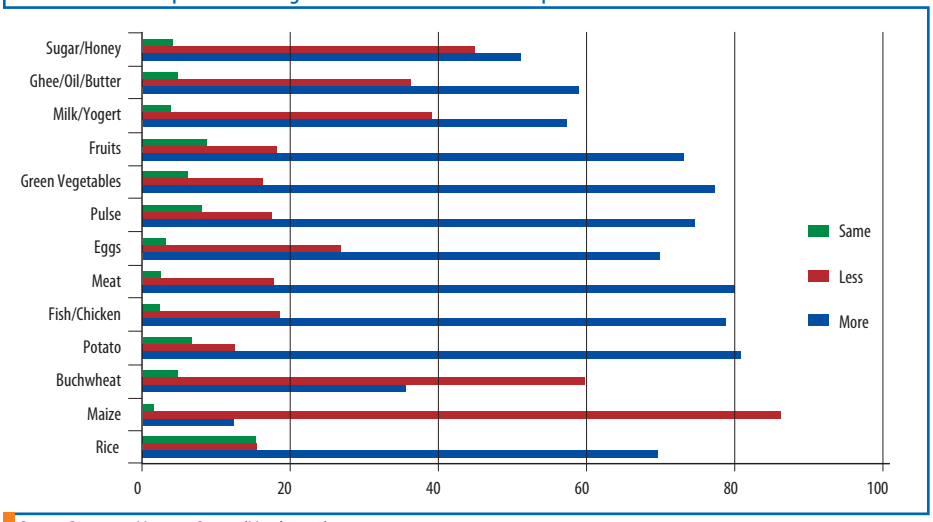
Migrants' Health Practices

Nearly one-third of all migrants interviewed said that they became sick while in India. In Nepal, a large number would typically visit 'quacks' and other unqualified medical practitioners — herbalists, religious healers and even exorcists — in the first event. In India, however, this trend is reversed. Fewer than 10 per cent of migrants resorted to those brands of alternative therapy, choosing instead to go to a qualified doctor or directly to hospital. This is probably explained by the greater availability of qualified doctors in India, and lower costs to consult them.

Migrants' Nutrition in India

Many migrants spoke of better nutritional intake in India than at home in Nepal (Figure 19). In India, they typically eat a greater variety of fruit, green vegetables, pulses, eggs, meat, fish, potato and rice. They also consumed considerably less buckwheat and maize than they do in Nepal. The main reasons for this seem to be the affordability and availability of a wider range of food items.

FIGURE 19 Comparison of Migrants' Diets in India and Nepal



Source: Returning Migrants Survey (March 2008)

14 Livelihood and Food Security

Summary

- The problem of food insecurity in Far- and Mid-West Nepal has increased dramatically in recent years.
- In those areas, local food production is generally sufficient for only three to six months of annual household consumption needs.
- Remittances are most important to the very poor and least important to the above averagely wealthy.
- Around 90 per cent of surveyed households had insufficient access to food in the year prior to the survey; Dalits are the worst affected.
- The most critical months — those in which most people experience difficulties accessing food — are March, April, July and August.
- A key focus group finding was the claim that many people would not migrate if they had sufficient access to food.

Nepal's dramatic, yet rigorous, terrain combined with limited economic opportunities and restricted access to markets and basic services make life for many — arguably most — rural households particularly arduous. It reinforces poverty among the one-third of the population that lives on less than $1 per day. For these people, the climb out of poverty can be as precarious and demanding as the mountains in whose shadows they live.

Agriculture production is generally poor in the Hills and Mountains of the Mid- and Far-West Regions, because of insufficient arable land, limited area under irrigation, and limited availability of agriculture inputs. The direct and indirect effects of conflict, along with erratic weather patterns and recurring

natural disasters — drought, flooding and landslides are common — have further exacerbated a precarious food security situation. Chronic food insecurity plagues much of Mid- and Far-Western Nepal, which are the areas most heavily impacted by the conflict and with the worst development indicators.

Inadequate access to food in the Western Hills has remained a continuing problem since the early 1990s. This has been attributed to a relatively high population density and land and forest degradation[14], as well as to failed crops. Adhikari and Bohle offer a further historical explanation for the increasing trend of food insecurity:

> *"Even though it is argued that poverty has been a problem in Nepal since the 18th century because of slavery and a feudal system of land ownership and labour arrangements, the problem of food insecurity has grown tremendously only in recent times. Traditional safety-net mechanisms had helped poor people in the past to secure a food supply to a certain extent. But now this system has almost eroded. Landlords who used to employ labourers on the basis of patron-client relationships now prefer to pay wages and do not want to carry any other obligations. Moreover, the abundant availability of other resources such as forest and wasteland meant that landless and marginal people could afford to keep animals and derive forest products for their livelihoods. In recent times, however, these opportunities have dwindled as common land used as grazing grounds are being converted into private property by wealthy and influential groups of people. Access to land has been declining for a large proportion of households, because of the increased population pressure and skewed distribution of land."*

A WFP report[15] suggests a correlation between landownership and patterns of food consumption. Among agricultural communities, it says, "the average size of landholdings of households belonging to the very poor and poor food consumption groups is below the average — 0.6ha. Households having good and very good food consumption have land sizes above the average — 0.94ha and 0.95ha respectively. When looking at the median size of land, the picture does not improve: households in the two worst food consumption groups have 0.3ha and 0.26ha. In this context, households are likely to be vulnerable not only to food insecurity, but also livelihood insecurity".

The report on Small Area Estimation for Poverty, Caloric Intake and Malnutrition[16], confirms that poverty is worst in the remote Hills and Mountains

[14] Adhikari, J & Bohle, H-G (1999): *Food Crisis in Nepal.*

[15] WFP (2005): *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis.*

[16] CBS, WFP, WB (2006), *Small Area Estimation of Poverty, Caloric Intake and Malnutrition in Nepal.*

of the Far- and Mid-West. There as much as 70 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line. Local food production is often only sufficient for three months of the annual household requirement. In some areas, rugged terrain and lack of roads means people cannot access food even if they could afford to buy it, due to a lack of markets. WFP's periodic food security phase classification maps show that large areas in the Far- and Mid-West face seasonal food shortages every year.

In poor, food insecure communities, women usually receive less and receive last. This applies as much to food as to education, health and other services. It also reflects cultural norms not only in Nepal but throughout much of South Asia. The prevalence of the caste system and its integral social hierarchy means that tribal people and lower castes are especially vulnerable to shocks, crises and food insecurity.

TABLE 24 Prevalence of Malnutrition in Nepal

INDICATOR	PREVALENCE
Stunting of Children <5 (low height for age)	49%
Wasting (low weight for height)	13%
Underweight (low weight for height)	39%

Source: Demographic and Health Survey, 2006

The Far- and Mid-Western Hills and Mountains have Nepal's least developed infrastructure and services, and food production by marginal farm households in the Hills and Mountains is often insufficient to meet year-round food needs. Diets are varied according to community, but are typically high in carbohydrates — maize, finger millet and buckwheat in particular — but low in proteins and deficient in micro-nutrients, iron, iodine and Vitamin A. As is often the case in other regions of South Asia, women and young children are most at risk from malnutrition. Migration, borrowing, reducing food intake and selling assets are common coping strategies in times of inadequate access to food.

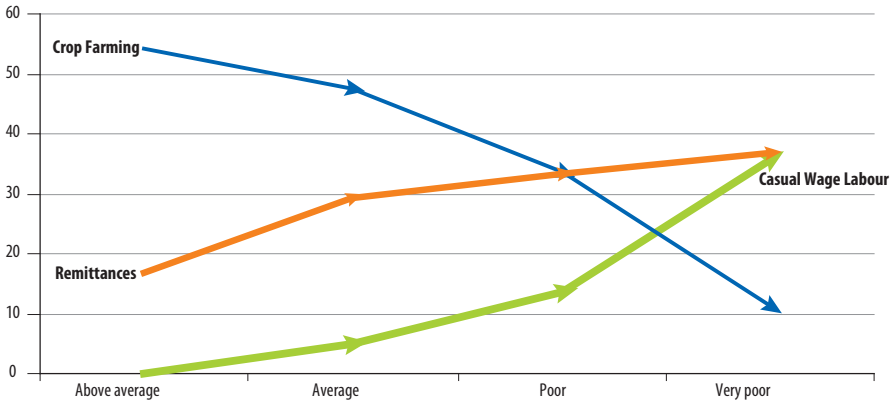
Livelihoods and Income

The major occupation in the study area is crop farming. Casual wage labour is also important, with remittances accounting for around 15 per cent of households' main source of income.

The single most important source of income for the very poor in the survey is remittances (36.9 per cent), followed closely by casual wage labour (35.6 per cent). It is interesting to note an almost linear relative importance of remittances, crop

farming and casual wage labour in wealth categories (Figure 20). Remittances and casual wage labour are most important to the very poor and least important to the above averagely wealthy, while crop farming shows an opposite trend. Fishing, collecting natural resources, running a business, portering and salaried employment each have a role for fewer than one in ten of all wealth categories.

FIGURE 20 Relative Importance of Key Sources of Income (%), by Wealth Category



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Food Security

In the twelve months preceding the survey, 75 per cent of all households surveyed did not have sufficient access to food (Table 25). More than 95 per cent of very poor households had insufficient access to food, as did nearly three-quarters of poor households. And more than half of those who are not classed as poor but are of average wealth did not have enough access to food during that period.

TABLE 25 Access to Food by Wealth Category

ACCESS TO FOOD	TOTAL		WEALTH CATEGORY							
	NO.	%	VERY POOR		POOR		AVERAGE		ABOVE AVERAGE	
			NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Had sufficient access to food	111	25.00	6	4.00	54	28.00	35	43.00	16	60.00
Did not have sufficient access to food	336	75.00	145	96.00	136	72.00	47	57.00	8	40.00
Total	**447**	**100.00**	**151**	**100.00**	**190**	**100.00**	**82**	**100.00**	**24**	**100.00**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

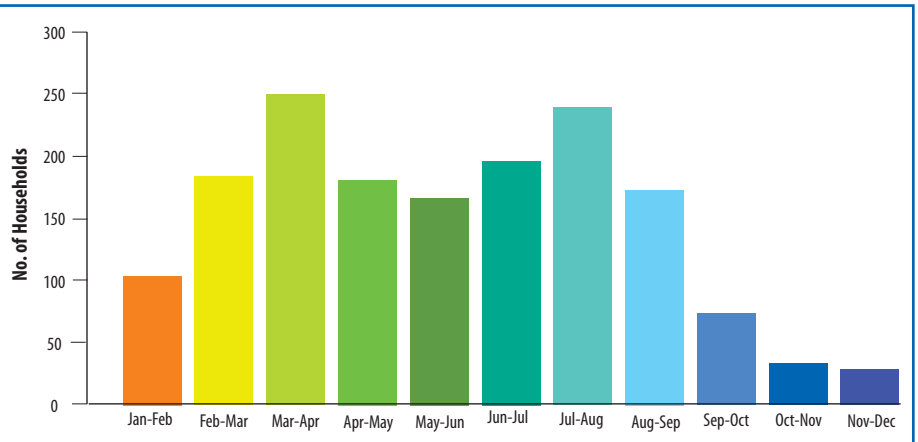
TABLE 26 Months of Food Insufficiency by Wealth Category

FOOD INSUFFICIENCY	TOTAL		WEALTH CATEGORY							
			VERY POOR		POOR		AVERAGE		ABOVE AVERAGE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Less than 3 months	63	18	11	7	26	19	18	38	8	100
3-6 months	120	35	47	32	51	36	22	47		
6-9 months	125	37	70	48	48	35	7	15		
9-12 months	33	10	19	13	14	10				
Total	**341**	**100**	**147**	**100**	**139**	**100**	**47**	**100**	**8**	**100**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

It comes as little surprise to learn that poor and very poor households experience the most problems in accessing sufficient food. More than 60 per cent of very poor and 45 per cent of poor households experience food insufficiency for six months or more. The most critical months — those in which most people experience difficulties accessing food — are March, April, July and August (Figure 21). In March-April, the wheat crop is in the field and the rice harvested during October-November has already been consumed, households therefore start facing food shortages. Similarly, during July-August, the maize crop is in the pre-harvesting stage in the field and wheat harvested in April-May is almost finished. Table 12 (page 42) shows the main cropping calendars for each ecological zone and the main months of food insecurity and migration.

FIGURE 21 Food Insecure Months



Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

Migration and Its Implications for Food Security

The survey data suggest a definite correlation between access to food and the decision to migrate. This is supported by focus group discussions. The number of people migrating during periods of food crisis is higher than in times of adequate access to food. Famine and drought both appear to influence increasing migration. An interesting point to emerge from several focus group discussions was the claim of many participants that they would not migrate if they had sufficient access to food.

There are, then, strong relationships between caste, land ownership, geographical location, education level, health and nutrition status, access to services, poverty and vulnerability to food insecurity. A household's capacity to cope with shocks and crises is linked to its financial, social, human and physical livelihood assets. The poorer a household, therefore, the less likely it is to be able to purchase food and the more likely it is to deplete further any assets it might have in reserve, or to add to its debt, and to look beyond the confines of its community to manage shocks and crises.

15 Vulnerability, Shocks and Coping

Summary

- Migration has become integrated into the culture of many communities in the study area.
- Dalits are more vulnerable than other groups to the impact of shocks and crises — and are the least equipped to deal with them.
- Crop and livestock disease, irregular rains, hailstorms, drought, flooding, landslides, erosion, storms, conflict and damage to infrastructure are the most common reported shocks.
- A little over half of all respondents said that the shocks they experienced led one or more households to migrate.

Dalits make up around one-fifth of the country's population. The word itself means 'oppressed', appropriate nomenclature for the lowest group in the caste system. Although Nepal's Constitution outlaws discrimination based on caste, the system remains widely observed. Dalits have traditionally done the jobs that nobody else wants to do: menial, dirty work that both explains and reinforces the sense of untouchability. Dalits own just one per cent of Nepal's cultivable land; have the lowest literacy rates and per capita income is less than one-fifth of the national average. Their life expectancy is estimated at 42 years, compared to a national average of 63. They are, in short, more vulnerable than any other group to the vagaries of drought, flooding and hunger. And they are the least equipped to deal with those crises when they arise.

While the majority of the poor and very poor are Dalits, these categories do also include significant percentages of Brahmin and Chettri — especially in the Far- and Mid-Western Hills and Mountains. So although there are strong relationships between wealth and caste, ecological zones are also influential.

Common Coping Strategies

Migration to elsewhere in Nepal or to India is so established a coping mechanism, a practice often going back several generations, that it has arguably become integrated into the culture of many poor and marginal farming communities in Mid-West and Far-West Nepal. It is commonly used as part of a normal livelihood strategy.

Borrowing from relations, neighbours and from informal money lenders, along with selling assets and altering patterns of consumption and expenditure, are the most immediate options available in times of inadequate access to food. Households will often skip meals and eat cheaper and less preferred items. Some will scavenge in forests for roots and other consumables. Again, it is often women and young children that must forego first, forego most and forego longest. The effect on child growth and on the ability of mothers to breast feed and to undertake domestic work is necessarily compromised.

Shocks: Extent, Impact and Recovery

Communities throughout the study area are regularly subject to a range of shocks and crises. Crop and livestock disease, irregular rains, hailstorms, drought, flooding, landslides, erosion, storms, conflict and damage to infrastructure were the most important found by the survey.

At the individual household level, the major shock was lack or loss of employment. This seems to be more pronounced in December, January, June and July — which is also when most migration occurs. Illness or accident of a household member is another common shock and this seems more pronounced from mid-July to mid-August. Other common shocks reported by the households include, unavailability of food, high food prices, drought or insufficient rainfall leading to crop failure and flooding or landslides.

Just under half of all households surveyed did not recover at all from these shocks. This means, for example, that they have not repaid outstanding loans, or have not been able to start producing again, or view their situation as if the shock or

Dalits are more vulnerable than any other group to drought, flooding and hunger; and are the least equipped to deal with them

disaster had just happened. A little over one-third recovered partially, and 19 per cent recovered completely. Therefore, only about one-fifth of households have capacity to cope and recover from shocks. The data indicates that non-migrant households have a marginally better capacity to recover from shocks than migrant households. This may be explained by the fact that non-migrant households are more rooted in the local economy, through employment, greater assets and access to resources. However, the difference is minor.

TABLE 27 Extent of Household Recovery from Food Security Impact of Shocks, by Wealth Category

RECOVERY	TOTAL		WEALTH CATEGORY							
	NO.	%	VERY POOR		POOR		AVERAGE		ABOVE AVERAGE	
			NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Not recovered at all	205	47.24	86	59.31	90	48.65	24	30.00	5	20.83
Partially recovered	145	33.41	54	37.24	56	30.27	27	33.75	8	33.33
Completely recovered	84	19.35	5	3.45	39	21.08	29	36.25	11	45.83
Total	**434**	**100.00**	**145**	**100.00**	**185**	**100.00**	**80**	**100.00**	**24**	**100.00**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

A strong relationship is found between access to land, caste/ethnicity and recovery from shocks. For example, while 52 per cent of large land owners recovered completely, only 7 per cent of landless households managed to. As land ownership increases, so does the capacity to recover. Similarly, the recovery rate of Brahmins, Chetris and Janajatis was each 25 per cent, while for Dalits the figure drops substantially to just 4 per cent.

Shocks and Migration

A little over half of all respondents (56 per cent) said that the shocks they experienced led one or more household members to migrate. Only 40 per cent said that shocks did not result in migration. Regression analysis of the survey data, however, does not suggest a direct relationship between the level of shocks and migration.

Table 28 suggests a clear relationship between shocks as a cause of migration and economic status. This seems to apply particularly to lower wealth categories, whose relative lack of assets leaves them more vulnerable to the impacts of shocks. A further explanation for the absence of a direct and immediate link between shocks (unless they cause displacement) and migration lies in the typical first response to a shock, which is to remain in the village and manage its immediate impact. That may often require social help or a loan from a local moneylender. That, in turn, may contribute to a later decision to migrate.

In addition, the established practice of migration by many communities in the study area, even in times of no shock or crisis, reinforces that finding. Those who do not migrate generally have non-farm opportunities within their communities and typically have slightly better access to resources, which improves their coping capacity. Migrant households, meanwhile, are likely to migrate regardless of shocks.

TABLE 28 Shocks as a Cause of Migration, by Wealth Category

IS SHOCK A CAUSE OF MIGRATION?	TOTAL		WEALTH CATEGORY							
			VERY POOR		POOR		AVERAGE		ABOVE AVERAGE	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Yes	240	56.07	90	63.83	114	61.96	30	37.97	6	25.00
No	173	40.42	43	30.50	63	34.24	49	62.03	18	75.00
Don't Know	15	3.50	8	5.67	7	3.80				
Total	**428**	**100.00**	**141**	**100.00**	**184**	**100.00**	**79**	**100.00**	**24**	**100.00**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

16 Effect of Food Aid on the Decision to Migrate

Summary

- Access to food aid plays a role in the decision to migrate — or not to migrate.
- The survey found significantly more non-migrant households benefit from external assistance than migrant households.
- Food for work schemes offer one solution to migration prompted by food insecurity.
- Nutrition-based programmes targeting women and children can reduce the severity of malnutrition

When increasing populations combine with a reducing average size of landholdings and crop failures that commonly characterise parts of Far- and Mid-West Nepal, there is clear potential for chronic food insecurity and the consequent need to look elsewhere for alternative sources of income. It would be too easy to conclude that food insecurity in and of itself causes people to migrate. While that may be true under certain conditions and at certain times, it is a generalisation that fails to take full account of other factors that may influence the decision to migrate. It is also important to distinguish migration from temporary displacement. The question is complicated further in situations, as in Far- and Mid-west Nepal, where migration is a common and established livelihood strategy for many communities. Migration is usually one of several strategies that communities use to manage shocks, crises and food insecurity. And access to food aid is one of a number of factors that influence a decision to migrate — or not to migrate.

With that caveat in place, it is just as certain that food aid does play a role in the decision; and that it has helped to reduce out-migration in a number of

chronically poor areas. It can also act as an inducement for migrants, as well as the internally displaced, to return.

Food aid plays a role in the decision to migrate — or not to migrate

The character of food aid is also influential in the migration decision. Global experience suggests that food aid and other external support can be less than fully transparent. Sometimes it is not as well focussed or targeted as it should be, causing uncertainty among recipients about the amount and timing of aid. It is also subject to manipulation by local leaders, elites and power brokers, meaning that its distribution may not always reach those that need it most. In these circumstances, the significance of food aid as a factor that influences the decision to migrate may be reduced.

But when food aid is well targeted — when it reaches those that need it, when they need it — it can be a powerful force with which to inhibit the deepening of poverty by helping recipients to retain assets that they would have sold to buy food, and to remove one of the factors that may have pushed someone to migrate.

Food for work schemes offer one solution to migration prompted by food insecurity, as a WFP report[17] notes:

> *"Food for work has particularly important implications for mobility and migration. The work requirement imposes significant restrictions on mobility. Traditionally, food for work has been provided in the agricultural off-season, on the assumption that this is when surplus labour is available. But this may be precisely when particular forms of migration play a key role in livelihood strategies."*

This underpins the need to assess the individual circumstances of each situation, ensuring that aid is highly targeted and predictable so that the intended recipients can depend on its adequate and timely distribution.

External Assistance

Just under half of all respondents said that they received external assistance. Significantly more non-migrant households than migrant households benefit from external assistance.

[17] WFP (2005): *The Effects of Food Aid on Household Migration Patterns and implications for Emergency Food Assessments.*

TABLE 29 Household Benefit from External Assistance During Crisis

RECEIVED EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE	TOTAL		NON-MIGRANT		MIGRANT	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Yes	190	46.34	56	57.73	134	42.81
No	202	49.27	35	36.08	167	53.35
Don't know	18	4.39	6	6.19	12	3.83
Total	**410**	**100.00**	**97**	**100.00**	**313**	**100.00**

Source: Household Survey (December 2007)

This is also confirmed by WFP monitoring findings which suggest that migration substantially decreases when food aid is provided. Quarterly monitoring data from the WFP Nepal Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System collected during 2007 and the first two quarters of 2008 find that only 13 per cent of all migrant households benefitted from external assistance. In contrast, more than 30 per cent of non-migrant households benefitted from external assistance.

Focus group discussions suggest that external assistance often lags behind the actual crisis it is responding to. Generally, community support is the first line of assistance. Communicating with external assistance providers is also a problem. Community support and credit assistance from local moneylenders are the support received immediately, allowed by the closeness of local communities. External assistance arrives, if lucky, within a week. Otherwise, it might take 10 to 15 days or more. The process can be especially long if it affects smaller numbers of people. In some cases, external assistance may not arrive at all. Only when there is a large impact with deaths of people, is assistance provided, according to some members of focus group discussions. They might spend months without help from the Chief District Office, which is responsible for support during natural calamities.

17 Implications for WFP Responses

Migration from Nepal to India is complex in its causes and its patterns. While it has been, and remains, an important livelihood strategy that has brought tangible benefits to many communities over a considerable period of time, its inherent risks are increasingly recognised and increasingly realised. In particular, the alarming spread of HIV/AIDS has the potential to devastate communities across the country, with substantial concomitant implications for the economy and even the social fabric of Nepal. It is essential, therefore, that practical, effective steps to address these real and present dangers are intensified significantly, at the earliest opportunity and with high priority.

Factor Migration into WFP Programming

The relationship between migration and food security suggests that it should be incorporated into normal WFP programming. This is all the more important given the HIV/AIDS impact of migration as well as changing political realities that might have the potential to inhibit migration to India.

Recommendation

- *Migration should be integrated into WFP needs assessments, including flood and drought assessments. It should also be reinforced in the WFP Nepal Food Security Monitoring and Analysis System. More generally, the ongoing political relationship between Nepal and India should be monitored closely for any possible changes to the Treaty of Friendship or any impact on the openness of the border.*

Timing of External Assistance

The relationships between the wealth of communities, agricultural seasons and peak periods of mobility offer an opportunity to focus external assistance so that out-migration prompted wholly or in part by food insecurity can be reduced.

Specifically, this allows food aid to be scheduled in accordance with anticipated periods of food insecurity. It also allows other assistance — such as health education — to be usefully coordinated with food aid.

Recommendation

- *Using field data, construct a schedule for food aid and other assistance. The schedule should take account of regional variations as well as more local differences in agricultural patterns and other factors that help to determine the main periods of migration.*

Targeting Women and Children

In the absence of a migrant — usually a male member of the household — women and children are often left to cope with very limited resources and access to food. It is also found that children suffer not only from worse nutrition during the migrant's absence, but also attend school less frequently or perform less well.

Recommendation

- *Nutrition-based programmes that target vulnerable women and children should be introduced. This is particularly important during the absence of one or more of the household's main earners and during periods of food insufficiency.*

- *Expand school feeding programmes to improve children's nutrition status and school attendance. These programmes can be adjusted, where appropriate, to take account of the main months of migration.*

- *Develop skills-based training programmes that give women opportunities to create additional sources of income from off-farm activities. These could be combined with micro-credit programmes.*

Cross-Sector Approach to External Support

This study shows clearly that food security is one factor in the decision to migrate. It is, however, not the only factor. Several multilateral and bilateral agencies provide development assistance in Nepal. Much of their work relates directly to, or touches upon, migration.

Recommendation

- *Initiatives that address the causes of migration, and those that deal with its impact, should be developed urgently. Where possible, where economies of scale can be developed, and where inter-agency cooperation offers the opportunity for the*

impact of these initiatives to be stronger, wider, deeper and generally more efficient and effective than agencies could achieve individually, consideration should be given to forming a representative group to lead collaborative efforts by UN and other agencies to tackle the problems that motivate and result from the forms of migration described in this report.

Joint Health Education Programme

HIV/AIDS is a major and growing consequence of migration.

Recommendation

- *The scale and scope of HIV/AIDS education and prevention efforts should be increased, particularly along key migration routes, in communities and among rural medical practitioners. The resources and particular capacities of WFP, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA and other appropriate agencies can be combined to create a joint health education programme that has a broader and more effective impact than the sum of its parts.*

HIV/AIDS Treatment and Support Services

The extent of HIV/AIDS suggests an urgent need for locally-based diagnostic and treatment services. Development agencies can assist in augmenting the government's own facilities.

Recommendation

- *Advocate for the continued upgrading and improvement of local HIV/AIDS diagnostic and treatment services, along with effective referral systems.*

Extending Access to Credit

Micro-credit has the ability to provide additional sources of income, including income from non-farm activities.

Recommendation

- *Extend access to micro-credit in migrant communities. This should be open to both women and men so that it offers an incentive for potential migrants to remain at home. It should be supported by practical training in business management and skills development.*

Making Food Aid Sensitive to Needs

Many of the respondents for this study suggested that they would not migrate if food and employment could be guaranteed during agricultural off seasons. The present lack of alternative employment offers a clear opportunity to introduce targeted activities that eliminate or reduce poor communities' dependence on migration. The financial benefits of the forms of migration described in this report are low, and the associated risks are high. Food or cash for work programmes could play an important role in significantly reducing migration.

To reduce dependence on migration, introduce and extend labour-intensive food or cash for work programmes in established and potential migrant communities. Such programmes should be targeted geographically and seasonally, so that the option of remaining at home becomes more rewarding than migrating to India. Food or cash for work programmes for women should stipulate a maximum working day of four hours. Consideration should be given to ways in which these initiatives can limit the overall burden on women.

Recommendation

- ***To improve the nutrition status of women and children who do not migrate, it is strongly recommended that current supplementary feeding programmes are expanded. These should be augmented by school feeding programmes, which will not only improve children's nutrition, but also encourage school attendance.***

- ***To reduce migration caused by shocks and emergencies, plan food for work programmes during and after periods of shock and emergency.***

- ***General food distribution and cash vouchers with time bound validity may help to improve the general nutrition status of poor communities. Their introduction should be considered, because their inherent distribution systems should allow themselves to be scaled up to respond efficiently and quickly to shocks, crises and emergencies. This should also enable improved targeting of communities and locations, as well as improving the management of seasonal risk.***

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