

2017

The Impacts of Foreign Labor Migration of Men on Women's Empowerment in Nepal

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**THE IMPACTS OF FOREIGN LABOR MIGRATION OF MEN ON WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT IN NEPAL**

A Dissertation Presented

by

PRATISTHA JOSHI RAJKARNIKAR

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 2017

Department of Economics

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PRATISTHA JOSHI RAJKARNIKAR

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DEDICATION

For my parents, without whose love and guidance, this work would not have been possible.

For Shrijan for always believing in me and encouraging me to be courageous and passionate.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am extremely grateful to all the people whose advice and encouragement have been instrumental to bringing this work to fruition. Firstly, I want to express immense gratitude to my committee members for their time, support and feedback on my work. I am incredibly fortunate that Professor James K. Boyce has worked with me over the past few years. I want to thank him for providing me with profound insights, encouraging me to explore different ways of understanding gender relations in the context of migration and development, and inspiring me to become a better thinker. I also want to thank Professor James Heintz for being available to discuss my dissertation and providing me with valuable suggestions, especially on the quantitative aspects of my work. Professor Priyanka Srivastava has guided me since the early stages of my work. I thank her for providing me with many constructive comments. I also owe enormous gratitude to Professor Smita Ramnarain for her insightful feedback and criticism on my work. Her advice has been very helpful in clarifying my ideas and strengthening my arguments.

There are many people I have to thank for making my fieldwork in Nepal successful. The advice provided by Professor Bishwambhar Pyakurel, Mr. Rajan Shrestha, and Dr. Ganesh Gurung, at the early phases of my fieldwork, were very helpful in selecting my research locations and structuring my survey questions. I am grateful to Narendra Nepal at the Center for Microfinance and Manju Gurung at Pourakhi for connecting me to their networks at my research locations. I owe immense thanks to the local organizations and social mobilizers at my research locations, who selflessly provided their valuable time and support for my work.

Particularly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Professor Keshav Sapkota, Kumari Bhatta, Manita Sapkota and Parwati Wagle in Chitwan, Abilash Gurung and the fieldstaff at Muktinath Bank in Syangja, Arun Sah and Batuk Samsher Shrestha at the Srijana Community Development Center in Siraha, and Deepa BudaMagar, Bhisma Bika, Poonam Singh, Tulsa Acharya and Nanda Pun in Rolpa.

I would also like to thank the faculty members at UMass with whom I studied and worked and who have inspired my intellectual growth. I remain indebted to my friends who have enriched my learning experience here through informal conversations and classroom discussions. I want to express my gratitude to the department for providing me with travel grants for my fieldwork and supporting my dissertation writing process with the PERI fellowship.

Lastly, I want to thank my family, whose endless love and encouragement has inspired me to pursue my passions. I want to thank my parents, Pradeep K. Joshi and Usha Joshi Shah, for always being there for me. I owe immense gratitude to my parents-in-law, Suroj Raj Rajkarnikar and Radha Rajkarnikar, for their continued support and their guidance especially during my fieldwork. I also have to thank my sisters, Pallavi Malnati and Priyanka Joshi, for being my cheerleaders during difficult times. Finally, an exceptional thanks to my husband, Shrijan Raj Rajkarnikar, for reading through different drafts of my work, providing helpful insights, and being a constant source of motivation.

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACTS OF FOREIGN LABOR MIGRATION OF MEN ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN NEPAL

FEBRUARY 2017

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This dissertation looks into the changes in the lives of Nepalese women due to the rapidly increasing foreign labor migration of men. Literature on migration from Nepal mostly focuses on economic gains made through remittance inflows. The changes in intra-household power relations and the transformations in women's lives, due to the male-dominated nature of Nepalese migration, are largely neglected. My study fills this gap, by examining women's experiences, as they assume the role of household heads, financial managers and single parents, in a society that has historically suppressed their freedom. I specifically focus on the changes in women's work responsibilities, their decision-making abilities and their participation in social activities to draw inferences about the impact of men's temporary absence on women's empowerment. My analysis is based on insights from interviews with migrant wives and econometric research using data from national level surveys.

I find that, in general, men's migration increases women's unpaid work responsibilities and often reduces their ability or willingness to participate in

market work. I also find that women's position in the household is central to influencing their participation in decision-making and their involvement in social activities. Women who take on the role of household head are more likely to gain decision-making power and experience an increase in social participation, while those left under the supervision of other members (usually their in-laws) may suffer from reduced decision-making ability and increased restrictions on their mobility in public spaces. These consequences are highly sensitive to the regional socio-cultural norms as well as women's caste, class, and individual characteristics.

The findings from this study help understand the consequences of migration from a gendered perspective and provide insights that may be valuable in developing policy measures for fighting gender inequality and providing women with the resources to cope with the challenges faced during men's migration.

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CHAPTER 1

GENDER AND MIGRATION

1.1 Introduction

With the global rise in migration of workers across countries, attention to the economic and social well-being of migrants, their families and their communities has been increasing. Currently, out of approximately 232 million international migrants in the world, about 150 million are labor migrants (ILO, 2015). These migrants contribute to the development of destination countries and also support the economy at home by sending remittances to their families. Foreign labor migration is often seen as a savior, especially for workers from developing countries where problems such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and conflict are prevalent. Out of the global remittance flow of USD 592 billion in 2015, an estimated USD 432 billion went to developing countries.¹ This is over three times greater than the Official Development Aid (ODA) of 132 billion and more than half of the Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) of USD 764 billion that developing countries received in 2015.² Hence, labor migration has become an essential aspect of developing economies and is central to understanding globalization and development in the current era.

¹ Based on calculations by World Bank Staff, as presented in World Development Indicators database.

² Out of the USD 764 billion in FDI received by developing countries, almost half (USD 310 billion) went to China. Data for ODA is based on OECD database (oecd.org) and that for FDI is based on United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (unctad.org).

One of the most important factors shaping migration is gender. Disaggregation of foreign migrants by sex shows a relatively equal distribution, with about 56 percent of migrants being men (ILO, 2015).³ However, when we look at sex disaggregation of migrants by sub-regions or by countries, stark differences appear; while there are more male migrants from Africa and South Asia, labor migration from East Asia and the Pacific, and from Latin America, is dominated by women (Oishi, 2005; Ionesco and Aghazarm, 2009). The focus of this study is on the former kind, where migration is primarily a male process. It specifically examines the impacts of men's absence on women's empowerment. The analysis of empowerment is based on theoretical framework by Naila Kabeer (1999), where empowerment is defined as the process of expanding women's abilities and three inter-dependent dimensions - access to resources, agency and achievements - are specified for interpreting and measuring it. Here, women's work and their access to labor market, their decision-making power, and their participation in social activities are used as indicators of their access to resources, agency and achievements, respectively. This dissertation attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How does men's migration affect women's work responsibilities?
2. How does men's migration affect women's decision-making power?
3. How does men's migration affect women's social participation?

³ This data is for all foreign migrants. Though this study focuses only on labor migrants, sex-disaggregated data by reason of migration was not found. I assume that a majority of the foreign migrants are labor migrants, based on ILO (2015) report that indicates that the global labor force participation rate for migrants is 73 percent.

4. What individual, household and socio-economic factors influence women's work, their decision-making ability and their participation in social sphere?

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

Men's migration also changes the household structure and transforms the division of labor and the power relations among household members left behind. In nuclear households, women take on the role of de facto heads, manage all domestic and childcare work, and assume new financial responsibilities. While such changes could increase women's autonomy and bargaining power at home, they could also add stress to their lives as women have to take on new challenges and cope with

living as single parents and migrant wives in a patriarchal society (Brown, 1983; Haas and van Rooij, 2010). In extended households, women may be living under the supervision of their in-laws or other senior household members. In such cases, husbands' migration could sometimes mean the loss of an ally and a decline in bargaining power as women often rely on their husbands to negotiate their position within the household and to voice their opinions (Kasper, 2005; Desai and Banerjee, 2008). At other times, women's relationship with their in-laws may remain the same or even improve during men's absence (see Louhichi, 1997). In such instances, women's bargaining position within the household may strengthen. Also, in cases where their husbands may have been abusive or demanding, women may experience increased freedom and relief during men's migration.

Power inequalities within the house based on age, sex, education and employment status of household members along with gendered social norms are crucial to understanding women's experiences during men's migration. While some women may gain bargaining power and greater access to resources, others may experience higher stress levels from increased responsibilities and constraints on their physical mobility. The experience of a woman who is the household head and receives remittances might be much different from that of a woman who lives in extended family where remittances are sent to her in-laws. For example, women in Pakistan, who were left under the supervision of senior (usually male) household members during their husbands' migration and had limited access to remittances, experienced higher stress levels than those in Egypt and Turkey, where women gained higher level of autonomy and greater access to economic resources during

their husbands' absence (Palmer, 1985). This suggests that region-specific cultural norms and socio-economic characteristics can be central to explaining the consequences of migration. Hence, case studies focusing on specific regions, with an in-depth analysis of the socio-cultural structures that influence women's experiences, might be appropriate for addressing my research questions.

This study is based on Nepal, a South Asian nation with high dependence on migration and a patriarchal social structure. Migration is one of the defining aspects of the current Nepalese economy; one out of every eleven Nepalese adults is in foreign employment and more than half of the households in the country receive remittances.⁴ In fact, with remittance inflow accounting for about 29.4 percent of the country's GDP in 2014, Nepal ranks third in the world in terms of remittances received as a percentage of GDP.⁵ Remittance is the biggest source of foreign funds into the country; in 2014 the total remittances received (USD 5.8 billion) was greater than the sum of ODA (USD 870 million) and FDI (USD 30 million) inflows.⁶ Labor migration from Nepal is heavily gendered; almost 90 percent of the country's

⁴ Information on number of migrants is taken from NIDS 2011 and percentage of households receiving remittances is calculated using NLSS –III.

⁵ Source: World Bank (2016). With remittances accounting for 36.6% of GDP and 30.3% of GDP, Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic rank first and second in the world, respectively. Though remittances are foreign flows and not included in GDP measure, remittances are expressed as a percentage of GDP here to illustrate their size relative to the country's overall production.

⁶ Source: World Development Indicators database. These values are in current dollars terms.

labor migrants are men.⁷ This male-dominated migration has contributed to an increase in the number of female-headed households; about 48.7 percent of migrant households are headed by women, compared to 16.9 percent for non-migrant households.⁸ The prevalence of gender discrimination in the socio-economic aspects of the country, along with a dismal economic and chaotic political environment, makes the case of Nepal interesting to study.

This first chapter presents the context for this study. It starts out with a brief overview of the economic and political environment in Nepal. This is followed by a discussion of the current trends in labor migration from Nepal, its causes and its key economic impacts. Then, the rationale for studying this subject is further explained by presenting an overview of the existing literature, identifying the gaps in this literature and discussing the key contributions made by this study. Finally, a brief discussion on the relevance of this study for policymakers in Nepal and its contribution to the larger literature on understanding the process of migration through a gendered lens is presented.

⁷ Source: Yearly Progress Report, Department of Foreign Employment, Nepal. Out of the 384,665 labor migrants leaving the country in 2011/12, only 5.8 percent were women. Note that this does not include migrants to India since there is no official documentation of these migrants.

⁸ Source: Author's calculation based on Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011.

1.2 Migration from Nepal

1.2.1 Economic and Political Context

With more than half of its population living below the poverty line of \$2 per day, Nepal ranks among the poorest countries in the world.⁹ The country's economy is largely agrarian, with 73.9 percent of the employed population working in agriculture. However, agriculture in Nepal is mostly subsistence in nature, and the sector suffers from low productivity due to lack of infrastructure and high dependence on rain. Agriculture only contributes 33 percent to the country's GDP, and almost 80 percent of the country's population under poverty line is engaged in this sector (Khanal, 2012). The low returns from farming have pushed workers to find alternative forms of employment. However, the development of manufacturing and services sector in the country has been relatively limited (Maharjan et al., 2013). Though the manufacturing and services sectors account for 15 and 52 percent of the GDP, respectively, only 10.8 percent of the employed population is in manufacturing sector and 15.3 percent is in services sector.¹⁰ Despite the higher productivity levels in both these sectors, employment opportunities are limited. Even among those employed, 81 percent are in a vulnerable position working temporary jobs with no job security, and the labor underutilization rate due to skills mismatch, time-related underemployment and inadequate earnings is over 30

⁹ According to the World Development Indicators data, 23.7% of the country's population lives below the poverty line of \$1.25 a day and 55.9% lives below the poverty line of \$2 a day.

¹⁰ Information on sectoral composition of GDP and employment by sector is taken from ILO (2010). This report uses data from Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008 to calculate the numbers.

percent (ILO, 2010). There have been no employment-generating structural changes and no clear macroeconomic policies for domestic job creation (Khanal, 2012). Hence, the country's economy suffers from a lack of employment opportunities.

Adding to the country's economic woes are political problems, including an unstable government, inefficient administrative system and the wreckage left by the decade-long civil war. Nepal was mostly under absolute monarchy until 1990.¹¹ In 1990, amid increasing pressures to end the ban on forming political parties, large-scale reforms were implemented to establish a system of constitutional monarchy where power was shared between the king and the political parties. Unfortunately, this new system turned out to be a setting for institutionalization of corruption, and continuous conflicts among the political parties led to poor governance (Sharma, 2006). The system, dominated by Hindu male state elites, favored people from high caste and promoted urban-based development, resulting in lack of access to economic opportunities in rural areas, gender and caste-based discrimination, deep rural poverty and increase in inequality (Murshed and Gates, 2005; Bohara et al., 2011; Tamang, 2011). In fact, social exclusion has been at the center of nation-building process in Nepal, where the goal of promoting unity, with one language (Nepali), one religion (Hinduism) and one caste (*Brahmins*), has resulted in marginalization of the diverse minority groups such as *Janajatis* (indigenous group mostly following the Tibeto-Burman culture), *Dalits* (untouchables) and *Madhesis* (identity group in Terai region and ethnically close to Northern India) (Tamang,

¹¹ In the late 1950s, a multi-party constitution was adopted for about 18 months, after which the then King Mahendra seized power and created the "*Panchayat*" system where the king assumed full control (Whelpton, 2005).

2011; Gurung, 2012).¹² The Maoist party of Nepal emerged under this setting and started a war in 1996 from the rural areas of the country with the goal of fighting inequality and replacing Nepal's constitutional monarchy with communist republic (Sharma, 2006). After years of conflict between the government and the Maoist rebels, resulting in a loss of over 13,000 lives, a ceasefire was agreed in 2006 with the integration of the Maoists into the government. In 2008, monarchy was abolished and Nepal was declared a Federal Democratic Republic.

The ruinous effects of the war have weakened Nepal's social well-being and hindered its potential for growth. The increase in violence during the war years heightened the levels of mistrust and insecurity in the society (Gyawali, 2009).¹³ Many lost their loved ones and over 200,000 people were displaced from their homes. The conflict arguably hit women and children the hardest as gender-based violence rose sharply during the war and many women and children got recruited into the Maoist army (Shakya, 2009).¹⁴ By 2001, the year when the war was most intense, almost NRs. 4 billion (USD 37.4 million) had been transferred from development to military expenditures (Kumar, 2003).¹⁵ The destruction of infrastructure and deterioration of business environment during the war resulted in

¹² There are over 103 ethnic groups and over 92 languages spoken in Nepal (Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011).

¹³ For example, Bhadra (2007) mentions that one of the difficulties with conducting fieldwork in Nepal after the war was that people had become less willing to talk to researchers, who were strangers to them.

¹⁴ Clewett (2015) estimates that women comprised 20 to 40 percent of the Maoist army.

¹⁵ Conversion from Nepali Rupees (NRs.) to USD, throughout the dissertation, is based on exchange rate of USD 1 = NRs. 107.01, as of September 2016.

an overall slowdown of economic activities.¹⁶ A decade after the official end of the war, political tensions persist with power sharing between party elites, a chaotic and difficult transition of the political system, and continuing prevalence of caste and gender-based discrimination. Tensions have been most intense in the Terai region, as the Madhesis demanded equal rights and representation in the political sphere. In 2015, the government passed a new constitution as a step-forward to maintaining stability; however, the constitution contained several discriminatory clauses suppressing the rights of women and minority groups.¹⁷ Hence, political struggles continue as the underprivileged groups seek equal rights and fair representation in the economic and political arena.

On April 25, 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake, followed by several powerful aftershocks, hit Nepal. The quake left over 9,000 dead and affected more than 8.1 million people across 39 of the country's 75 districts (IOM, 2015). Estimates by the government show the total cost of the destruction of assets and infrastructure caused by the quake to be about USD 7.1 billion. Repair and rebuilding by the government has been slow, as tens of thousands of people affected by the quake still live in tents and the government has failed to manage the logistics and reach out to the most affected population. The adverse impact of the earthquake on the economy

¹⁶ Based on unofficial estimates, the cumulative cost of the war by 2002 was estimated to be about NRs. 219.46 billion (USD 2.1 billion). This is over one-third of the country's GDP of USD 6.1 billion in 2002 (Gyawali, 2009).

¹⁷ For details on Nepal's struggle with writing a new constitution after the war, see Snellinger (2015) and Tamang (2011). Also, Karki (2016) reports on the issues with Nepal's current constitution with detailed account of the gender and caste-based discrimination.

is expected to increase the population size below poverty line (Ministry of Finance, 2015). In sum, the country faces numerous socio-economic challenges building from the post-conflict and post-disaster phase and planning for long-term development.

1.2.2 Trends in Migration

Amid this dismal economic and political environment, many Nepalese workers are increasingly turning towards foreign labor markets for earning their living. Between 1993/94 and 2003/04, the annual number of labor migrants increased from 3,605 to 106,660, and the number reached 527,814 by 2013/14.¹⁸ With the increase in migration of workers, remittance inflow into the country has been rising steadily. In the ten years between 2003/04 and 2013/14, remittances rose from NRs. 58.6 billion (USD 548 million) to NRs. 543.3 billion (USD 5.1 billion).¹⁹ Some of the major economic progress that the country has made in the past two decades such as reduction in poverty and higher literacy, despite the conflict, has been attributed to remittance inflows rather than structural changes or development efforts by the government (Sapkota, 2013).

¹⁸ Source: Department of Foreign Employment. These numbers only include workers who migrated with government permission. It is an underestimate of the actual number of migrants as seasonal migration to India (about 2 million workers) and informal migration to other countries is not included here.

¹⁹ Source: Economic Survey of 2014/15 Report, Ministry of Finance, Government of Nepal.

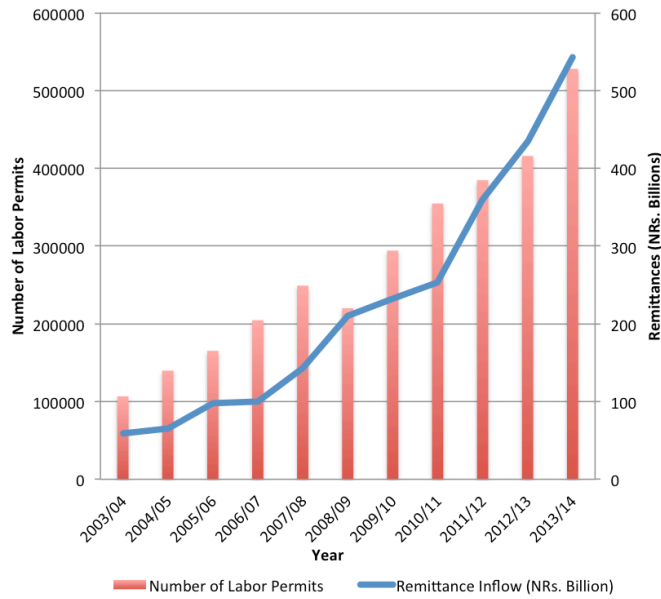


Figure 1.1: Number of Labor Permits and Remittance Flows
 (Source: Department of Foreign Employment (for data on labor permits), and Nepal Ministry of Finance (for data on remittance inflow).)

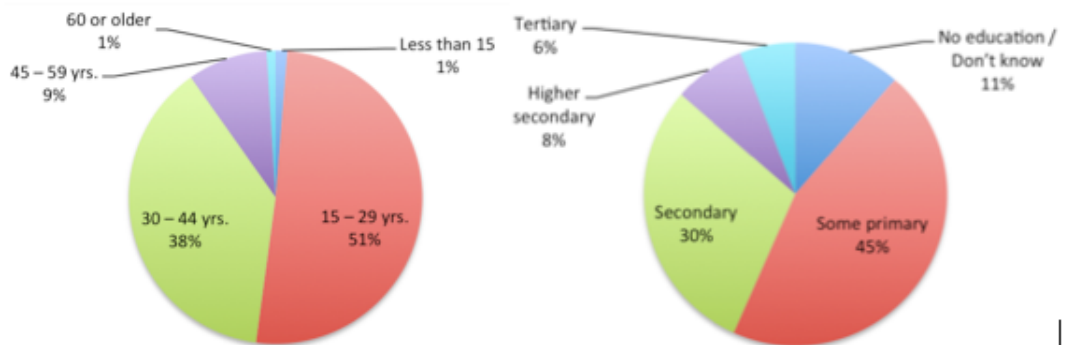


Figure 1.2: Migrant's Age and Education Level
 (Source: Author's calculation based on NLSS-III.)

Data from Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 shows that almost 92 percent of labor migrants are men. About 50 percent of these men are in the age group 15 to 29 years and another 38 percent are between 30 to 44 years. Hence, Nepal is losing a substantial fraction of its young male workers to foreign migration. Also, about 11 percent of the migrants are illiterate and about 45 percent only have

some primary education, indicating that over half of the labor migrants from Nepal are likely to be employed in low-skilled low-wage sector at the destination. In fact, data from the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) show that 74 percent of migrant workers receiving labor permits were categorized as ‘unskilled’ (Sijapati et al., 2015).

1.2.2.1 Migrant Destinations

International labor migrants from Nepal can be categorized into three main groups, based on their destinations. The first group includes workers migrating to India, mostly to work as soldiers, security guards, porters and construction workers. India is the oldest and the most common destination for Nepalese migrants and migration to India is often seasonal, with some migrants returning home every year during growing seasons and for festivals. Formal labor migration to India started in the early 19th century when Nepalese workers joined the colonial British army through a treaty between the two governments (DoFE, 2015). Migration to India is facilitated by the proximity between the two countries, the low cost of migration and the open-border policy that allows citizens of both countries to travel and work across borders (Seddon, 2005). This policy has made it difficult to keep track of the number of Nepalese migrants in India; while official sources report 1.5 million Nepalese migrants in India, the actual number could be as high as 2 to 3 million (NIDS, 2011).

The second group consists of workers going to the Middle East and East Asia. Migration to these destinations from Nepal started in the early nineties after the

restoration of democracy when a series of policy reforms, such as issuing permits for foreign employment, trade liberalization, financial deregulation and privatization, were implemented by the government to transform the closed and centralized agrarian economy of Nepal to a market-oriented one (Khanal, 2012; DoFE, 2015). Between 2008/09 and 2013/14, Malaysia received the highest number of workers from Nepal (40.9 percent), followed by Saudi Arabia (22.9 percent), Qatar (20.3 percent), United Arab Emirates (11.2 percent) and Kuwait (2.1 percent); only 2.6 percent of Nepalese workers migrated to other destinations (DoFE, 2015). Most of the workers going to these countries are employed in low-skilled jobs, often as drivers, security guards and construction workers (ILO, 2010). Most of these jobs are based on short-term contracts (2-3 years); hence migrants going to these destinations either get their contracts extended, find another job at the destination or are involved in repeat migration where they return home when their contracts end and migrate again (Prasai, 2005). Though the cost of migrating to these countries is higher than that of migrating to India, the expected returns are also higher;²⁰ hence the proportion of migrants going to these destinations has been rising over time (DoFE, 2015).

The third group of migrants includes workers going to developed countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, United States and Japan. Most of these migrants either migrate as students and decide to work at the destination after graduating, or get their educational degrees in Nepal but go to work in skilled-labor sector abroad.

²⁰ For example, the average cost of migration to Malaysia is NRs. 109,700 while that of migrating to India is only Rs. 5,250 (World Bank, 2011).

These migrants usually come from wealthier families and they migrate with the hopes of better economic opportunities and higher standard of living. This kind of migration has been rising in recent years and this loss of skilled labor could have important implications for the long-term development of the country (Poudel, 2015; Maharjan et al., 2012).²¹ However, most of these migrants migrate permanently and are able to take their spouse and children with them. Hence, my research questions are not relevant for this group. For my analysis, households with migrants in this group are excluded, and households with migrants in India, Middle East and East Asia are categorized as migrant households.

Though our focus is on international migrants, internal labor migration is also an important aspect of the Nepalese economy.²² The urban-based development structure and the scarcity of employment opportunities along with the higher intensity of the civil war in rural areas has motivated labor migration into urban regions (KC, 2003; Gurung, 2012). In this study, those households where a male member has migrated for work internally leaving his wife and family behind are categorized as migrant households. This is because, though these internal migrants remain within the country and may visit home more often, their wives face similar circumstances as the wives of international migrants do; wives of internal migrants

²¹ Report by Ministry of Education shows that there has been an increase in the number of students taking the 'No Objection Letter' as permission from the government to study abroad. As of 2013, 91,519 students had taken this letter from the ministry. However, this could be a huge underestimate of the actual number of student migrants, since the letter is not a required document for migration and many students migrate without taking this letter.

²² See Heide and Hoffman (2001) for detailed account of the different aspects of internal migration from Nepal.

have to adjust to life without their husbands and take responsibility for all the household, childcare and social obligations.

The destination of migrants often provides some indication of the socio-economic background of a household. Usually, the poorest households have migrants either within the country or in India, the relatively well-off have migrants in the Middle East and East Asia, and the richest households have migrants in the developed countries (Acharya & Leon-Gonzalez, 2012). The difference in socio-economic background of migrant households based on migrant destinations is illustrated in table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Characteristics of Migrant Household by Migrant Destination

	Households with migrants in		
	Within Nepal and India ²³	Middle East/ East Asia	Developed nations
Households in each group (% of migrant households)	56.3%	40.9%	2.8%
Remittance-receiving households*	83%	88.8%	90.8%
Female-headed households*	45.4%	47.3%	41.5%
Mean education level of household head	3.3	3.4	7.1
Wage-employed household heads*	6.4%	7%	9.2%
Mean value of remittances received	NRs. 88,070	NRs. 145,615	NRs. 398,686
Mean value of asset index ²⁴	1.0	1.3	2.6
Percentage of households in urban areas*	19.1%	25.5%	67.7%

*As a percentage of households in each group.

(Source: Author's calculations based on data from NLSS – III.)

The values for mean years of education, access to wage-employment and asset index, show that households with migrants in developed countries are much better off than households in the other two groups, and households with migrants in Middle East or East Asia are slightly better off than households with migrants within

²³ We categorize internal migration and migration to India in the same group given the similarities between these two groups.

²⁴ Based on MCA index, as defined in appendix D.

Nepal or in India. Also, more than half of the households with migrants in developed countries are in urban regions of the country, while most migrants going to other locations are from rural regions. The consequences of migration may depend on migrant destinations, as the nature of migration as well as the amount of remittances sent varies by destination.²⁵ While migration within Nepal and to India is circular in nature with the migrants returning home more often, migrants in Gulf and South East Asia return home less often (Maharjan et al., 2012). The table shows that the percentage of households receiving remittances as well as the average amount of remittances received is highest among households with migrants in developed country followed by households with migrants in East Asia or Middle East and lowest for households with internal migrants and migrants in India.

1.2.2.2 Migration by Gender

Figure 1.4 shows the number of permits issued by the government to labor migrants.²⁶ It clearly illustrates the gender-based disparity in labor migration from Nepal. Though the number of female migrants has been rising over time, labor migration remains largely male-dominated.

²⁵ In our quantitative work, we test if there are appreciable differences in women's experiences based on migrant's destinations.

²⁶ Note again that the figure only includes migrants who have taken government permit to migrate. Since it is suspected that a lot of women migrate through irregular channels and through India (see Sharma et al., 2014), the numbers here could be huge underestimates of the actual number.

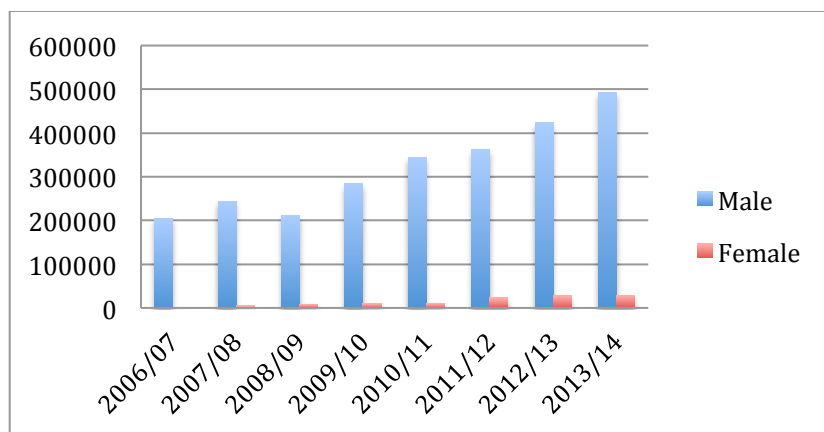


Figure 1.3: Number of Permits Issued to Labor Migrants
 (Source: Annual Report 2015, Department of Foreign Employment, Nepal)

The low participation of women in foreign employment is partly explained by the patriarchal structure of the Nepalese society, where men are considered the primary breadwinners; they migrate to provide for the families while women are limited to caretaking and managing work within the domestic space (Kasper, 2005). Women in Nepal also face restrictions on their mobility in public spaces and have lower access to education and employment opportunities (Morgan and Niraula, 1996); these may deter their ability to migrate. Often, women who migrate are characterized as being sexually promiscuous and bringing dishonor to the family. Hence, women's families are usually reluctant to send them to work (Dannecker, 2005; Cohen et al., 2008; Pickbourn, 2011).

Women are assumed to be more vulnerable to the risk of sexual assault in foreign lands; hence, their emigration is often restricted by the government (Oishi, 2005; Piper, 2009). In Nepal, the government has been imposing and retracting various restrictions on women's migration because of increasing incidents of physical assault on female migrants. For example, in 2012, a temporary ban on

migrating to the Gulf region was placed for women younger than 30 years of age and this ban was extended to women of all ages in 2014. Though this restriction was partially relaxed in 2015 by reducing the minimum age for migration to 24, women's migration to most destinations still requires strict oversight (ILO, 2015). Such regulations are influenced by the patriarchal ideology that seeks to 'protect' women by restricting their physical mobility (Bhadra, 2007). Men, on the other hand, face no such restrictions. Hence, state policies have systematically facilitated men's migration and discouraged women from migrating. In addition, brokers, who negotiate labor contracts between migrants and their employers at the destination, hesitate to recruit women to avoid the risk of having to bear responsibility if women face sexual assault at the destination (NIDS, 2011). Despite these restrictions, the number of women migrating for work has been rising over time and it is suspected that the government bans have only encouraged migration through irregular channels (Clewett, 2015).

Male-dominated migration is a common feature among most South Asian countries because of the prevalence of male breadwinner – female homemaker ideology, cultural restrictions on women's mobility in public spaces and, in some cases, restrictions placed by the government.²⁷ The gendered nature of labor demand at the destination country, with many of the jobs in West Asia, Southeast

²⁷ The only exception to this case is Sri Lanka, where about 50 percent of the labor migrants were women in 2010. During the 1990s, between 70 to 80 percent of labor migrants from Sri Lanka were women. Most of these women are employed in low-skilled domestic work on contract basis at destination (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 2013). In Asia, female migrants outnumber male migrants in Sri Lanka, Philippines and Indonesia (Asis and Piper, 2008).

Asia and East Asia being in 'male' sectors like construction, security, driving and manufacturing, has also contributed to the gender disparity in migration from South Asia (Piper, 2009). Though there has been an increase in demand for female migrants for domestic work in East Asia and Middle East, most of these jobs are taken by women from other countries that already have stronger networks of female migrants at the destination and better skills than Nepalese women. One of my key informants, Manju Gurung, explained the challenges faced by female migrants from Nepal by stating that:

Nepalese women compete with women from Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Bangladesh for domestic work. Many of our women haven't seen or used a refrigerator or microwave. They don't know what food to store in refrigerator and how to care for pets, so we need to train them so they can compete in these markets and do well at the destination.²⁸

Hence, Nepalese women have to compete for jobs with women from other countries, as well as deal with the social and structural restrictions at home, to be able to migrate for work.

1.2.3 Causes of Migration

Migration from Nepal is mainly motivated by poverty and lack of economic opportunities at home. Out of the 400,000 youths that enter the labor market every year, more than 200,000 go overseas (Kharel, 2011). In 2008, though the official unemployment rate was only 2.1 percent, youth unemployment (age 15 to 29) was

²⁸ Manju Gurung is one of the founding members of Pourakhi – a non-government organization for female migrant workers in Nepal.

19.2 percent and the rate of labor underutilization was 30 percent (NLFS, 2008).²⁹ Additionally, the political environment, characterized by repeated strikes, closures and an investment-unfriendly setting, has driven the youth out of the country. The outflow of migrants was especially high during the war years, as many left the country to avoid being recruited into the war and to be able to find stable income source to support their families (DoFE, 2015). Given the poor economic and political conditions at home, many Nepalese households have been relying increasingly on migration to maintain their livelihoods.

The oil industry boom of the 1970s in the Middle East along with the East Asian industrialization have made destinations such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei, Japan and South Korea attractive to Nepalese workers (Sharma et al, 2014). Also, the expectation of relatively higher wages in these destinations (compared to Nepal or India) may have encouraged migration from Nepal to these destinations.³⁰ It is important to note, however, that in many cases Nepalese migrants do not get what they expect when they get to the destination; many workers have their passports withheld by employers and are exploited working long hours, receiving low wages and working

²⁹ Nepal Labor Force Survey (NLFS) 2008 defines labor underutilization as population who has labor slack, low earnings and skills mismatch. Labor underutilization is a better indicator of labor market conditions than unemployment rate.

³⁰ Clewett (2015) reports that indicative month wage for workers in Kathmandu is USD 85 (source: Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit) compared to wages being USD 140 in India (source: Government of Delhi, Labor Department minimum wage) and \$250 in Malaysia (source: Malaysian minimum wage for migrant worker).

under harsh conditions with minimum job security (Gurung, 2000; Pattisson, 2013). Often, imperfect information about expenses at the destination leads to misconceptions about how much money households may receive or be able to save when a member migrates.³¹ Sometimes returnees contribute to optimistic expectations about the earning potential at the destination by painting a rosier picture of their experience as migrants to feel more successful than those who haven't migrated (Levitt, 2001; Prasai, 2005). Hence, migrants often find themselves overestimating their ability to send remittances, and end up extending their stay or migrating repeatedly (Castaneda, 2013).

In addition to these push and pull factors, other aspects such as government regulations, migrant networks and social pressures to migrate also affect decisions to migrate. The Nepalese government has been focusing on promoting foreign employment by identifying potential foreign markets, establishing temporary working programs and training and exporting Nepalese workers in order to address domestic unemployment (Chapagain, 2003). In addition, over 900 private agencies have obtained licenses from the Department of Foreign Employment to negotiate labor contracts between migrants and their employers at destination. These private agencies along with several government, non-government and international

³¹ During my fieldwork, many women mentioned that there was not much difference in the income their husbands earned at home and what they sent from abroad since their husbands are not able to save much due to the higher than expected expenses at the destination.

organizations also facilitate the process of migration by providing prospective migrants with training and information about the destination.³²

Migration is a self-perpetuating process. As connections to migrants settled in destination countries increase and knowledge about foreign employment increases, more people rely on community-based networks to get to their destinations (Koc and Onan, 2004; Cohen et al., 2008; Castaneda, 2013). Such networks have been central to encouraging migration from Nepal, as previous and current migrants pave way for prospective migrants by sharing their knowledge and experiences about the destination, strengthening migrant networks and increasing familiarity with the process and prospects of foreign migration (DoFE, 2015). Sometimes, status-enhancing changes in migrant families such as building a new house or display of goods brought from abroad motivates further migration and migration decisions may be driven by the need to maintain social standing (Adhikari and Hobley, 2015; Castaneda, 2013). In fact, accounts of migration being motivated by seeing other migrants building new houses and sending their children to better schools were evident in many of my fieldwork conversations.

After the April 2015 earthquake, the outflow of migrants fell sharply as many migrants returned home or cancelled their plans to migrate to be with their families. However, preliminary reports on the impacts of the earthquake on migration rates from Nepal suggest that migration is likely to increase in the medium-run and current migrants are likely to prolong their stay, as young men seek additional

³² Examples of such organizations include Pourakhi, Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

resources to rebuild their homes and recover from the crisis (see Bellman, 2015; Orozco, 2015). Though the destruction left by the quake has created an increase in demand for construction jobs and development projects within the country, the inability of the government to use development funds efficiently and initiate the process of reconstruction has pushed workers towards foreign migration (Sijapati et al., 2015).

1.2.4 Economic Impacts of Migration

The receipt of remittances is often cited as the biggest positive impact of migration from Nepal. Between 2003/04 and 2010/11, the percentage of Nepalese households receiving remittances increased from 31.9 to 55.8. During the same time, the total remittance flow into the country rose from USD 547 million to USD 2.4 billion, and it reached USD 5.1 billion in 2013/14.³³ Actual remittances could be higher than these estimates since remittances are often sent informally via hand or through the *hundi* system.³⁴ The figure below shows the changes in economic growth in Nepal with the increasing inflow of remittances between 1999 and 2014.

³³ Source: Economic Survey 2014/15, Ministry of Finance, Government of Nepal.

³⁴ In the Hundi system, a series of middlemen effectively process the money earned by Nepali migrant and ensure both a reliable transfer of worker's earning to their relatives at home and a significant profit for those involved in the system (Seddon et al., 2002).

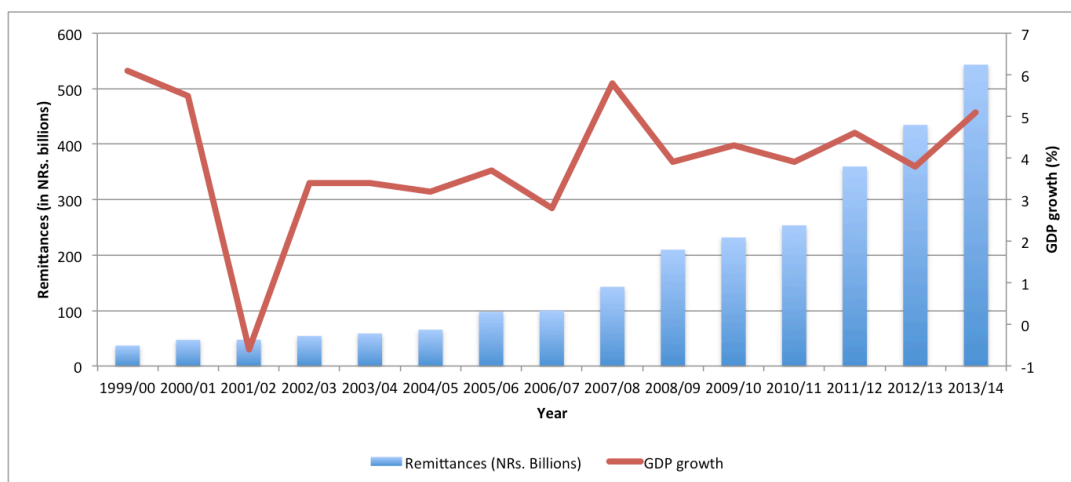


Figure 1.4: Remittances Received and GDP Growth (%)
 (Source: Economic Survey Fiscal Year 2014/15, Ministry of Finance 2015, Nepal)

Remittance inflow directly affects both the micro and macro economic circumstances of a country. At the household level, remittances directly enter the income stream and improve the standard of living by lifting budget constraints and increasing consumption. Of the total remittances received in Nepal in 2010/11, 78.9 percent was used on consumption, 7.1 percent on loan repayment, 4.5 percent on purchasing property, 3.5 percent on education, 2.4 percent on capital formation and the remaining 3 percent on other purposes.³⁵ Studies on the impact of remittances in Nepal show that remittances have contributed to a decline in poverty levels (see Lokshin et al, 2007; Acharya & Leon-Gonzalez, 2012). The table below illustrates the improvement in household’s access to basic facilities between 1995/96 and 2010/11; part of this improvement can be attributed to the increasing inflow of remittances in the country.

³⁵ Source: NLSS-III Report, Vol. 2.

Table 1.2: Percentage of Households Reporting Less Than Adequate Availability of Basic Needs

Category	NLSS - I (1995/96)	NLSS - II (2003/04)	NLSS-III (2010/11)
Food	50.9	31.2	15.7
Housing	64.1	40.6	22.0
Clothing	57.6	35.6	16.7
Health care	58.7	28.3	18.5
Schooling	45.4	21.4	16.1
Total Income	72.6	67.0	48.6

(Source: Nepal Living Standard Survey III (2010/11), Statistical Report, Vol. 2)

At the macro-level, the inflow of remittances has added to Nepal's foreign exchange reserves and helped maintain the balance of payments (NIDS, 2011). Also, remittances are a more reliable source of foreign funds for the economy than FDI or aid. Migrants send money home so their families can meet their consumption needs; hence remittance flow is not dependent on the economic or political environment in the country. Also, remittances are countercyclical; they increase during crisis, as migrants may want to send more support home during such times (Ratha, 2007a). As figure 1.4 above illustrates, the remittance flows continued to increase even during war years when the economy was in tatters (Pant, 2008).

The increase in consumption at household level through remittance receipt could contribute to growth through multiplier impacts, as increased consumption encourages domestic production (El-Sakka, 1997). However, this impact has not been seen in Nepal, as the unfavorable investment environment, political conflict, and competition from abroad has hurt Nepalese suppliers and the increased demand has been mostly fulfilled through imports (Kharel, 2011; Thagunna and Acharya, 2013). This effect, where increased domestic demand is fulfilled through imports instead of increase in domestic production (termed as 'boomerang effect'), may bring no real benefits to the economy as higher imports hurt growth (El-Sakka,

1997). Additionally, the inflow of remittances in Nepal has contributed to currency appreciation leading to a loss of competitiveness in export sector and a rise in trade deficit, thus resulting in the Dutch disease effect (Sapkota, 2013).

Remittance inflows in Nepal may have also contributed to increasing inequality; between 1995/96 and 2004/05 the Gini coefficient for Nepal rose from 0.34 to 0.41 (Acharya and Leon-Gonzalez, 2012). This increase in inequality may be explained, at least in part, by the trends in migration where the rich and the poor migrate to different destinations and are employed in different jobs based on their skills, access to credit and social networks (Seddon et al., 2002; Sharma, 2011; Sunam and McCarthy, 2016). While the poorest of the poor stay behind because of their inability to afford migration costs, the poor usually migrate internally or to India because of the low cost of migration to these destinations and send some remittances home. The relatively well-off, who go to countries in East Asia or Middle East, are able to earn relatively high income and send more remittances home. And, the rich, who migrate to developed countries, earn the highest level of income and are able to send even more remittances home (Wagle, 2009, Gurung, 2012). The resulting differences in value of remittances sent based on migrant destination are also illustrated in table 1.1 above.

Migration of workers has affected the labor market within Nepal. In sectors that have specific demand for male labor, such as agriculture and construction, problems of shortage of labor supply due to men's migration have been reported and wage rate has increased (Maharjan et al., 2013; Sunam and McCarthy, 2016). Additionally, despite the high demand for skilled labor in the country, migration of

skilled workers has been rising (Poudel, 2015). To my knowledge, an in-depth study on the impact of migration of these skilled workers has not been conducted; however, it is likely that this outflow of skilled workers could impede the country's development, since these workers are often considered the source of innovation and job creation. In fact, the problem of brain drain, where underdevelopment encourages migration of skilled workers and outflow of skilled workers furthers underdevelopment, is likely in the case of Nepal as most skilled workers have been migrating with expectations of better opportunities abroad (Kharel, 2011). The outflow of the active labor force, both skilled and unskilled, could have eroded Nepal's productivity and hindered its growth if the value that migrants would have created had they stayed home is higher than the value of remittances sent (see Taylor, 1999). Additionally, the dependence on migration has made the economy of Nepal vulnerable to the labor market conditions at destination countries (ILO, 2010). During the global financial crisis of 2008, many Nepalese migrants lost their jobs and returned home and many others applying to migrate were unable to find jobs, thus intensifying the unemployment problem at home (NIDS, 2011).

In addition to these economic impacts, men's migration has several implications on the non-economic aspects of everyday life and the socio-cultural context at the origin. Separation of families as well as changes in household structure and gender composition in the community could influence social norms. For example, in Nepal Hindu women are not allowed to perform funeral rites; however, in some of the villages in Syangja and Rolpa women have taken up these

roles in the absence on men.³⁶ Also, social remittances, in the form of transfer of knowledge and culture from the destination, could change cultural attitudes at home (Levitt, 1998). For example, Hadi (2001) claims that, in Bangladesh, migration of men has resulted in a decline in practices of dowry as men are influenced by the cultures at destination. In contrast, study by Gulati (1986) on India points out that because of the higher family status and higher earning potential of migrants, migrant men (termed as 'gulf boys') demand higher dowry. In Nepal, the gendered nature of migration has resulted in changes in gender relations and women's roles within the household and in the community, as is examined through the rest of this dissertation. Here, we first explain the rationale for conducting this research by identifying the gaps in the existing literature and discussing the contributions made by this study.

1.3 Overview of the Existing Literature

Most of the literature on the consequences of labor migration concentrates on economic aspects at the household or country level (Boyd and Greico, 2003). These studies address questions on the impacts of remittances on household well-being, poverty levels and inequality (see Acharya and Leon-Gonzalez, 2012; Cohen, 2004; Smith et al., 2004), changes in labor market conditions or on country's balance of payments, trade and growth indicators (see Amuendo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2004; Pant, 2008; Sapkota, 2013). In the 1960s, the dominant economic theory characterized migration as a constructive process leading to convergence in

³⁶ Based on fieldwork observations.

economic growth through movement of workers from Global South to fill labor gaps in Global North and transfer of remittances and knowledge from the North to South.³⁷ This notion changed in the 1970s and 1980s with a number of academic studies arguing that migration resulted in brain drain (see Adams, 1969), dependency on destination countries (see Myrdal, 1957) and higher inequality (see Lipton, 1980) at the country of origin (de Haas, 2007). The debate returned to a more optimistic view in the 1990s, with migration being portrayed as a process of co-development where both origin and destination countries could foster development by building networks of knowledge and remittance through circulation of labor (Maimbo and Ratha, 2005). The current view, often termed transnational migration, adds that even when migrants don't return to their country of origin, they contribute to its development through diaspora knowledge networks and hometown associations (Faist, 2008; Castaneda, 2013).

Though these theories provide interesting insights into the macroeconomic impacts of migration, they have been criticized for studying migration as a strictly economic process and overlooking the complexities associated with the historical, social and political context in which migration occurs (Asis and Piper, 2008). These studies implicitly assume men as primary migrants and often consider households to be static units where income is pooled and the household head has the altruistic motive of allocating resources to maximize the utility of the entire family (see Becker, 1981; Stark and Lucas, 1988). Hence, they fail to address intra-household

³⁷ This theory is derived from earlier theories on movement of labor proposed by Lewis (1954) and Ranis and Fei (1961), and theory on transfer of human capital developed by Kindelberger (1967).

conflicts due to changes in household structure resulting from migration of some of the members (Schwenken & Eberhardt, 2008; Boyd and Greico, 2003; Kanaiaupuni 2000; Lawson 1998; Posel 2001; Casteneda, 2013; Pickbourn, 2011). There can be conflicts between the interests of men and women within the same family, and women are usually at the losing end because of their lower bargaining position. Since men's migration directly affects women's ability to represent their own interests, studying migration through a gendered perspective can provide important insights into changes in intra-household power relationships and its impact on women's status.

Scholars focusing on the impact of male migration on families and communities left behind argue that men's migration could fundamentally change gender relations and transform socio-cultural beliefs that characterize traditional gendered practices at origin (Howell, 2002; Cohen et al. 2008). A review of these studies reveals mixed results, with women experiencing both gains and losses from male migration and the consequences being dependent on the various socio-economic and structural aspects of the case being studied. Some scholars portray a positive view, arguing that men's absence improves women's well-being by increasing their freedom and expanding their decision-making power (Durand and Massey, 2004; Hadi, 2001). Also, remittances sent by migrants could enable women to attain a better standard of living for themselves and their children by lifting budget constraints and increasing their access to education, healthcare and credit facilities (Amuendo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2006; Haas and Van Rooij, 2010). Often, management of household resources by women could be advantageous for girls as

several studies show that women are more likely to invest in their daughter's education and well-being than men (Hadi, 2001; Haas and van Rooij, 2010). In some cases, men's migration may create shortages in labor supply (see Lipton, 1980) and increase women's participation in market work; thus contributing to women's empowerment by decreasing their financial dependence on men. These studies conclude that increases in women's freedom and bargaining power could expand their abilities and contribute towards shrinking the gender gap in access to social and economic opportunities.

Other studies claim that the transformations that men's migration brings to women's family life and their social and economic position are often detrimental to their well-being, as women may be taking up more responsibilities but without much change in their status in the household hierarchy (Brown, 1983; Jetley, 1987; Agadjanian & Menjivar, 2007; McKenzie & Menjivar, 2011). These studies argue that because men still serve as the primary breadwinners and make the most important decisions, there may be no real transformation in women's status. Increases in stress levels due to increased household and childcare responsibilities are common findings in these studies (Jetley, 1987; Brown 1983). Men's migration may also limit women's mobility in public spaces either because of increased scrutiny over their whereabouts in the absence of their husbands or because women may be more vulnerable to harassment by other men who believe that there is no one to protect the woman when her husband is away (Debnath & Selim, 2009; Adhikari and Hogley, 2015). Such circumstances limiting women's mobility could discourage women's participation in market work and keep them dependent on their husbands

(Jetley, 1987; Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2008; Acosta, 2006). Additionally, emotional deprivation due to prolonged displacement of family may result in increased divorce rates and destabilization of families (Jetley, 1987; McKenzie and Menjivar, 2011; McEvoy, 2012).

A third strand in the literature finds mixed impacts of male migration on women's well-being. These studies point out that while women may experience higher stress levels and anxiety from increased workload during men's migration, they may also gain independence and self-confidence from taking up tasks like operating bank accounts, supervising land, going to the market, negotiating terms of loans and managing household finances. A study by Sadiqui and Ennaji (2004) on Morocco claims that women's responsibilities as well as their dependence on their husbands increase during men's absence, but that they also enjoy a higher level of freedom and become stronger from having to fight social exclusion and negotiate power relations in the new setting. Study by Khalaf (2009) on Lebanon concludes that while women may gain freedom and feel empowered during their husbands' absence, they may also face several restrictions from having to remain financially dependent on their husbands and deal with constant interference by their in-laws. This is consistent with the findings of Desai and Banerjee (2008) who study the case of India and find that when men migrate, women in nuclear families enjoy higher autonomy but also experience an increase in workload, while women in extended families don't see much change in their workload but lose their autonomy. Some studies also point out that while remittances could increase women's access to resources, it could also weaken women's willingness to participate in market work

and keep them financially dependent on their husbands (Amuendo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2006; Acosta, 2006). Some scholars argue that the gains in autonomy during men's absence may disappear when men return, i.e. the changes experienced by women may be temporary (Kasper, 2005; Elbadawy and Roushdy, 2010; Sadiqui and Ennaji, 2004). Others claim that at least some permanent change may be seen in women's status as women learn to manage things on their own and will have negotiated a different position for themselves within the family and the society during men's absence (Yabiku et al., 2010).

These disparities in findings can be partly attributed to individual and household characteristics as well as to differences in the economic, social and cultural structures of the regions being studied. In order for women to realize economic gains through remittance reception, they should have access to the money and authority to use it. Gaining higher freedom in men's absence requires socio-economic conditions and household power relations that allow increased participation of women in socio-economic arenas and household decision-making. Also, while women in nuclear families may stand to gain power by assuming the role of household heads when their husbands migrate, women in extended households living under the headship of other family members may experience a decline in their bargaining power (Prasai, 2005; Desai and Banerjee, 2008). Additionally, norms regarding women's participation in social and economic spheres influence women's ability to make choices. It is likely that in regions with less restrictive gender norms, women face lower constraints in achieving better standard of living for themselves and their families than in regions with higher gender inequality.

Studies on migration from Nepal mainly focus on the benefits of migration, such as poverty reduction through remittance inflows and reduced unemployment pressures through outflow of workers (see Lokshin et al., 2007; Acharya & Leon-Gonzalez, 2012). Hence, facilitating migration has been a priority for the government in solving the current economic problems and little attention is given to the social changes. The gender aspect of migration from Nepal has been largely neglected in the academic literature as well as in migration-related policymaking. The only study that looks into gender impacts of migration at country level, using quantitative analysis, is a World Bank study by Lokshin and Glinskaya (2008). This study examines the effects of male migration on women's participation in labor market using the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2003/04 (NLSS -II) data and finds that women in remittance-receiving households have lower market participation than women in households that don't receive remittances. The study, however, assumes household as the unit of analysis and overlooks the effects of the changes in intra-household power relations due to men's migration on women's willingness or ability to work. Additionally, differences in women's experiences due to household structure and socio-cultural norms are disregarded in the study. Also, by focusing only on market participation, the study neglects looking into changes in women's overall workload during men's absence.

Other studies on this subject in Nepal focus on qualitative research based on smaller samples in specific regions of the country. For example, Kasper (2005) examines the changes in gender relations among the Gurungs in the Kalabang village of Kaski district. Based on semi-structured interviews with women in the

region, she finds that women's overall workload as well as decisionmaking power increases during men's absence, with the increase being higher for women in nuclear households. In another study, Maharjan et al. (2012) look into the cases of two districts – Syangja and Baitadi – and find that women's experiences depend on remittances; while women receiving high remittances could experience a decline in workload (as they may be able to hire labor) and an increase in decisionmaking, women receiving low remittances could be burdened with more work and less decisionmaking. Study by Adhikari and Hobley (2015) examines the case of Khotang and Udaypur districts in Nepal and finds that while men's migration results in intensification of women's domestic work, the impacts on their economic and social participation are not as clear as these may be dependent on women's caste and income group. This study also points out that though women may make some gains in autonomy during men's absence, household decisionmaking is mostly controlled by men. These studies provide interesting insights into women's status in specific regions, however, they don't provide much information in the differences in women's experiences across regions with different socio-economic conditions. In fact, all three of these studies are based on districts in the Hills of Nepal; hence, they fail to illustrate the differences in women's experiences based on the vastly different gender norms between the Hill and Terai. Also, since the analysis in these studies is mostly limited to qualitative methods, it is difficult to generalize the findings to the rest of the country and propose specific policy measures.³⁸ Few other studies on the

³⁸ Maharjan et al. (2012) uses some quantitative methods, but this is limited to providing descriptive statistics and comparing the means between migrant and non-migrant households, for the survey sample of the two districts.

consequences of migration from Nepal briefly mention higher workload and increased sufferings from having to manage remittances as the key challenges faced by women during men's migration (see Prasai, 2005; Gartaula, 2009).

An in-depth study, including both quantitative and qualitative analysis of women's experiences and of the socio-economic factors influencing their well-being, during men's migration, is missing. My study fills in this void by looking at women's experiences within a broad framework of women's empowerment, and examining how these experiences are influenced by various individual, household and socio-economic characteristics. I use a mixed methods strategy including qualitative analysis based on observations from fieldwork in four districts in Nepal – Syangja, Rolpa, Chitwan and Siraha – along with quantitative research using data from national level surveys from the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 (NLSS-III) and the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2011). My quantitative analysis helps make comparison across different socio-economic and regional groups and draw inferences about the experiences of Nepalese women during men's absence, in general. And, my qualitative research, based on ethnographic data from four districts with different gender norms and economic backgrounds, provides deeper insights into women's experiences in these regions.

In addition to women's market participation, I include women's domestic responsibilities and their self-employment in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. This classification illustrates the changes in allocation of women's work and examines if there are intensifications in certain aspects of women's work or in their overall workload, even if their market participation is declining. I also present a

detailed analysis on changes in women's decision-making abilities and their participation in social sphere. The literature on both these aspects of women's empowerment, in the case of Nepal, is scarce and limited to qualitative research based on small samples at specific locations. By integrating findings from fieldwork at four different locations with econometric analysis using national level data sets, my analysis provides comprehensive understanding of the intricacies associated with Nepalese women's ability to make household decisions and participate in social activities. In addition to discussing the challenges faced by women, I also point out some of the coping mechanisms women have used to overcome the difficulties and adjust to life without the migrant. Hence, the questions addressed in this dissertation as well as the approach used to answer the questions help overcome some of the shortcomings of the existing studies on Nepal.

1.4 Conclusion

With the rise in movement of workers across borders, understanding the experiences of transnationally split families is becoming increasingly important. My study contributes to this literature by focusing on the experiences of women in households with male migrants. As men migrate, women take on the role of household heads, make more decisions, manage financial matters and single-handedly bear all childcare responsibilities (Prasai, 2005). Though these changes could contribute towards empowering women in the long run, in the short run these increased responsibilities along with women's lower access to resources such as education, employment or credit could leave female-headed migrant households in

a vulnerable position. Additionally, women have to deal with the changing socio-economic conditions created by men's absence and negotiate gender relations to live in a society that has historically suppressed women's freedom and restricted them within domestic spheres.

This study looks into the impacts of men's migration on women's lives by analyzing the changes in women's work responsibilities, their involvement in household decision-making and their participation in social activities. It also examines the role of various socio-economic and household characteristics in influencing women's experiences during men's migration. By exploring these questions, my study sheds light on both the struggles and the achievements of women during their husbands' absence and provides insights that might be useful to policymakers interested in advancing women's well-being as well as those involved with facilitating migration. A woman's experience during her husband's absence directly affects her role as the caretaker of the family and influences the well-being of her children as well as other household members. Hence, with the rising rate of migration of men, it is increasingly important to understand the consequences faced by women and to provide them with the resources essential to coping with these challenges. For example, providing women with skill-based trainings and encouraging their participation in market work could make them more independent financially and improve their bargaining position within the family. In fact, migration of men from Nepal has increased the proportion of women in the workforce; however, women's lack of access to resources and skills has restricted their participation to low-income and low-skilled sector (ILO, 2010). Policy-level

efforts to discourage gender-specific division of labor, ensure equal pay for women and increase their access to resources might help reduce some of this discrepancy in women's achievements.

A study such as this can help us to understand the process of economic development through a gendered lens. It provides insights into the role of social norms and the complexities associated with household power inequalities in influencing women's experiences and their participation in development. Women constitute slightly more than half of the world's population and their contribution to socio-economic development is also more than half because of their dual roles in productive and reproductive spheres (Bari, 2005). However, most of their work is unpaid and undervalued. And, their lower economic and educational achievements have put them in a subordinate position in the society. Understanding the difficulties women face and providing them with necessary resources to expand their capabilities would not only reduce gender inequality but also contribute to increasing the productive capacity of the economy and facilitate development. The literature on women's status in other developing countries with widespread patriarchal norms reveal that women's experiences discussed above is not unique to Nepal. Women in many other countries face similar struggles in terms of their access to education and other resources and their freedom to participate in economic and social spheres. Hence, the study could serve as a resource to advocate for policies that enhance women's access to resources, support their participation in socio-economic spheres, and discourage cultural norms that promote gender inequality.

This first chapter has focused on the context of the study. In chapter 2, the key research questions are presented along with the theoretical framework and a discussion of the status of women in Nepal. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used to answer the research questions along with a description of both the qualitative and quantitative data used for this study. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present in-depth analyses on the changes in women's work, their decision-making and their social participation due to migration of men, respectively. The final chapter summarizes my main findings and suggests some policy measures to address the issues related to the gender consequences of migration.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

2.1 Introduction

The key goal of this study is to look into the changes in women's experiences in Nepal during migration of men and understand the impacts of these changes on their empowerment. Women's empowerment is distinct from the empowerment of other disadvantaged or underprivileged groups based on social classes. Firstly, women are a crosscutting category of individuals that overlaps with these other groups; hence the forms of discrimination faced by women as well as the ways in which women may have mediated their relations within the family and in the society may be different based on their socio-economic status. Representation of women as a singular category with common interests may obscure the multiple identities, roles, and difference in experiences across class and ethnicities (Tamang, 2009; Ramnarain, 2015). Additionally, women live with men in the same household and constantly negotiate their power roles. These relations are shaped by conflicts from sharing work responsibilities and distributing household resources as well as cooperation from emotional ties and mutual dependence (Hartmann, 1981; Sen 1990b). Such complexities associated with women's roles within the household are central to understanding their empowerment. Lastly, women live within the constraints created by social norms; their choices and behavior are often based on what is expected of them in the society (Mosedale, 2005; Pickbourn, 2011). Hence, women's empowerment is a multidimensional concept that is highly sensitive to the

socio-economic, historical and cultural setting in which it is being studied (Batliwala, 1994; Kabeer, 1999).

This chapter begins by developing a conceptual framework on the basis of which empowerment is defined in this dissertation. Then, an overview of the status of women in Nepal including a discussion of the key religious and social norms that define gender relations in Nepal is presented. This section provides the necessary background for interpreting empowerment and understanding the role of socio-cultural factors in perpetuating gender inequality in Nepal. Next, the key research questions, based on the theoretical framework as well as the literature on the status of women in Nepal, are discussed. The final section presents some concluding remarks.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Defining Empowerment

In the literature, the term 'empowerment' has been defined and interpreted in different ways. While some scholars prefer to use the term by coming up with a list of quantifiable aspects, others argue that the value of the term lies in its vagueness and any attempt to quantify it may make it underspecified (Kabeer, 1999; Endeley, 2001). In the development discourse 'empowerment' is often used loosely to fit the objectives of the development programs; while, in policy-making the focus is more likely to be on defining the term based on quantitative measures (Malhotra et al., 2002). Though women may have some interests in common, and women's empowerment may be defined based on women's abilities to pursue these interests,

there is no agreement on what these interests are. Hence, there exists no universally applicable and theoretically acceptable explanation of women's subordination from which a general definition of empowerment may be derived (Molyneux, 1985; Mosedale, 2005).

The complexities associated with defining empowerment also apply to developing a quantitative index for measuring it. Attempts to measure empowerment through specific indices are often criticized for failing to include different aspects of empowerment by compressing a lot of information into measurable indices. Women may be empowered in one aspect of their lives but not in others; such complexities may be masked in studies that do not differentiate between the various aspects of empowerment (Malhotra et al., 2002). Also, because empowerment is context-specific, it is difficult to make cross-regional and cross-cultural comparisons. For example, access to education may not be a good indicator of women's empowerment in most of the developed world but it is one of the key measures in Nepal, as girls are often not sent to school. Additionally, since empowerment entails a process of change, it would be ideal to look at time-series data when conducting econometric analysis. However, given the difficulties measuring empowerment, such comparisons over time may not be possible.

Despite these complexities associated with conceptualizing and measuring empowerment, review of existing literature suggests a considerable consensus in studies attempting to define the term. Common themes in most of these studies revolve around notions of women's abilities, their choices, their power to influence

household decisions, their control over household resources, and their participation in economic and social spheres, as illustrated by the definitions below.

“...process of removing obstacles of women’s active participation in all spheres in public and private life through full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making” (Beijing Platform for Action, UN 1995).

“...control over material assets (physical, human, financial), intellectual resources (knowledge and information), and ideology (ability to generate, propagate and sustain specific sets of beliefs)” (Batliwala, 1994).

“...rights, resources and voice are key aspects of women’s empowerment” (World Bank, 2001).

“...process by which women redefine gender roles in ways which extend their possibilities for being and doing” (Mosedale, 2005)

Efforts to deter the maintenance of women’s subordination are often based on abolishing the sexual division of labor, removing institutionalized form of discrimination, attaining political equality, gaining freedom of choice over childbearing, adopting measures against male violence, and transforming structures and institutions that perpetuate gender discrimination (Batliwala, 1994; Molyneux, 1985). There is a general agreement on using measures such as women’s access to resources and ownership of assets (Quisumbing et al., 2000), decline in fertility rate (Morgan and Niraula, 1995; Sen, 1999), rise in women’s market participation (Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2008), decision-making power and autonomy (Desai and Banerjee, 2008), as indicators of empowerment.

One of the theories that incorporates these aspects and provides a broad framework for understanding empowerment is Kabeer’s (1999) work on gender, where empowerment is defined as the process through which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such ability. Kabeer points out that in

order to make choices, there need to be alternatives; for the poor who struggle with meeting basic necessities, this definition of exercising meaningful choices may not apply (p. 437). Also, sometimes differences in choices arise from difference in preferences and not from constraints. Since the notion of power is not relevant if the failure to achieve something comes from laziness or from preferential differences, analysis on women's empowerment should examine if the differences in choices come from differences in constraints faced (p. 439).

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

category in Kabeer's framework, achievement, refers to the outcomes of women's empowerment; these may be seen as improvement in children's or women's well-being due to women's empowered position (p. 438). Kabeer stresses that the three aspects of empowerment in her framework are closely tied (triangulation) and it is only through an inclusion of all these aspects that evaluations on empowerment can be made (p. 452). For example, a woman who gains access to or ownership of land but no control over its use may not see any change in her ability to make choices. Having access to the land is only a pre-condition for empowerment. Her ability to make choices may be expanded when she is able to exercise agency over the land she owns.

In her analysis, Kabeer suggests a framework under which empowerment may be quantified by looking into variables that provide a measure for each of its three dimensions. Resources could be measured by looking at differences in primary functionings such as nourishment, health, shelter, education, access to employment, and ownership of land and other fixed assets. Agency could be measured by looking into indices of decision-making, incidence of male violence, or women's mobility in economic and social spheres. Indicators of women's and children's well-being such as literacy rate, child mortality rate or infant immunization rates could be used as indicators of women's achievements.

One of the main challenges in working with Kabeer's framework is that there are no clear distinctions on what indicators to choose for each of the three dimensions, as these concepts are closely tied and inter-dependent. Malhotra et al. (2002) describe this problem by stating that,

“While distinctions such as those between ‘resources, agency and achievements’ ... seem clear at the conceptual level, it is not always easy to completely separate them in developing empowerment indicators. And too, a given variable may function as an indicator of women’s access to resources (or an enabling factor) in one context, of women’s agency in another, and may represent an achievement in still other contexts.” (p. 9).

For example, wage-employment could be a measure of women’s access to labor market (resources) but it could also be interpreted as increased agency through mobility in economic sphere or an achievement from having access to labor market and being less dependent on other household members. Despite this complication, Kabeer’s framework is specific enough to distinguish it from the general concept of power, look into the different aspects of empowerment and interpret it as a process of change. It also offers researchers the flexibility of choosing specific indicators for empowerment based on the context of the study. Additionally, the framework facilitates the interpretation of empowerment using mixed-methods, as it provides a solid basis for measuring empowerment quantitatively while emphasizing on the need to ensure triangulation of the different dimensions of empowerment through deeper qualitative analysis.

2.2.2 Household Power Relations and Social Norms

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

involvement in household decisionmaking. Hence, women's empowerment must be understood in the context of intra-household power relations and social structures; such a framework is particularly useful for this study as men's migration results in direct changes in these structures.

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

Women usually have worse breakdown positions, lower perceived interest and lower perceived contribution because of socially generated asymmetries related to women's ownership and their access to education, employment and other

household resources (Braunstein, 2008; Sen, 1990b). Since most of women's work is household work that produces no remuneration and is less visible, women remain financially dependent on men. Also, gendered nature of labor market and lack of access to economic and social resources limits women's participation in market work. Even when women do take up market work and contribute to household income, their earning is considered secondary to men's income (de la Rocha, 1994).

Additionally, an idealized notion of femininity is based on women's generosity and altruism, hence women are expected to compromise personal well-being for the benefit of the family (Rashid, 2013). For example, women often eat last and least in the household to ensure that their children and husbands get proper nutrition and this practice is valued as a sign of being a 'good woman/wife'. On one hand, the glorification of such practices, that are discriminatory towards women, may cause women to internalize their social position as persons of less value and prioritize the family's well-being over personal welfare (Braunstein, 2008). On the other hand, women could willingly participate in such practices as a way of 'bargaining with patriarchy' to maximize their security by manipulating affections of their husbands and sons, and maintaining their status as 'good wives' and 'good mothers' (Kandiyoti, 1988). Hence, women may not consider gender inequality as being unjust. In some ways, they may participate in their own oppression by submitting to the patriarchal structures so as to maintain individual gains from following discriminatory practices.

Women's behaviors are influenced by the feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, guilt and shame from violating social norms (Pickbourn, 2011). Women may not

want to participate in social and economic spheres, if it is not socially acceptable. Also, women may be reluctant to admit that they are making more decisions or taking on the role of the household heads, since those are considered to be 'male responsibilities'. Even when women's participation in socio-economic spheres increases and they make more decisions, they might see these changes as an increase in stress rather than an expansion in their agency power, partly because they have to step into 'male territories' to take on these new roles (McEvoy et al., 2012). Such perceptions about women's place in the social and economic spaces are borne out of historical and cultural factors that constrain women's freedom and lower their perceived interest (Sen, 1999; Batliwala, 1994).

Sen's theory on 'cooperative conflict' is useful for my study since by characterizing household power relations as a complex phenomenon involving both cooperation and conflict between family members, this theory overcomes the shortcomings of the neoclassical model that portrays household as a unit with altruistic head making decisions to maximize the well-being of the entire family (see Becker, 1981). Also, unlike most game-theoretic models that come up with solutions for collusion and conflicts between household members based on arbitrary assumptions about households' utility and behavioral characteristics (see McElroy and Horney, 1981), Sen's theory is more realistic as it is based on perceptions about who contributes and deserves how much of the household resources. Since these perceptions are shaped by social and cultural norms, this framework is helpful in understanding empowerment in the context of household structure and social relations.

2.3 Status of Women in Nepal

According to the Gender Gap Report 2013, presented in the World Economic Forum, Nepal is among the countries with highest gender inequalities, ranking 121st out of 136 countries.¹ Women are among the poorest in Nepal; though they work three to four more hours per day than men, they have lower income levels, limited access to education, marginal land holdings, and most of their labor is confined to domestic and farm work which is unpaid labor. Even when women take up wage-employment, household work is considered their primary responsibility and they are expected to manage both domestic and market work. Also, women's decision-making position in the family is weaker than that of the male members and they are often restricted from participating in market work and social activities (Acharya & Bennett, 1983; Ledgerwood, 1997). Therefore, women carry higher workloads than most men but also have restricted freedom and lower access to resources; these have contributed to the subordination of women's economic and social status in Nepal.

While the above description represents the overall status of Nepalese women, it is important to note that 'Nepalese women' cannot be specified as a singular category given the diversity in gender norms based on ethnicities, castes and regional characteristics. The constraints faced and the opportunities available to an upper class educated woman from urban region may be very different from those of women from lower class in rural areas. Also, the stark differences between the experiences of Indo-Aryan women bound within domestic space and those of

¹ The gender gap ratio is based on indicators for education, economic achievements, health and well-being and political participation of men and women.

Tibeto-Burman women who have higher freedom have been discussed by several scholars (see Bennett and Acharya, 1983; Niraula and Morgan, 1995; Tamang, 2009). In Tamang's (2009) words,

From Hindu high caste women (including Madhesi women) sequestered in private sphere, to Thakali women renowned for their business acumen and skills, to Limbu women who are free to divorce and remarry as widows, women and men in various communities in Nepal have historically structured their relations very differently. (p. 65).

Such distinctions are identified and discussed at several places in this dissertation. Here, we present a discussion of the dominant religious and social norms in the country that have contributed to the existing gender inequality.

2.3.1 Religious Norms

The religious composition of Nepal's population shows that the majority, 84 percent follow Hinduism. The other religious groups in the country include Buddhists (9%), Muslims (4%), and, Christians and others (3%).² Hence, Hinduism is the main religion of Nepal and its key doctrines are entrenched in the country's social and cultural values. The Hindu religious outlook on women is based on notions about her sexuality and sexual purity. In a woman's natal household, she is portrayed as being non-sexual and benevolent as it is assumed that she has no sexual influence over the men in her natal family. In fact, girls who have not hit puberty are considered pure and divine and worshipped during the festival of *Kumari Puja* (virgin worship). However, a married woman in her conjugal household is assumed to have sexual power to lure men and threaten their purity.

² Source: Nepal Demographic and Health Survey Report, 2011.

Hence, she is viewed as being potentially malevolent, and the need to control and maintain her subservience is widespread in many of the texts and religious practices of Hinduism (Gray, 1990). Hence, women in their conjugal households are perceived as having lower status than women in their natal households.

Hindu notions on women's sexual purity are central to understanding the gender norms in Nepal. The sexual purity of an unmarried girl lies in her virginity; and the honor of her family, especially that of the male members, is dependent on her sexual purity. Hence, pre-marital sex is considered a taboo for girls and their socialization with men outside the house is viewed with contempt. Girls are required to dress appropriately and behave politely in public spaces, so that they don't attract men. For the same reason, they are often restricted from going to the market alone, being outside the house after dark, and participating in economic and social activities. The roots of child marriage, which still exists in many parts of rural Nepal, partly come from the need to get daughters married while they are still sexually pure (Bennett, 1983; Gray, 1990).

The sexual purity of married women, on the other hand, lies in being faithful to their husbands. Hence, women's participation in activities that require interaction with other men, such as taking up market work or participating in social activities, is restricted. Some high-caste Hindu groups in the Terai region also follow purdah norms of covering women's bodies and limiting their mobility (Acharya & Bennett, 1983). In some households, rituals such as washing husbands' and in-laws' feet every morning are followed to maintain women's devotion to their husbands and reinforce their submissive position in the family (Majupuria, 1989).

Additionally, married women are required to wear *sindoor* (red vermilion powder), *potey* (glass-bead necklace) and bangles as marks of their married status (Adhikari et al., 1994).

In Hinduism, a woman's status is often defined by the well-being of the male members of the family. If a woman gives birth to a son, her position within the household rises. However, if a woman's husband dies, she is considered as being jinxed and her position within the household and the society declines. Widows from orthodox Hindu families are not allowed to remarry and they are required to practice abstinence from wearing auspicious colors (such as red and green) and attending propitious occasions like marriages (Majupuri, 1989). In fact, the husband's death is often blamed on the woman's misfortune; hence, women follow several restrictive practices, such as fasting and praying during festivals, to ask for husbands' long life and express devotion to their husbands. Men, on the other hand, face no such religious obligations to remain faithful to their wives.³

Nepalese women from other religious backgrounds face fewer constraints than Hindu women. For example, women from the Tibeto-Burman culture, most of whom follow Buddhism and other indigenous religions, are less concerned about matters of sexual purity. Unlike Hindu women, they do not face restrictions on social mobility or participation in economic spheres. Also, the norms on marriage in these societies are more liberal in that women have more freedom in selecting their conjugal partners, the age of marriage is higher, pre-marital sex is acceptable and

³ Polygamy is, however, not common in Nepal. Though there are no religious restrictions on polygamy, it is socially frowned upon and punishable by law. Based on NDHS 2011, only 2% of Nepalese men were reported to have more than one wife.

women do not lose their status if they get divorced or decide to remarry. The socio-economic indicators for women from the Tibeto-Burman culture are much higher than that for most Hindu women (Bennett and Acharya, 1983). Such accounts illustrate the degree to which the patriarchal nature of Hindu religious beliefs affects the lives of Hindu women. Women from the Tamang, Rai, Sherpa, Magar and Kiranti communities fall within this category. However, they constitute only about 10 percent of the women in Nepal.

2.3.2 Socio-Cultural Norms

In the paper 'Songs of Tij: Genre of Critical Commentary for Women in Nepal' by Skinner, Adhikari and Holland (1994), the writers analyze a collection of local songs composed by Hindu women in preparation for celebrating Tij - a festival in which women fast all day long and sing and dance for the maintenance of health and well-being of their husbands. Contrary to the rituals of this festival that reaffirm patrilineal principles, the songs mostly focus on the hardships and the various forms of discriminations women face due to pressures from Hindu culture that require them to be good daughters, devoted wives and respectful daughters-in-law. Expressed in these songs are the pains of a daughter who does not have the opportunity to go to school or play with her friends like her brother does, a young woman who has to get married to a man she does not know and live with an unknown family, a wife who has to bear the violence and abuse of her drunkard husband, a daughter-in-law who has to remain subservient to all other household members and take up the most difficult household work, and a widow who is seen

as a disgrace to her household. These songs illustrate the everyday experiences of an average Nepali woman and provide insights into the social context in which most women live.

A typical Nepali household is characterized by a hierarchical system based on the age and gender of household members. This hierarchy, partly determined by the relationship of each member to the household head, influences women's experiences and access to resources in the household. Usually, the eldest male member serves as the head of the household. Next in order are the spouse of the head followed by sons and then daughters. At the end of the hierarchy are daughters-in-law followed by their children. The lower position of conjugal women (daughters-in-law) relative to natal women (daughters) is partly based on the religious views that consider natal women as being sexually benign and conjugal women as being sexually powerful (Gray, 1990). If there is more than one daughter-in-law, their rank is determined by the age of their husbands, i.e. the wife of an older brother has a higher status than that of a younger one. Also, the woman who gives birth to a son has a higher status than a woman who has only daughters or who has no children at all, since she provides a legitimate male heir to the family. This hierarchy is important in understanding the differences in women's experiences within a household, as women at the bottom of the hierarchy may be required to do more strenuous work and have lower access to household resources. In fact, women in higher positions often exhibit discriminatory behavior towards those below them. For example, the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is often conflictual since the mother-in-law takes responsibility of controlling the

daughter-in-law's submissiveness and imposes restrictions on her activities (Gray, 1990).

Social norms regarding marriage play a key role in the persistence of discrimination against women and the preference for a male child in the Nepalese society. The patrilocal system of marriage that requires a woman to move to her husband's house upon marriage increases parents' preference for a son, since daughters are not going to be present to take care of them in old age or to carry on the family lineage. Additionally, the continuing existence of the dowry system, that requires the bride's parents to make large payments to the groom's family, could lower parents' preference for a female child (Majupuria, 1989). In fact, discrimination against girls begins even before she is born; as the practice of female feticide, though illegal, has been cited as an increasing problem by health care providers and administrators providing abortion services in Nepal (Lamichhane et al., 2011). After a girl is born, she faces various forms of disadvantages relative to her male siblings. Fewer girls have the opportunity to go to schools, girls spend more time in household work, and they receive unequal access to food and other household resources. Once she gets married, her position falls even lower as she has to start at the bottom of the household hierarchy and she is expected to take on unfair burden of household work (Gray, 1990; Adhikari et al., 1994).

Nepalese women thus face various forms of discrimination based on religious beliefs and the social structure in which they live. These put severe constraints on women's ability to make choices and voice their opinions. In the long-term, the unequal access to education and health care that girls receive put them at

a disadvantaged position compared to their male counterparts in terms of gaining the skills to participate in social and economic activities. Hence, women either remain restricted to subsistence agriculture and household work or take up low paying market jobs, and remain financially dependent on their husbands (Bennett, 1983; Manjupuria, 1989). Because of the different forms of discrimination faced by women, they are still far behind men in terms of their achievements. A brief overview of the differences in achievements of men and women in Nepal, based on various socio-economic indicators, is presented next.

2.3.3 Socio-Economic Indicators

A quick overview of the gender disaggregated socio-economic indicators for Nepal shows women lagging behind men in terms of educational qualifications, economic achievements, asset ownership as well as participation in political sphere. In the last few decades, Nepal has been making steady progress in terms of educational achievement of the population as a whole. As illustrated by table 2.1 below, between 1995/96 and 2010/11, there has been an increase in the adult literacy rate as well as the percentage of population attending schools; however, there is a huge gap between the educational achievements of men and women. Gender inequality is even more intense within some social, regional and income groups. For example, in the Terai middle caste group, only 58 percent of 6-10 year girls are at school compared to 94 percent for boys. Also, school enrollment is lower for children from poorer households, where the 36 percent of 6-10 year olds are out of school and two-thirds of these children are girls (Mathema, 2007).

Table 2.1: Education Indicators

	1995/96	2003/04	2010/11
Adult literacy rate, both sexes (15 years and above)	35.6	48.0	56.5
Men	53.5	64.5	71.6
Women	19.4	33.8	44.5
School ever attended, both sexes (15 years and above)	33.9	45.8	54.6
Males	50.2	61.2	69.6
Females	19.1	32.6	42.9

(Source: Nepal Living Standard Survey- I, II and III.)

Table 2.2: Reasons for Not Attending School

Reason for not attending school	Men	Women
Did not want to go to school	30.4%	12.7%
Parents did not send	14.5%	35.3%
Had to help with household work	13.5%	29.6%
Too expensive	6.8%	7.5%

(Source: NLSS-III.)

Table 2.2 above shows the survey responses from NLSS-III on the reasons for which men and women did not attend school. We see that while the most common reason for men to not attend school is not wanting to go to school, for women the most common reason is parents not sending them to school, followed by having to help with household work. These numbers are indicative of the socio-cultural norms where parents are less inclined to send daughters to school.⁴

When we look at women's economic participation, we see that most of their work is limited to household work and self-employment in agriculture. Men dominate wage-employment and employment in sectors other than agriculture. Based on the World Bank's Gender Statistics for 2008, among the employed men, 62.1 percent were in agricultural sector, 15.5 percent in industry and 22.4 percent in services. Among the employed women, these numbers were 84.3 percent, 6.8

⁴ During my fieldwork, some women mentioned that when faced with financial constraints, they had to take their daughters out of school so that they could afford to send their sons to school. In many cases, girls were sent to government school (much cheaper, often free) while boys went to more expensive private school.

percent and 9 percent, respectively. Table 2.3 below shows the distribution of the men and women employed across different sectors as well as their mean incomes. We see that most of women’s work is concentrated in the unpaid agricultural sector, and that the mean wages for women is much lower than that of men in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

Table 2.3: Employment Indicators

	Men (% of employed men)	Women (% of employed women)
Wage-employed in agriculture	2.7	2.8
Wage-employed in non-agriculture	20.9	5.7
Self-employment in agriculture	53.6	67.7
Self-employed in non-agriculture	17.1	9.0
Extended economy	5.6	14.8
Mean daily wages in agricultural sector (NRs.)	201	147
Mean daily wages in non-agricultural sector (NRs.)	286	189

(Source: NLSS-III)

Women in Nepal are behind men in terms of their political participation as well. Though women constitute little more than half the population of the country and they actively participated in political movement of 1951, the mass movement of 1990, and the civil war from 1996 to 2006, they haven’t gotten equal political representation or equal rights (Pradhan, 2005; Pokharel, 2014). When the Maoists won the Constituent Assembly elections in 2008, women gained unprecedented number of seats in the parliament raising hopes for better representation of women’s interests. However, women were marginalized within the parties by being placed in positions with less decision-making authority, and political parties continue to be dominated by elite high caste men (Tamang, 2009). In 2015, women only held only 29.5 percent of the seats in the national parliament and 13.6 percent

of the ministerial level positions.⁵ The new 2015 constitution has provisions for substantive gender equality including equal property rights and elimination of violence against women; however, the constitution also contains discriminatory clauses including unequal citizenship rights.⁶ For example, children of a Nepali woman married to foreign man can only get citizenship by naturalization (naturalized citizens cannot access higher posts in administration or security), whereas children of Nepali man married to foreign woman gets citizenship by birth.

Other variables often used to illustrate the status of women include regional or national trends in age of marriage, women's ownership of assets, access to credit and prevalence of gender violence. In Nepal, the age of marriage has been rising; the percentage of women married by age 15 declined from 24 percent for those between 45 to 49 years to 5 percent for those between 15 to 19 years. However, the median age of marriage for women aged 25 – 49 is four years lower than that for men (NDHS, 2011). Also, asset ownership is very low for Nepalese women; only 6 percent of the women own a house and about 9 percent own some land alone compared to 23 percent and 25 percent of men owning a house and land alone, respectively (NDHS, 2011). Though women have legal access to banks, their low literacy limits their access to institutional credit (Acharya et al., 2007). Gender violence is also widespread in Nepal; based on a report by Department for International Development (2011), almost 75 percent of women have experienced some form of violence in their lifetimes.

⁵ Source: World Development Indicators database, World Bank.

⁶Source: Article 11.7, article 18.5 and article 38, Constitution Bill of Nepal 2015.

Gender discrimination is deeply rooted in the socio-economic and cultural structures of the Nepalese society. As daughters, women are expected to be more obedient, less demanding and satisfied with lower access to resources than her brothers. When faced with resource constraints, a daughter's education, nutrition and healthcare is often sacrificed to be able to provide better education and healthcare to sons. Upon marriage, a woman is expected to remain subservient to her husband and in-laws. She has to start at the bottom of the household hierarchy and take charge of most of the household and childcare work (Bennett, 1983; Gray, 1990). And, throughout their lives, women's access to resources is more limited than that of men, they face severe limitations in terms of their freedom and mobility in public spaces and they are underrepresented in almost all public domains from civil service and local governance to politics and entrepreneurship (Mishra, 2014). Though women's access to education and employment has been increasing in the past couple decades, Nepalese society is still far from reaching the goals of gender inequality.

2.3 Research Questions

The key purpose of this study is to examine how men's migration has changed women's experiences and affected their empowerment. Based on Kabeer's framework, we analyze empowerment by looking into whether women have gained access to resources, higher agency and greater achievements in the absence of men. Here, women's access to wage-employment, their involvement in household decisionmaking and their participation in social activities are used as indicators of

their access to resources, agency and achievements, respectively. If in the absence of men, women take up some of the market employment and add to the household income, she could gain autonomy and higher decision-making ability as her position within the household hierarchy increases (see Beneria and Roldan, 1987). Such changes could strengthen women's self-confidence and encourage their participation in social activities. We will test if these assumptions hold in the case of Nepal. The selection of the indicators, as measures of resources, agency and achievements, is partly based on findings from fieldwork where these were the most commonly cited aspects of women's experiences that had changed due to men's migration. Hence, we will investigate how men's migration affects women's work responsibilities, their decision-making abilities, and their participation in social sphere, and also examine what individual, household and socio-economic characteristics influence these aspects of women's empowerment.

A few qualifying statements are necessary here to validate the use of this framework. First, though using quantitative measures comes with the risk of underspecifying empowerment, such an approach is valuable for gaining insights into specific aspects of women's lives and could be very useful for policy-making purposes. Second, the three indices chosen to represent the three dimensions of empowerment could be used interchangeably; and we may see an increase in one of the three aspects, but no change or even a decline in other aspects. For instance, there could be an increase in women's social participation without a change in women's decision-making power or an increase in women's decision-making ability but no change in wage-employment. Finally, given the complexities in measuring

and defining empowerment, the study does not intend to come up with a simple deterministic answer to the question of whether men's migration empowers women or not. Rather, the objective is to understand the complexities associated with women's experiences, analyze whether and under what conditions these changes may bring about an expansion in women's abilities to make choices, and suggest measures that might help minimize the struggles faced by women during men's migration. A brief discussion on each of the indicators used for measuring empowerment is presented next.

2.3.1 Women's Work and Access to Wage-Employment

Gendered division of labor is characterized as being central to perpetuating gender inequality (see Molyneux, 1985; Moghadam, 1998; Niraula and Morgan, 1995; Sen 1990a). In most developing countries, women's work is concentrated in household maintenance and subsistence farming. Irrespective of the difficulties associated with these tasks, there is little value attached to it since household work is seen more as women's duty than as her contribution to the family (de la Rocha, 1994). Also, since most of this work is unpaid, women remain financially dependent on other household members. Men, on the other hand, are mostly involved in income-generating employment activity which is valued for the financial security it provides to the family. Hence, increased participation in wage-employment could improve women's position in the household by making their work more visible. Women may also gain social respect from increased visibility of their work. The distribution of household resources may be less biased against women if they are

able to earn and contribute to household income. Also, if the job has some form of legal protection, women may make gains in corresponding rights and financial independence. Hence, participation in market work may improve a woman's breakdown position by reducing her dependence on other family members and providing her with some form of financial security. Also, being able to add to the family's economic security could change the perceptions about the woman's contribution to the family, and increase her perceived interest and perceived contribution (Sen, 1990a).

As women enter the labor market, there could be social and structural changes that further facilitate their participation in market work. Over time, it may become more acceptable for women to take on wage-employment and gender-based barriers to entering certain professions may become less pronounced. Expansion in women's ability to take up market work could help reduce bias against girls, as women become recognized as productive contributors of the society. Such changes would reduce women's dependence on men and in the long-term contribute towards removing structural inequalities between men and women (Sen, 1999).

While in general increased participation in market work is seen as a sign of women's empowerment, having to take on such work might also add stress to their lives mainly because taking on wage-employment does not free women from unpaid household work (de la Rocha, 1994). In many cases, having to participate in market work could be born out of necessity due to insufficient household income; under such conditions women might be undergoing an immense amount of pressure from having to manage both household and market work. Therefore, only looking at

changes in market participation for women might provide an incomplete picture of their experiences; it is important to see if their participation in market work is complemented by a reduction in household responsibilities and a transformation in the gendered division of labor. For example, Molyneux (1985) points out that after the Nicaraguan revolution of 1979, women entered the labor market but there was no change in gender relations. Hence, contrary to the official rhetoric of women being 'emancipated' after the revolution, they endured increased pressure from having to fulfill the traditional role of a housewife while also being a wageworker and a political activist.

In studying the changes in women's work responsibility due to men's migration, I categorize women's work into the following four types: (a) household work, (b) self-employment in agriculture, (c) self-employment in non-agriculture, and (d) wage-employment in agriculture. This is different from the approach taken by most studies, where the sole focus is on women's participation in labor market, and changes in women's household responsibility and subsistence farming are neglected (see Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2008; Acosta, 2006). Hence, my research question on women's work responsibilities is further disaggregated into the following four questions:

- a) How does men's migration change women's household responsibilities?
- b) How does men's migration change women's participation in subsistence agriculture?
- c) How does men's migration change women's participation in self-employment in non-agriculture?

d) How does men's migration change women's participation in wage-employment?

Understanding how women's involvement in each of the four categories of work changes during men's migration provides interesting insights into their well-being. Since household work and family-based agriculture are both mostly unpaid and undervalued work, women who spend more time on these tasks are likely to have a lower bargaining position within the household than women who bring in income through some form of market employment (Acharya and Bennett, 1983; Mu et al. 2011). Less household or agricultural work could also improve women's well-being, as she might be able to enjoy more leisure time. Participation in wage-employment and self-employment in non-agriculture enables women to contribute directly to household income; hence women involved in these activities may have a stronger bargaining position and greater agency than women who are limited to household and subsistence agricultural work.

2.3.2 Women's Decision-Making

Women's participation in household decision-making is frequently used as an indicator of their bargaining power (see Bennett and Acharya, 1983; Acharya et al., 2015; Desai and Johnson, 2005; Adato et al., 2000; Maharjan et al., 2012). Increased decision-making authority expands women's ability to make life choices, influences the allocation of resources and improves the well-being of women and their families (WDR, 2012). Being able to make choices and exercise control over one's life is intrinsic to well-being. Women may be able to gain human capital with

increased decision-making power. For example, Begum and Sen (2005) find that in Bangladesh women who had more control over their health care, physical mobility and household purchases had systematically higher nutritional status for all income groups. Studies examining the impacts of increased decision-making for women on children's well-being often find better health and education outcomes for children when mothers make more decisions (see Smith et al. 2003, Adhikari and Sawangdee, 2011; Desai and Johnson, 2005; de Haas and van Rooij, 2010). In Mexico, girls were found to spend less time in domestic work in households where mothers had greater decision-making power (Reggio, 2010). Also, Hadi (2001) finds better educational outcomes for girls when mothers have higher decision-making power. Such findings indicate that greater decision-making for women may be specifically beneficial for girls. Hence, increased decision-making for women could help reduce gender-based inequalities and contribute towards improved well-being for the entire family.

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

making more of the everyday household decisions, while men control a majority of the decisions related to children's health and education and allocation of the household's financial resources, then such changes might not necessarily imply increased agency for women. In this study, in addition to using a composite index for measuring women's decision-making, I also investigate whether women's decision-making ability differs by the type of decision made. I, specifically, look into differences in women's decisionmaking ability on decisions on children's health, women's health, women's physical mobility, smaller everyday expenses, bigger financial investments, and the use of husband's income.

2.3.3 Women's Social Participation

Women's subjugation in private space is often a primary source of their subordination in the society. Hence, women's physical mobility and their ability to participate in public spheres, especially in contexts where they have been denied such opportunities, has been identified as an important indicator of their empowerment by many scholars (see Kasper, 2005; Debnath and Selim, 2009; Hanson, 2010). As discussed above, women in Nepal face several forms of restrictions in terms of their mobility in public spaces due to the various religious and social norms. Such restrictions are common in the context of South Asia in general (see Mayoux, 2001; Desai and Banerjee, 2008). In their study on contraceptive use in Bangladesh, Schuler and Hashemi (1994) use women's physical mobility as an indicator of women's empowerment and argue that participation in community activities (such as weekly meetings for microfinance programs) gives

women legitimate reasons to move in public spaces, increases their visibility and exposes them to new ideas that increase their self-confidence and make them more skillful with public interactions.

As women form bonds with other women, they create an identity outside the family and find support from each other on everyday things like childcare, domestic work and participation in wage-employment (de la Rocha, 1994). Such transformations could expand women's knowledge base, extend their support network and result in improved breakdown position and higher perceived interest. Women cannot address structural inequalities alone. However, collective solidarity among women through social networks could create conditions to help them identify their strategic and practical interests and transform social structures to reduce discrimination (Kabeer, 1999; Weiss, 1999). Hence, higher social participation and strengthened social network among women could be central to combating gender inequality.

Increased freedom of movement in social spaces could transform norms that limit women to domestic spaces. Women who are outgoing are often stigmatized as being "loose characters". Also, the pervasiveness of harassment in the form of teasing, name-calling and making sexual advances discourage women's social participation. Such perceptions and practices may decline, as women gain confidence from their exposure to outside world and show restraints against discriminatory practices. These changes may in the long-term contribute towards furthering women's physical mobility and reducing the gender-based segregation of social responsibilities.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified some of the difficulties with defining and measuring empowerment and discussed the framework used to examine the case for Nepalese women in this study. Here, we mainly look at changes in women's empowerment during men's migration by focusing on the changes in women's work responsibilities, their decision-making ability and their participation in social activities. Each of these aspects directly influences women's position as well as affect social norms dictating women's economic and social mobility; hence they provide interesting insights on the strengthening or weakening of gender-based inequalities over time.

It is important to note that studying only one of the three aspects provides an incomplete picture of women's experiences and may not be sufficient to understand women's empowerment in the broader context. For example, only increased market participation is not sufficient to assume increased bargaining power for women until we have some evidence of women having a bigger say in distribution of household resources (Moghadam, 1998). Also, increased decision-making but no change in economic or physical mobility, may imply that women remain dependent on their husbands and that even if they are making more of the everyday decisions, bigger and more important decisions may be completely controlled by men. Hence, it is necessary to include all the three indicators as measures of women's access to resources, agency power and achievements to make inferences about her empowerment.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA DESCRIPTION

3.1 Introduction

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

Quantitative studies overcome these issues as they are mostly based on large random samples that are less likely to be biased. Quantitative analysis, however, fails to provide insights into perceptions and experiences of the research subjects. Also, statistical indicators are only simple windows to complex processes and a lot of relevant information may be missed when relying solely on quantitative methods to understand socio-economic processes (Carr, 1994; Choy, 2014). Mixed methods

are considered particularly useful for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches and for complementing each other to strengthen the research analysis (Jick, 1979; Choy, 2014). By using mixed methods, this study hopes to provide a more holistic view of women's experiences during men's migration.

Given the nature of our research questions that, as discussed in chapter 2, are highly sensitive to the socio-economic context as well as the cultural norms in Nepal, fieldwork involving direct interaction with women who had been affected by migration of men seemed essential for this study. Therefore, I carried out fieldwork in Nepal from June to August of 2014. The fieldwork was instrumental to framing my research questions, understanding the socio-cultural norms at the research locations, and also interpreting the results from my quantitative research. However, given the time and resource constraints for conducting large-scale fieldwork, I was unable to confirm if the findings from my fieldwork could be generalized to the rest of the country. To address this issue, I complemented my fieldwork with quantitative analysis based on country-level data sets from the Nepal Living Standard Survey – 2010/11 (NLSS-III) and the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011 (NDHS 2011). The quantitative analysis also makes it possible to make comparisons across castes, regions and economic backgrounds.

The next section presents a discussion on the methodology used for my fieldwork including details on the selection of research locations, sample selection, and brief description of some of the individual and household characteristics of the fieldwork participants. This is followed by two sections, presenting the description

of data for the NLSS-III and NDHS 2011 datasets, respectively. The final section presents some concluding remarks.

3.2 Description of Fieldwork

The primary objective of my fieldwork was to collect information from women in migrant households about their experiences due to their husband's migration. The fieldwork involved conducting semi-structured interviews with 207 women, 178 of whom were wives of migrant members, from four districts of Nepal. Districts with high rates of male labor migrants and different socio-economic conditions were selected to compare the experiences of women based on various individual, household and social characteristics. At each of my research locations, I interviewed people working at local organizations about social and economic changes they had observed due to migration of men. In addition, I conducted informational interviews with professionals working at government, non-government and international organizations focusing on migration to understand their perspectives on the prospects as well as the consequences of migration and to learn about the work they are doing to facilitate migration. In presenting the statements made by participants in this dissertation, the participants' first names have been anonymized to protect their identity. However, their last names as well as other information regarding their age, education, economic and caste background are retained.

3.2.1 Selection of Research Locations

Three main criteria were considered in deciding on the research locations: the percentage of households with absentee members (indicator for migration rate) by ecological zone and district, the economic development of a region at the district level, and the status of women (using indicators of gender inequality). Based on the land terrain, Nepal is divided into three ecological belts running across North to South and stretching from the East to West. The Mountain region, including high hills and mountains, is on the North. The Terai region, with vast plains and fertile soil, is on the South and in between is the Hill region with mid-hills and valleys. For administrative purposes the country is divided into 5 development regions and 75 districts.¹ Figure 3.1 below presents the map of the country, indicating the research locations along with the three main ecological zones and seventy-five districts.



Figure 3.1: Map of Nepal

¹ A detailed illustration of this division is presented in the map in Appendix A.

Table 3.1 below presents data on the percentage of households with at least one absentee member outside the country by ecological belt, development regions and the districts selected for my study. Table 3.2 shows the geographic locations for each of the districts selected for the study.

Table 3.1: Percentage of Households with At Least One Absentee Member Abroad

By Ecological Belt				
Mountain		Hill		Terai
23.5		28.1		30.9
By Development Region				
Eastern	Central	Western	Mid-Western	Far-Western
28.4	21.7	40.1	28.8	35.5
By Selected Districts				
Syangja	Rolpa	Chitwan	Siraha	
49.7	39.0	20.0	31.2	

(Source: Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008)

Table 3.2: Geographic Location of the Districts Selected

Districts	Administrative Zone	Development Region	Ecological Belt
Chitwan	Narayani	Central	Terai
Syangja	Gandaki	Western	Hill
Siraha	Sagarmatha	Eastern	Terai
Rolpa	Rapti	Mid-Western	Hill

I decided to choose two of my research locations from the Hill region and two from the Terai, partly because of the higher percentage of households with absentees in these regions and partly because a Hill-Terai comparison of women's experiences would be very relevant due to the differences in gender norms in these two regions. Also, since I conducted my fieldwork during the rainy season, when there was sharp increase in landslides and road blockages, traveling to the Mountain region was particularly difficult.

In addition to including districts from both Hills and Terai, I wanted to see if women's experiences were influenced by the economic conditions in the different

regions. Hence, I selected one district with a relatively high development index and one with a relatively low development index in each of the two ecological zones. The various development indicators used for this purpose are presented in table 3.3 below. I also selected districts with different levels of gender inequality, as shown in table 3.4 below. Two of the districts I selected (Chitwan and Syangja) have a much higher level of gender equality than the other two (Siraha and Rolpa).²

Table 3.3: Development Indicators for the Districts Selected

Indices	Districts			
	Syangja	Rolpa	Chitwan	Siraha
Overall composite index by rank ³	9	64	2	58
Poverty and deprivation index by rank	22	65	3	49
Socioeconomic and infrastructure development index by rank	21	68	4	40
Overall literacy rate by percentage	66.7%	37.5%	71.1%	40.8%
Overall literacy rate by rank	7	64	3	58

Table 3.4: Gender Inequality Indicators for the Districts Selected

Indices	Districts			
	Syangja	Rolpa	Chitwan	Siraha
Rank by women's empowerment index	1	54	8	65
Rank by gender discrimination index	10	61	8	58
Percentage share of females in literacy	48.1%	30.2%	44.2%	30.4%
Percentage share of females in literacy by rank	1	63	9	62
Percentage share of females in non-agricultural occupations	33.4%	19.8%	24.8%	14.0%
Percentage share of females in non-agricultural occupations by rank	1	46	21	58
Mean age at marriage for female	20.1	18.7	20.2	17.6
Mean age at marriage for female by rank	23	55	22	68

(Source: Districts of Nepal: Indicators of Development, Update 2003.⁴)

² The variables included to construct each of the indices in tables 3.3 and 3.4 are illustrated in a chart presented in appendix B.

³ Ranked among the 75 districts in Nepal.

⁴ Report published by the Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal and the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

3.2.2 Selection of survey sample

I recruited participants for my study with assistance from local government and non-government organizations. I started by reaching out to organizations in Kathmandu, explaining my objectives and seeking their help in getting me connected to organizations at my research locations.⁵ Once I got to the research location, I contacted these organizations and they helped me reach out to the participants. These organizations had social mobilizers who introduced me to the participants, by either taking me from house to house or summoning people to one location, so I could interview them. In order to diversify my sample, I enlisted the participants via two or more organizations at each of my research locations.

The positive aspect of using this methodology was that it was easier for me to recruit participants for my study; I was able to interview about 50 women at each location in a time frame of two to three weeks. Also, because the social mobilizers knew most of the participants personally, the participants were more willing to talk to me on the basis of their trust with the social mobilizer. However, this came with the risk of the participants' responses being influenced by their relationship with the social mobilizer or with the organizations. In order to address this concern, I requested the social mobilizer to introduce me to the participant, remain present for the first few warm-up questions, and then leave me with the participants to conduct the interview. However, in some interviews, the social mobilizer remained present either because it was uncomfortable to leave or because the participants wanted

⁵ Organizations I contacted in Kathmandu included Center for Microfinance, Pourakhi, Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Women for Human Rights, Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC).

them to stay. Also, for some of the interviews in Siraha, I needed the social mobilizers to be present because of language barrier; the participants did not speak my language (Nepali) and I did not understand their language (Maithili). In such cases, the social mobilizer acted as the translator.

The relationship between the researcher and the participants often influences the participants' responses. The participants' perception of me as a researcher from Kathmandu studying in the United States may have affected their interactions with me. Some of the women I talked to had never been too far from their villages; even Kathmandu, the capital city, seemed almost foreign to them. They were often curious to know how I had made it all the way to the United States, what life was like in the developed world and how my husband or my family had allowed me to travel alone to unknown villages. Other women explained that they were familiar with the survey process, since people from Kathmandu often came to collect information from them. Sometimes, they even complained about how they had invested their time in participating in the surveys but the government had not brought any development programs to their villages. Such past experiences may have also influenced the ways in which the participants answered my questions.

In Nepal, there is a deep divide between the Hill (*Pahad*) and Terai (*Madhes*) region. The Hill people have always dominated the economic and political spheres and discriminated against the Terai people. The country's civil code from 1961 to 1990, *Muluki Ain*, mainly portrayed *pahadi* residents as being 'real Nepalis' and the population in *Madhes* as being 'Indians' or not 'real' Nepalis because the culture, language and customs in Terai is more similar to the neighboring parts in India

(Tamang, 2009; Clewett, 2015). Though such discriminatory clauses have been removed from the legal codes, discrimination in cultural and social attitudes still persists. Given this context, women in Terai often referred to me as being a Nepali, for being born and raised in Kathmandu (which is in the Hills), and to themselves as being '*Madhesi*', as though Terai was not a part of Nepal. The increasing tensions between the Hill and Terai with the ongoing *Madhesi* struggle, and the perceptions of Terai women about the Hill women may have influenced my interactions with the Terai women.

Despite these differences, being familiar with the cultural norms in Nepal and speaking the same language was an advantage for me. I wore traditional clothes and often shared some stories that the participants could relate to in order to make them comfortable in the interview setting.

3.2.3 Survey Questions

The survey questionnaire used for my fieldwork is presented in appendix C. I usually started the interviews by explaining the purpose of my research and getting the women's consent for participating in the study. I then collected background information from the participants on their age, education, household structure, ownership of land and other assets along with information on migrant's destination, work, duration of stay and frequency of visits. I talked to them about the changes in their work responsibilities, their decision-making abilities, and their participation in social and economic spheres, due to their husbands' migration. I asked about these experiences in terms of both the opportunities gained, the challenges faced and the

approaches taken to deal with the difficulties. Though I followed the basic structure of my survey questionnaire, I kept the interviews semi-structured and conversational, allowing the respondents to talk about their experiences more freely than having them follow a question-answer format. This helped me get a better understanding of their experiences from their perspectives and allowed me to see what aspects of their experiences seemed important to them.

3.2.4 Description of Survey Sample

Most of the women with whom I talked were wives of migrants. For households where the migrant members were unmarried, I talked to their mothers. My analysis here, however, only includes migrant wives since I am primarily interested in this group. The following table provides some descriptive statistics on the individual characteristics of migrant wives in my survey sample.

Table 3.5: Individual Characteristics of Migrant Wives

		Hill		Terai		All
		Syangja	Rolpa	Chitwan	Siraha	
Number of observations		47	52	59	49	178
Mean age (in years)		36.8	27	30.2	30.3	30.7
Relation to head	Head	63.2%	47.1%	68.9%	48.9%	56.5%
	Daughter-in-law	13.2%	52.9%	31.1%	48.9%	37.6%
	Other	23.6%	0	0	2.2%	5.9%
Mean years of education		4.6	7.4	9.9	2.4	6.6
Reason for quitting school	Completed school	2.7%	14%	45%	0	15.6%
	Parents didn't send	32.4%	18.6%	2.5%	55%	26.8%
	Marriage	48.7%	7%	15%	17.5%	21.3%
	Household work	2.7%	7%	2.5%	7.5%	5%
	Didn't want to go / Don't know	8.1%	37.2%	17.5%	15%	20%
	Financial problems/School far	2.7%	9.3%	7.5%	2.5%	5.7%
Failed 10 th grade board exams		2.7%	7%	10%	2.5%	5.6%
Mean number of children		2.1	1.4	1.8	2.5	1.9
Percentage of women owning land (alone/ jointly)		26.3%	17.3%	17.8%	13.9%	18.5%
Percentage of women owning house (alone/ jointly)		34.2%	3.4%	13.3%	16.3%	15.7%
Percentage of women receiving remittances		93.1%	66.0%	74.4%	68.3%	73.7%

I interviewed migrant wives between 19 to 66 years old; the mean age of the participants was 30.7 years. A little more than half of the women had taken the role of household heads during their husbands' migration. Percentage of female-headed migrant households was higher in the more developed districts (Chitwan and Syangja) than in the less developed ones (Rolpa and Siraha).

The mean years of education for the participants is about 7 years; it is interesting to note here that years of education for women from Rolpa, a district ranking much below Syangja in terms of both gender equality and development index, is much higher than that for women from Syangja. This could be because Rolpa was one of the regions most affected by the war in Nepal; providing equal rights to women was included among the goals of the Maoist movement and women in the Maoist controlled regions had become more involved in economic activities and more aware of their rights after the war (Shakya, 2009).⁶ Such effects of the war may explain the higher educational qualification of women in Rolpa. In fact, though the average years of education is higher for women in Chitwan, the number of women pursuing a bachelor's degree and hoping to enter the skilled labor market sector was much higher in Rolpa. Also, Rolpa was the only district where women were going to school even after being married and having children. Mean years of education was lowest in Siraha, perhaps because of higher poverty and gender inequality in this region. Overall, the most common reasons for women's limited access to education were either parents not sending girls to school or quitting

⁶ Clewett (2015) mentions that though women faced increased harassment and violence during the war, many women also became active participants. Some women even held high-ranking combat positions during the war.

school to get married. Such trends were seen to be much higher in Siraha and in Syangja than in other regions.

The finding for Syangja seem somewhat contradictory to my expectations, as Syangja ranks higher than Rolpa in terms of both development and gender equality but has lower average educational qualification for women. This may be due to some bias in sample selection. Firstly, the mean age for women from Syangja is higher than that of women from other districts, meaning the sample in Syangja might have included more of the older women than the sample in other regions. Also, my fieldwork in Syangja was concentrated in the rural regions of the district, while for Rolpa more than half of my sample was based in the district headquarter (Libang), which was the most developed region within Rolpa.⁷

However, we do see that women in Syangja are far ahead of women in other districts in terms of their ownership of land or house. Also, the percentage of women owning land or house is much higher in my sample than in the data for the country as a whole.⁸ This could also be a bias, based on the small sample size of my study that may not be representative of the country and because the women who had connections with the organizations I worked with may not have been the poorest of the poor. For example, I worked with a local microfinance institution in Syangja; most of the women I interviewed in this region were their clients. Hence, I

⁷ This was because the organization I worked with in Syangja did most of its work in the rural regions, while in Rolpa I received assistance from social mobilizers working at the local Village Development Committee office based at the district headquarters.

⁸ Based on NDHS 2011, only 6 percent of the women in the country owned a house and 9 percent owned some land.

was unable to reach out to poorer women who may not have qualified for microfinance loan. Also, I missed women who may not have had the time or resources for being involved in community organizations. The low ownership of house for women in Rolpa could be because about half of the women in the sample had left their conjugal homes and moved to Libang to send their children to school. These women were living in rented rooms, while their family home was owned mostly by their husbands or their in-laws. It is also interesting to note that despite the huge difference in terms of women’s empowerment and development index between Chitwan and Siraha, both of these districts in the Terai region had similar outcomes for female ownership of land or house. Some key household characteristics of my fieldwork participants are presented in table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6: Characteristics of Migrant Households

		Hill		Terai		All
		Syangja	Rolpa	Chitwan	Siraha	
Caste ⁹	High Caste (Brahmin/ Chhetri/ Newar)	26.3	51.9	86.4	25.6	48.6
	<i>Janajati</i>	65.8	36.5	4.5	9.3	28.2
	Dalit and other low caste	7.9	11.5	9.1	65.1	23.2
Household size (mean)		4.0	3.9	3.5	4.7	4.1
Household structure	Joint	34.2	40.4	34.1	53.5	40.7
	Nuclear	57.9	42.3	61.4	44.2	50.8
	Other	7.9	17.3	4.6	2.3	8.5
Percentage of household receiving remittances		76.3%	86.5%	95.6%	97.6%	89.3%
Percentage of households with remittance as the main source of income		68.4%	78.9%	88.6%	97.6%	83.4%

In each of my research locations, I included women from different caste groups. About half of the women in my sample were from high caste households. The proportion of *Janajati* is higher in the Hill region than the Terai region, and the

⁹ A detailed categorization of the ethnicities within each caste group is provided in table 3.8 below.

proportion of low caste or *Dalits* is highest in Siraha district in Terai. The composition of caste groups in the sample may not be representative of the district; however, inclusion of the main caste groups in the different districts allows for comparison based on caste.¹⁰ In the classification above, one group that needs specific mention is Muslims. Though Muslims do not belong to any of the caste groups and constitute only about 4 percent of the population of the country, I had the opportunity to visit one Muslim neighborhood in Siraha and interview 7 women in this region. Given the similarities in the economic condition of these women with those of Dalit women in Siraha, I included them in the same group.

In terms of household structure, we see that the more developed regions (Chitwan and Syangja) have more nuclear households. This is consistent with our observation that the proportion of female-headed migrant households is higher in the more developed districts. Percentage of households receiving remittances as well as households with remittance as the main source of income is higher in the Terai region than in the Hills, perhaps indicating that women in the Hill region might be involved in other income generating activities while those in Terai region may be more dependent on their husbands, as we will investigate in the following chapter.

¹⁰ Data on disaggregation by caste for each district was not available. However, the population monograph report by Central Bureau of Statistics provided information on the four major ethnic groups in each district. Based on this, the major ethnic/caste groups in each of our research locations is as follows:
Syangja - Brahmin 30.9%, Magar 21.5%, Chhetri 11.5%, Gurung 8.7%
Rolpa - Magar 43.2%; Chhetri 33.8%; Kami 12.2, Damai 3.6%
Chitwan - Brahmin 28.6%, Chhetri 11.4%, Tharu 10.9%, Tamang 8%
Siraha - Yadav 24.4%, Muslim 7.5%, Muahar 6.3%, Koiri 6%.

Some caveats apply to the qualitative study. Since I was able to conduct the study only in four districts, it is difficult to generalize the findings to the rest of the country. Given the small sample size of my fieldwork along with the limitations on the selection of research locations within each of the districts, there may be issues related to sample selection. In many cases, women's husbands had migrated for over ten years; hence, there could be recall bias in the information the respondents provided. Also, because I only interviewed women in migrant households, it is not possible to see quantitative differences in the hours worked, decisionmaking or social participation of women based on whether they belonged to migrant households or not. Hence, my qualitative analysis focuses on changes in women's experiences over time (before and after husband's migration). My quantitative analysis aims to remedy these gaps by using the national-level data provided by the NLSS-III and NDHS 2011. Discussions of these data sets are presented next.

3.3 Description of Data from NLSS-III

The Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 (NLSS-III) is a nationally representative survey of households conducted by the Nepal Census Bureau of Statistics with assistance from the World Bank. It follows the Living Standards Measurement Survey methodology developed by the World Bank. The survey includes information on 28,670 individuals from 5,598 households and it covers all three ecological zones, five development regions and seventy-five districts in the country. My quantitative analysis is based on a subsample of 7,203 individuals, all of whom are married women above the age of 15 years. A brief description of all the

variables used in our econometric analysis is presented below. The variables have been categorized as women’s individual characteristics and characteristics of the household and the geographic location.

3.3.1 Variable Definitions

3.3.1.1 Women’s individual characteristics

Age: The variable ‘age’ represents the age of an individual.

Education: Education is a continuous variable measured in terms of the years of schooling. The survey provides information on highest grade completed by each individual; this information is converted into years of education based on the following scale.

Table 3.7: Scale for Defining Years of Education

Highest grade completed	Years of education
Never attended school	0
No schooling but can read and write	4 (assumed to be equal to grade 3)
Kindergarten	1
Grade 1- Grade12	2-13 years respectively, one year increment for each grade
Bachelor’s	17
Masters	19

Wage-employed: Anyone who has spent an hour or more in the past week in some wage-earning activity, either in the agricultural or non-agricultural sector, is classified as being wage-employed. Of the remaining observations, women who are not employed because of reasons including attending school, being sick and disabled or not being in the economically active group are categorized as not being in the

labor force.¹¹ Women who are in the labor force but not employed in wage-labor are classified as not-wage-employed.¹²

Relationship to household head: A woman's relationship to the household head is defined as either being the head of the household or not being the head of the household.

3.3.1.2 Household characteristics

Household size: Household size is defined as the number of household members living in the same house and sharing the same resources.¹³

Number of adult male members: Number of adult male members is defined as the number of male household members between the ages of 15 and 59 years old. In the analysis presented, I used a binary variable, presence of adult male member, with value 1 for households with adult male members and 0 otherwise.

Number of adult female members: Number of adult female members is defined as the number of female household members between the ages of 15 and 59 years old.

¹¹ Economically active age group includes people in the age group 15 to 59 years.

¹² A detailed description of the definition of 'wage-employed' is presented in Appendix D.

¹³ The Nepal Living Standard Survey identifies household members based on the definition provided by the United Nations on its "Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses, Rev 2" (UN, 2008) where household is defined as "arrangements made by persons, individually or in groups, for providing themselves with food or other essentials for living" (Nepal Living Standard Survey III Report, Vol. 1).

Number of dependent members: The number of dependent members in a household is defined as the sum of the number of elderly members in the age group 60 years and older and the number of children in the age group 14 years or younger.

Caste: The caste system in Nepal is a form of social stratification, originally based on people's occupations and carried on through generations. The caste group that a household belongs to is important since a household's rank within the caste hierarchy influences a household's access to economic and social opportunities (Gellner, 2007). Households are primarily divided into five caste groups: high caste, middle caste, *Janajatis*, *Dalits* and other castes, based on the classification developed by the Department For International Development (DFID) and the World Bank for their 2006 study titled 'Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal', as presented in table 3.8 below. For the quantitative analysis in this dissertation, I use a binary variable 'high caste' with value 1 for women belonging to the high caste group and 0 otherwise.

Table 3.8: Caste Classification

Caste Group	Castes
High caste	Chhetri, Brahmin (Hill and Terai), Newar, Thakuri, Sanyasi, Baniya, Rajpur, Kayastha, Marwadi, Nurang, Bengali, Jain
Middle caste	Yadav, Teli, Sonar, Kalwar, Sudhi, Lohar, Koiri, Kurmi, Kanu, Haluwai, Hajam/Thakur, Badhae, Rajbhar, Kewat, Mallah, Kumhar, Kahar, Lodh, Bing/Binda, Bhediyar/ Gaderi, Mali, Kamar, Dhuniya
Janajatis	Magar, Tamang, Rai, Gurung, Limbu, Sherpa, Bhote, Walung, Byangsi, Yehlmo, Gharti/Bhujel, Kumal, Sunuwar, Brahm/ Baramu, Pahari, Adibasi/ Janajati, Yakkha, Jirel, Darai, Dura, Majhi, Dunuwar, Thami, Lepcha, Chepang/ Praja, Bote, Tharu, Dhanuk Rajbansi, Tajpuriya, Gangai, Dhimal, Meche, Kisan, Munda, Santhal/ Satar, Dhagar/ Jhagar, Koche, Patharkata/Kuswadiya
Dalit	Kami, Damain/ Dholi, Sarki, Gaine, Badi, Chamar/ Harijan/Ram, Musahar, Tatma, Bantar, Dusadh/ Paswan/ Pasi, Khatwe, Dom, Chidimar, Dhobi, Halkhor, Other Dalit.
Others	Chhantal, Thakali, Barae, Nuniya, Punjabi/ Sikh, Muslim, Churaute, Other caste

Land Ownership: Information on the area of land owned by each household, expressed in terms of acres, is used as an indicator of the economic status of a household. Land ownership may be associated with women's participation in agricultural work and animal rearing as well as their involvement in wage-employment.

Asset Index: Two asset indices are created for measuring the economic status of a household on the basis of five housing characteristics (material of outside wall, source of drinking water, type of toilet used, source of light, main cooking fuel) and ownership of eight assets (camera, television, computer, heater, refrigerator, telephone, motorcycle, fan).¹⁴ The first index is an equally weighted average of the values of all the thirteen variables.¹⁵ A second index is constructed using the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) method, which assigns different weights to each variable based on the distribution of the data for each variable across all observations and then sums the weighted values to give an index.¹⁶ Indices with higher values indicate better economic status of the household.

¹⁴ A detailed description on the choice of variables as well as the methodologies used to create the indices is presented in appendix D.

¹⁵ The value of weighted index ranges from 0 to 1. Households that don't own any of the eight assets and have value 0 for all five housing characteristics have weighted index 0 and households owning all eight assets and value 1 for all housing characteristics have weighted index 1.

¹⁶ Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) is an extension of correspondence analysis, which allows for the study of the pattern of relationships of several variables. It is used as a data reduction technique here to create one index from a set of variables. MCA is a generalization of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) when the variables to be analyzed are categorical instead of continuous (Abdi & Valet, 2007).

Migrant household: A household is categorized as migrant household if at least one of the members has migrated for work either within or outside the country.¹⁷ Here, we exclude households with migrants going to developed countries (United States, United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and Australia). Most of the migrants going outside Nepal include migrants to India, East Asia and Middle East. Households without labor migrants are categorized as non-migrant households.

Remittance-receiving households: Households that have received some form of remittances (either cash or in-kind) in the past year are categorized as remittance-receiving households.

3.3.1.3 Geographic characteristics

Location: A binary variable with value 1 for rural area and 0 for urban area is used to categorize households by their geographic location.

Ecological zone: Two binary variables, 'Mbelt' with value 1 for Mountain region and 0 otherwise and 'Hbelt' with value 1 for Hill and 0 otherwise, are used to represent the ecological belt.

¹⁷ Migrants are termed as absentees on NLSS-III data. An individual who is considered by the reporting household as its member at the time of the interview and will return to the same household in the future but who is excluded from the survey-definition of household membership because of his/her prolonged absence (away from the household for more than 6 months or has just left but is expected to be away for 6 months or longer) is defined as absentee.

3.3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 3.9 below presents the descriptive statistics for individual, household and geographic characteristics for all 7,155 women from 5,378 households in our sample.

Table 3.9: Descriptive Statistics for NLSS-III

Variables		Migrant Households	Non-migrant Households	All households
Age	Mean	37.7	37.9	37.8
	Std. Dev.	14.3	13.4	13.8
Education	Mean	3.1	3.9	3.5
	Std. Dev.	4.5	5.3	5.0
Wage-employment	% of women in the labor force	15.8%	18.2%	17.2%
Not in labor force	% of women	13%	12.2%	12.5%
Household headship	% of women	27.5%	5.5%	14.9%
Migrant Households	% of households	--	--	37.9%
Remittance-receiving households	% of households	85.5%	32.7%	52.8%
Household size	Mean	4.7	4.8	4.8
	Std. Dev.	2.4	2.2	2.3
Number of adult male members	Mean	0.8	1.3	1.1
	Std. Dev.	0.9	0.9	0.9
Number of adult female members	Mean	1.6	1.3	1.4
	Std. Dev.	0.9	0.8	0.9
Number of dependent members	Mean	2.4	2.2	2.2
	Std. Dev.	1.7	1.6	1.6
Area of land owned	Mean	0.5	0.4	0.5
	Std. Dev.	0.8	1.0	0.9
Asset Index	Mean	1.1	1.4	1.3
	Std. Dev.	0.8	1.1	1.0
Caste (% of households)	High caste	39.0	47.4	44.2
	Middle caste	9.6	10.3	10.0
	Janajatis	32.5	27.6	29.4
	Dalits	14.6	10.4	11.9
	Others	4.4	4.4	4.4
Location (% of households)	Urban	21.9	40.3	33.3
	Rural	78.1	59.7	66.7
Ecological belt (%of households)	Mountain	7.2	6.7	6.9
	Hill	48.8	56.1	53.3
	Terai	44.0	37.2	39.8

It is interesting to note that the mean years of education as well as participation in wage-labor is lower for women in migrant households than women in non-migrant households. Female headship is higher in migrant households

indicating that as men migrate, women take on the role of household heads. The table also indicates that the percentage of households receiving remittances is much higher than the percentage of households with labor migrants, implying that households can receive remittances from individuals whom they might not consider members of their own households. For example, a son who has separated from his parents could still send remittances to them. In such cases, though the impact of absence of the migrant member may not be felt, the economic benefits from reception of remittances may be experienced. In my econometric models, I have included such remittance-receiving households.

We see that asset index is lower for migrant households than for non-migrant households, implying that labor migrants tend to come from the poorer households. The land ownership is, however, higher for migrant households. This could be either because migrant households are investing remittances to buy land or because agricultural households are sending more migrants because of the low return from agriculture. Among the different caste groups, the proportion of migrant households is higher for *Janajatis* and *Dalits* than for high caste and middle-caste groups. Also, labor migrants disproportionately come from the rural areas, perhaps due to the limited employment opportunities there. Among the three ecological zones, the proportion of migrant households is highest in the Terai belt.

3.4 Description of Data for NDHS 2011

The Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2010/11 is conducted by New Era, a non-government non-profit research organization, under the guidance of

the Ministry of Health and Population.¹⁸ NDHS 2011 is a nationally representative comprehensive survey of 10,826 households that includes individual information from 12,674 women between the ages of 15 and 49 years old. My analysis is based on a sub-sample of 9,458 women, all of whom are married. Below I present a description of the independent variables used for my econometric analysis using NDHS data. These independent variables again include women's individual characteristics along with various characteristics of the household and geographic location.

3.4.1 Variable Definitions

3.4.1.1 Women's Individual Characteristics

Age: Age represents woman's age.

Education: Education is a continuous variable representing the years of schooling completed.

Relation to household head: Woman's relationship to household head is a binary variable defined as either being the head of the household or having other relationships with the household head (either wife of head, daughter-in-law of head or other relations with household head).

Number of children: The number of living children.

Media exposure: Exposure to media is an index created based on information on how often women listen to radio, watch television or read news. Each of these three

¹⁸ Technical support for the study is provided by ICF International and financial support was provided by United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

variables are assigned the following values: 0 if never, 1 if less than once a week and 2 if at least once a week. The index for women's exposure to media is created by taking an equally weighted average of the values assigned to these three variables.

Ownership index: The survey provides information on women's ownership of land and ownership of house using the following scale: value 0 if no ownership, value 1 if ownership is joint (with her husband or other household members) and value 2 if the woman owns the land or house by herself. Ownership index is then created by taking an equally weighted average of the values assigned to women's ownership of land and women's ownership of house.

3.4.1.2 Household Characteristics

Wealth index: Wealth index is an indicator of household wealth. This index is available on the DHS dataset.¹⁹

Caste group: Households are categorized into the following four groups based on their ethnicities: (i) High caste (*Brahmins, Chhetris* and *Newars*), (ii) *Janajatis* (Rai, Gurung, Magar and Tamang), (iii) *Dalits*, and (iv) Other low caste groups. For my

¹⁹ The survey provides the following information on the index: 'In the first step, a subset of indicators common to urban and rural areas is used to create wealth scores for households in both areas. Categorical variables to be used are transformed into separate dichotomous (0-1) indicators. These indicators and those that are continuous are then examined using a principal component analysis to produce a common factor score for each household. In the second step, separate factor scores are produced for households in urban and rural areas using area-specific indicators. The third step combines the separate area-specific factor scores to produce a nationally applicable combined wealth index by adjusting area-specific scores through a regression on the common factor scores. The resulting combined wealth index has a mean of zero and standard deviation of 1.'

econometric analysis, I use a binary variable 'high caste' with value 1 for high caste groups and 0 otherwise.

Household structure: Household structure is a binary variable representing either a joint household or nuclear household. Households where at least one of the women is identified as the daughter-in-law of the household head is categorized as joint household and the rest of the households (with no daughters-in-law present) are classified as nuclear households.

Migrant household: Households where at least one member has migrated either within the country or abroad for work are defined as migrant households. Women are categorized into two groups based on whether they belong to a migrant household or not. This is the key independent variable in all models since we are comparing women in migrant households with those in non-migrant households.

3.4.1.3 Geographic characteristics

Location: Location is a binary variable with value 1 for urban households and 0 for rural households.

Ecological belt: Two binary variables, 'Mbelt' with value 1 for Mountain region and 0 otherwise and 'Hbelt' with value 1 for Hill and 0 otherwise, are used to represent the ecological belt.

3.4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Tables 3.10 and 3.11 below present the descriptive statistics for these independent variables used in the analysis.

Table 3.10: Descriptive Statistics for Women's Individual Characteristics

Variables		All Women	Women in non-migrant households	Women in migrant households
Age	Mean	31.3	31.7	30.8
	Std. Dev.	8.6	8.4	9.0
Years of education	Mean	3.7	3.8	3.5
	Std. Dev.	4.1	4.2	3.9
Ownership index	Mean	0.2	.20	.18
	Std. Dev.	0.5	.49	.48
No. of children	Mean	2.4	2.4	2.4
	Std. Dev.	1.6	1.6	1.7
Relation to household head (% of women)	Head	18.5%	7.4%	36.6%
	Wife	49.4%	66.7%	21.1%
	Daughter-in-law	22.5%	16.9%	31.7%
	Other	9.6%	9.0%	10.7%
Media exposure index	Mean	0.9	.96	.90
	Std. Dev.	0.5	.53	.52
Percentage of women who belong to community groups		46.9%	46%	48.4%

The mean age as well as the mean years of education are slightly lower for women in migrant households than women in non-migrant households. Indices for ownership of assets and exposure to media are also lower for women in migrant households. However, women in migrant households have greater participation in community groups than women in non-migrant households. Also, female headship is much higher for migrant households, indicating that many women assume the role of household heads in the absence of their husbands. The percentage of women who are daughters-in-law of the head is also higher for migrant households, showing that a greater proportion of the migrant households have an extended household structure perhaps because women live with their in-laws when their husbands are away.

Table 3.11: Descriptive Statistics for Household and Geographic Characteristics

Variables		All Households	Non-migrant households	Migrant households
Wealth Quintile	Poorest	20.3%	20.1%	20.7%
	Poorer	18.6%	16.6%	21.7%
	Middle	18.7%	17.5%	20.7%
	Richer	19.7%	18.9%	21%
	Richest	22.7%	26.9%	15.9%
Household Structure	Nuclear	69.1%	76%	57.7%
	Joint	30.1%	24%	42.3%
Caste Group	High caste	44.5%	46.4%	41.2%
	Janajatis	31.9%	30.5%	34.3%
	Dalit	14.4%	13.4%	15.9%
	Other	9.2%	9.7%	8.6%
Location	Urban	27.3%	31.6%	20.2%
	Rural	72.7%	68.4%	79.8%
Ecological Belt	Mountain	16.5%	16.5%	16.5%
	Hill	38.8%	38.7%	39%
	Terai	44.7%	44.8%	44.5%

Based on the distribution of wealth across migrant and non-migrant households, we see that more of the migrant households are from lower and middle wealth quintiles; only 36.9% of the migrant households are in the top two wealth quintiles while the percentage of non-migrant households in the top two wealth quintiles is 45.8%. The proportion of joint households is higher among migrant households than non-migrant households. Also, the proportion of migrant households again is higher among the *Janajati* and *Dalit* caste groups. There doesn't seem to be much difference in the proportion of migrant households across the three ecological belts; however, the proportion of migrant households again is higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter explains the methodology used to answer my research questions. Detailed descriptions of the qualitative and quantitative data that will be

used in my analysis in the next three chapters have been presented here. The advantages and shortcomings of both qualitative and quantitative methods have been discussed above. The use of mixed methodology is not only relevant but also necessary for this study, since the research questions focus on examining women's experiences that are highly sensitive to socio-economic context, household relations and perceptions about women's roles. However, using this methodology comes with certain challenges.

First, despite the usefulness of mixed methods in addressing the weaknesses of one methodology with the strengths of another, using this technique can be difficult as this methodology requires some level of integration at the data collection or analysis stage, but there is no consensus on how this integration must be executed (Bryman, 2007). For this study, we first present the findings from qualitative research followed by quantitative analysis. Though these are presented separately, the selection of variables as well as the interpretation of results for quantitative work is informed by observations from qualitative analysis.

Another difficulty with mixed methods is that sometimes the results from one method may not entirely coincide with that of another method, making it difficult to interpret the findings. Jick (1979) suggests that this difficulty, however, must be taken as an opportunity to explore the reason for diverging results and might in fact help enrich our analysis. Following from this, in cases where I find inconsistencies in results from the two methodologies, I provide possible explanations to understand such discrepancies.

CHAPTER 4

WOMEN'S WORK AND MEN'S MIGRATION

4.1 Introduction

One of the direct consequences of migration of men is a change in the gender division of labor. As men leave their homes and fields to work at destinations abroad, responsibilities of the women left behind transform. Also, men's migration brings changes in the labor market conditions and the socio-economic structures at the origin country and influences women's participation in market work. Studies on impacts of men's migration on women's work often point to factors such as family structure, economic status, gender norms on women's physical mobility and the restrictions they face in entering the labor market as being vital to understanding women's market participation. In this chapter, I will consider these factors and look into how men's migration from Nepal has affected women's work and what these changes might mean for their empowerment.

When men migrate, women's domestic responsibilities are likely to increase as they compensate for any contribution in subsistence farming, home management or childcare previously made by the migrant (see Menjivar and Agadjanian 2007; Jetley 1987). Increase in workload may be especially severe in agricultural households, where women replace male labor in the fields. Mu and Van De Walle (2011) find that the increasing migration of men from China has resulted in feminization of the traditionally male agricultural sector. Similar trends of women taking up more farm responsibilities in the absence of men are seen in the case of

Swaziland (Palmer, 1985) and in the hills of Nepal (Maharjan et al., 2013). Exceptions to this increased agricultural work for women may occur if women are able to hire help to undertake some of the agricultural or domestic work. In some cases, women may neglect or cut down on subsistence production, as remittances become the main source of household income (Maharjan et al., 2013).

In studying the impacts of male migration, Desai and Banerjee (2008) on India and Rashid (2013) on rural Bangladesh find that the changes in women's domestic responsibilities are dependent on the household structure, where increase in responsibilities may be more intense for women in nuclear households than that for those in extended households. Women in nuclear households may have to shoulder the entire burden of household work while responsibilities may be shared more evenly among family members in extended households. In some cases, however, women in nuclear households may be able to cut down on their responsibilities as they don't have to maintain the appearance of being good wives by cooking extensive meals or keeping the house clean when their husbands are away. Also, having one less member to provide care to, especially if the absent member demanded a lot of care, may reduce women's responsibilities (De Haas and Van Rooij, 2010).

Women's participation in market work is likely to increase in men's absence if women gain freedom and autonomy when men are away (Sadiqui and Ennaji, 2004). Also, if men's migration creates shortages of labor supply, women enter the labor market especially if the existing barriers to entry start to disappear or if there is an increase in wages in the domestic market. Such trends are more likely to be

seen in societies with lower gender inequalities where women may have gained education and skills necessary to enter the labor market and the social and structural barriers to women's mobility in public spaces are disappearing. In some cases, increased ability to invest in capital due to inflow of remittances may encourage women to take up income-generating self-employment activities (Funkhouser, 1992; Mendola and Carletto, 2009). While such increases in women's market participation generally strengthens women's position in the household and may empower her (as discussed in chapter 2), it must be noted that in some cases the increased market participation may come from economic desperation. For example, being abandoned by the migrant member or not receiving sufficient remittances could force women to enter the labor market. In such cases, taking up market work while managing all household and childcare responsibilities could be stressful for women (Jetley, 1987; Paris et al., 2005, Gulati, 1986).

Most studies on the impact of men's migration on women's market employment, however, conclude that women are less likely to be employed in the market during men's absence (see Abbasi and Irfan, 1986; Acosta, 2006; Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2008). First, intensification of household work during men's migration may deter women's ability to take up market work. In regions with strict gender norms, women may face increased restrictions on their physical mobility during their husband's absence; this, too, could impede women's ability to participate in market work. Also, rigidities in the labor market, such as the male-dominated nature of certain professions, may dissuade women from entering the labor market. Finally, an improvement in household status through inflow of

remittances could motivate women to withdraw from the labor market (Go and Postrado, 1986; Kanaipuni, 2000; Acosta, 2006; Menjivar and Agadjanian, 2007; Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2008). In the last case, it is difficult to make inferences about women's empowerment as women may be giving up market work by choice, i.e. they may decide to stay home, provide better care to their children or enjoy more leisure time. Though their well-being may improve in such cases, their subordination may be maintained due to their continuing financial dependence on their husbands.

Hence, men's migration could affect women's work within the household as well as their participation in market work. The net effect of such changes is uncertain, but may have important implications for better or worse on women's empowerment. In my analysis here, I divide women's work into the following four categories: (a) household work, (b) self-employment in agriculture, (c) self-employment in non-agriculture, and (d) wage-employment. Based on my discussion in chapter 2, I argue that though increases in women's household work and self-employment in agriculture raises women's contribution to the family, this increase may not be empowering, as most of this work is unpaid and invisible. Also, a decline in women's ability to participate in paid work, either self-employment in non-agriculture or wage-employment, may hurt their well-being, as such changes reinforce women's subordinate position in the family and maintain the traditional male-breadwinner households. On the other hand, increase in women's participation in market work could strengthen women's bargaining position in the household and contribute to her empowerment.

This chapter is structured as follows. The next section provides an overview of women's participation in household and market work in Nepal. This is followed by a discussion of the findings from my fieldwork on changes in women's work responsibilities due to men's migration and socio-economic factors that affect women's ability to participate in market work. Next, an econometric analysis is presented on the differences in women's work responsibilities between migrant and non-migrant households, in terms of their household work as well as their participation in self-employment in agriculture, self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment. The quantitative work is divided into two parts; the first part (section 4.4 below) is based on the data from the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 (NLSS-III) and the second part (section 4.5 below) uses data from the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2010/11 (NDHS 2011). The final section presents some concluding remarks.

4.2 Women's Work in Nepal

In a typical Nepalese household, the gender division of labor is such that women do most of the household work while men work outside and earn for the family. Women manage tasks such as fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, cleaning and providing care to children and the elderly. Men, on the other hand, dominate the public space and are mainly involved in income-generating activities outside the home (Kasper, 2005). Additionally, though men and women both contribute to family-based agriculture, women are more heavily invested in these tasks as they take up almost 70 percent of the work in subsistence farming (Weiss,

1999). In fact, the low returns from farming have increasingly pushed men to seek alternative forms of employment and more and more of the work related to agriculture and animal farming is shifting towards women. Between 1991 and 2011, though the overall employment in agriculture declined from 83 percent to 64 percent, women's share in agriculture increased from 44 percent to 52 percent;¹ thus women have been replacing male labor in the agricultural field - a trend commonly referred to as 'feminization of agriculture' (Maharjan et al., 2013; Acharya 2008).

Research on women's work in Nepal reveals that women usually spend more time working and have shorter leisure periods than men (Ledgerwood, 1997; Weiss, 1999). A study by Brown (2003), in the Yarsha Khola watershed region in Nepal, finds that women in that region work longer than men by 3.8 hours a day on average. Another study by Joshi (2000), in the Lubhu village of Lalitpur district in Nepal, compares the amount of time spent by men and women in the cultivation of rice, wheat, maize and vegetables (the four main crops in the region) and finds that women's responsibilities are higher than men's in each of the four cases. While men mainly do the ploughing, irrigation and threshing; the rest of the work, including leveling, applying fertilizers, transplanting, weeding, harvesting, winnowing and storing food products, is almost exclusively done by women.² The study also shows

¹ Source: Population Census for 1991 and 2011, Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Nepal.

² Ploughing of land by women is considered to cause misfortune and bring natural calamities; and women are forbidden from ploughing. The lack of male labor in the fields due to men's migration, is often a huge constraint in agriculture (Maharjan et al., 2012)

that women contribute more time in livestock husbandry as they are mostly responsible for tasks such as collecting fodder, feeding animals, milking them, cleaning the shed and processing dairy products. Men, on the other hand, are mainly involved in grazing animals, bringing them to veterinary facilities and buying or selling animal and animal products; hence men spend less time than women in animal rearing.

Table 4.1 below provides an insight into some of the key differences in economic and non-economic activities of men and women in Nepal. The classification of economic and non-economic activity is based on the definition provided by the United Nations 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA).

Table 4.1: Hours Spent on Economic and Non-Economic Activities

		1998/99	2008/09
Average hours per week spent on economic activities (defined as wage-employment in agriculture and non-agriculture, self-employment in agriculture, owning business, employment in milling, handicrafts or construction and activities such as fetching water and collecting firewood).	Total	39.4	38.7
	Men	42.6	43.1
	Women	36.3	34.8
Average hours per week spent on non-economic activities (defined as activities such as cooking, cleaning, household repair, shopping, caring for the sick or old, childcare and other voluntary or community activities.)	Total	13.9	15.4
	Men	4.6	5.7
	Women	22.4	23.2
Average total hours per week spent on economic and non-economic activities	Total	53.3	54.1
	Men	47.2	48.8
	Women	58.7	58

(Source: Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008 Report)

From table 4.1, we see that men spend more time in economic activities while women are more involved in non-economic activities, which mainly includes household and childcare work. Also, the average of total hours worked for women is much higher than that for men; thus illustrating the relatively higher workload for Nepalese women. Between 1998/99 and 2008, the average time spent on economic

activities has increased for men and declined for women. Time spent on non-economic activities, on the other hand, has increased for both men and women. Increase in migration of men could have influenced these numbers since it is likely that lack of male labor in the market could have increased the time spent in economic work for the men left behind. Men left behind may also be helping out with some of the non-economic work; hence increasing the average time they spend on these activities. For women, migration of men could have increased their household and childcare work, resulting in higher non-economic workload. This increase in workload could have discouraged them from participating in market work and reduced their involvement in economic activities.

Table 4.2: Employment Data by Gender

	1998/99			2008		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
Labor force participation rate	85.8	90.2	81.9	83.4	87.5	80.1
Percentage of population in non-SNA activities	69.4	47.7	89.3	74.9	56.9	89.5
Share of employment in agriculture & forestry (%)	78	66.8	85.2	73.9	62.2	84.3
Share of employment in manufacturing (%)	5.9	7.7	3.9	6.8	8.8	5.0
Share of employment in services (%)	16.1	25.5	10.9	19.3	29.0	10.7
Share of paid employees in total employment (%)	16	24.3	7.7	16.9	26.7	8.3
Among paid employees, share of workers in government job and public corporations (%)	20.8	23.6	11.7	20.6	22.2	16.3
Among paid employees, share of workers in NGO/INGOs (%)	1.7	1.8	1.4	2.8	2.8	3.1
Among paid employees, share of workers in private corporations and other sector ³ (%)	77.5	74.6	86.9	76.6	75	80.6
Average monthly earnings (cash and in-kind combined) of paid employees (in Nepali Rupees)	2143	2389	1368	5117	5721	3402
Male share of paid employees	76.0			73.9		
Female share of paid employees	24.1			26.2		

All labor market indicators are based on population ages 15 and above.
(Source: Nepal Labor Force Survey 1998/99 and 2008.)

³ The NLFS 1998/99 report states that most paid employees were coded as 'other' because they could not be allocated to a specific code and that most of these people are likely to be working in private unregistered business (informal sector).

About 78.4 percent of households in Nepal own agricultural land and both men and women in these households are likely to be involved in some agricultural work.⁴ This explains the high labor force participation rate for the country. Based on the data for 2008, almost 74 percent of the labor force is employed in agriculture and the proportion of women in this sector is much higher than that of men. In terms of wage-employment, only 8.3 percent of all employed women receive wages; this number is 26.7 percent for men. Also, among the paid workers, only 26.2 percent are women. Hence, most women are employed in unpaid work mainly in the agricultural sector. In fact, even when men take on contract-based paid agricultural work, they use women and children as unpaid helpers (Upadhyaya, 2002). Among the paid workers, most are employed in private corporations or the 'other' sector, which mainly includes the informal sector.

A comparison of the average earnings between men and women indicates a large gap in their incomes and this gap has not decreased by much in the ten years between 1998/99 and 2008/09.⁵ The lower educational and employment skills for women along with concentration of their work in low-wage sectors could explain part of this discrepancy in earnings. The Nepal Census Bureau of Statistics reports that the ratio of median wage of women to men for 2011/12 was 82.9 percent.⁶ So, women receive lower wages than men, even for similar work. The table also shows

⁴ Source: Nepal Labor Force Survey 2008

⁵ Men earned 74.6% more than women in 1998/99 and in 2008, men earned 68.2% more than women.

⁶ The Nepal Census Bureau of Statistics also reports a much higher wage-gap between men and women in medium to low technology job category than that for high technology jobs.

that the percentage of population involved in non-economic activities is much higher for women than for men; thus illustrating the disproportionate amount of household work carried out by women. Even women who take up market work face several kinds of discrimination at the workplace, in terms of recruitment, training and promotion. Employers often show reluctance in hiring women assuming women's family work and reproduction responsibilities may affect their productivity and commitment towards market work (Upadhyaya, 2002).

Though women work more than men on average, most of their work is hardly recognized since it is concentrated in the unpaid domestic and subsistence agricultural sector. Hence, their productive activities, despite being strenuous, are often discounted as being light and unskilled work (Joshi, 2000). Not being financially rewarded for the work also makes them dependent on other household members who are involved in market activities. Despite having to take on multiple responsibilities of household management, childcare and agricultural production, women's work often ends up being undervalued. In many cases, women perceive their own contribution to the family as being less important than that of men and submit to their subordinate position. Hence, they don't consider it unfair that they have to work longer hours than men or that most of their work is unpaid and goes unappreciated (Kabeer, 1999; Sen, 1990). Women's work activities are highly influenced by such perceptions about the value of their work. Additionally, women's educational background, perceptions about the kinds of work that are acceptable for women to do, social restrictions on their mobility in public spaces and the socio-economic status of the household are central to explaining the trends in women's

employment in Nepal. A detailed discussion of these aspects, based on my fieldwork, is presented next.

4.3 Observations from Fieldwork

4.3.1 Overview of fieldwork findings

During my fieldwork, I talked to women about their work responsibilities within the household and in the family fields along with their participation in wage and self-employment activities. I also asked about the reasons for unemployment and the kind of work they might be interested in doing. Table 4.3 below presents some of the key statistics on women's work activities, based on my survey sample of 178 women, all of whom were wives of migrant members.

From the table, we see that about 83 percent of the 178 migrant wives I interviewed mentioned that they were primarily responsible for all household work and about 79 percent stated that their responsibilities had increased since their husbands' migration, mainly from having to take on tasks such as going to the market or bank that were previously done by their husbands. The proportion of women reporting increased household work is higher among household heads than among non-heads.

Of the women in my sample, 63.5 percent were employed. Among these employed women, 59.3 percent were working in family-based agriculture or animal farming and did not earn any income. About 29.2 percent of the employed women were self-employed in non-agriculture and the remaining 11.5 percent were wage-employed in agriculture or non-agriculture sector; most women working in these

two sectors were able to contribute to family income. A disaggregation of women's employment activities by household headship shows that the proportion of women employed in paid work is higher among non-heads than among household heads. Though this does not concur with our expectation of non-heads having lower access to economic resources due to their limited physical mobility, it could be that the higher domestic responsibilities of household heads diminished their ability to take up paid work. These assumptions will be explored further in our discussion below.

Table 4.3: Women's Work Responsibilities in Migrant Households

Household work				
	Head (n=100)	Non-head (n=78)	Sample (n=178)	
Who is primarily responsible for household work?	95.9%	66.7%	83.1%	
Domestic work increased on husband's migration?	84.9%	70.3%	78.6%	
Market work				
Percentage of women who are currently employed	58%	70.5%	63.5%	
Percentage of women employed before husband left	42%	47.4%	44.4%	
Percentage of women employed in paid work (wage-employed/ self-employed in non-agriculture)	39.7%	41.8%	40.7%	
Percentage of women in wage-employment	23%	29.5%	25.8%	
Employment type (% of the employed women)				
	Head (n=58)	Non-head (n=55)	Sample (n=113)	
Self-employment in agriculture/ animal care	60.3%	58.2%	59.3%	
Self-employed in non-agriculture	Own and run a store	17.2%	18.2%	17.7%
	Home-production and sell in market	10.4%	9.1%	9.7%
Wage-employed	Agriculture	5.2%	1.8%	3.6%
	Unskilled	1.7%	5.5%	3.6%
	Skilled (requiring at least high school education)	5.2%	7.2%	6.1%
Reason for not being employed for paid work				
	Head (n=49)	Non-head (n=37)	Sample (n=86)	
For women who were either not employed or were only employed in subsistence agriculture with no pay	No time due to household work	42.9%	43.3%	43.1%
	Not allowed to work by family	12.2%	10.8%	11.5%
	Want to work but don't know how to find work	20.4%	29.7%	24.4%
	Currently looking for work	4.1%	5.4%	4.7%
	Don't feel the need to work	6.1%	5.4%	5.8%
	Sick/ Too old to work/ Other	14.3%	5.4%	10.5%

Women who were not employed or were self-employed in agriculture with no remuneration were asked why they had not taken up paid employment activities.

About 43.1 percent of these women cited heavy workload within the house and in the agricultural fields as a key obstacle to taking on work outside home. Another 25 percent of these women mentioned that, though they wanted to work, they did not know where or how to find work that would be appropriate for them; and about 12 percent of them stated that their husbands or in-laws did not allow them to work outside home. Most women mentioned that men's migration had made it harder for them to participate in employment activities outside home either because of the intensification of household, childcare and agricultural work or because they faced additional restrictions on their mobility in public spaces during their husband's absence. Only 6 percent of the women mentioned that their improved economic status due to remittance reception had motivated them to not take up paid work.

When asked about the kind of market work women wanted to be employed in, most answers were concentrated within a few categories based on their educational and economic backgrounds. Women with higher educational qualifications considered teaching at schools or working at local offices as their ideal jobs. Women with lower or no education expressed their preference for being self-employed in the non-agricultural sector because it allowed them to earn money while working at or within close proximity of home. Among women in this category, those from relatively rich families mostly opened their own stores, beauty salons or tailor shops, while the relatively poor focused on home-based production of mats, baskets, soap, alcohol, etc. Women from the poorest families were often wage-employed at low-paying jobs either in construction, agriculture or other temporary jobs such as collecting wood and delivering merchandize.

4.3.2 Differences in women's work across survey districts

To examine if women's responsibilities varied between districts and if regional factors explain some of the differences in women's work, the data on women's work is disaggregated by district. Some key results are presented in table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Women's Work Responsibilities in Migrant Households by District

	Hill		Terai		Sample (n=178)	
	Syangja (n=38)	Rolpa (n=52)	Chitwan (n=45)	Siraha (n=43)		
Household work						
Primarily responsible for all household work	78.9%	80.8%	84.4%	88.1%	83.1%	
Domestic work increased on husband's migration?	85.3%	65.4%	82.2%	85.7%	78.6%	
Market work						
Percentage of women who are currently employed	86.8%	55.8%	53.3%	62.8%	63.5%	
Percentage of women employed before husband left	73.7%	26.9%	31.1%	53.5%	44.4%	
Percentage of women employed in paid work (wage-employed/ self-employed in non-agriculture)	24.2%	51.7%	33.3%	55.6%	40.7%	
Percentage of women wage-employed	21.1%	28.9%	17.8%	34.9%	25.8%	
Employment type (% of the employed women)						
	Syangja (n=33)	Rolpa (n=29)	Chitwan (n=24)	Siraha (n=27)	Sample (n=113)	
Self-employment in agriculture/ animal care	75.8%	48.3%	66.7%	44.5%	59.3%	
Self-employed in non-agriculture	Own and run a store	12.1%	24.1%	20.8%	14.8%	17.7%
	Home-production and sell in market	3.0%	3.5%	0%	33.3%	9.7%
Wage-employed	Agriculture	6.1%	3.5%	0%	3.7%	3.6%
	Unskilled	0%	6.9%	4.2%	3.7%	3.6%
	Skilled (at least high school education)	3.0%	13.7%	8.3%	0%	6.1%
Reason for not being employed for paid work						
	Syangja (n=11)	Rolpa (n=26)	Chitwan (n=28)	Siraha (n=21)	Sample (n=86)	
For women who were either not employed or were only employed in subsistence agriculture with no pay	No time due to household work	27.3%	38.5%	50%	47.6%	43.1%
	Not allowed to work by family	0%	3.8%	7.1%	33.3%	11.5%
	Want to work but don't know how to find work	45.5%	23.1%	21.5%	19.1%	24.4%
	Currently looking for work	0%	7.7%	7.1%	0	4.7%
	Don't feel the need to work	0%	7.7%	10.7%	0	5.8%
	Sick/ Too old to work/ Other	27.2%	19.2%	3.6%	0	10.5%

We see from the table that about 80 percent of the women in all four districts were primarily responsible for the majority of household work; hence there is not much difference in the distribution of household work among family members. Also,

in all the districts, most women mentioned that their domestic responsibilities had increased in their husband's absence; however, the percentage of women making this claim is much lower in Rolpa than in the other regions. This could be because about half of the women interviewed in Rolpa had moved to the district headquarter, Libang, upon their husband's migration to send their children to better schools. They had given up agricultural work and had fewer family members to provide care to (only their children as opposed to providing care to their children, husband and in-laws before). Also, the higher education level for women in my sample in this district may have influenced these numbers.

The findings on women's employment activities across the four districts are more diverse. More than half of the women in my sample were employed, either in subsistence agriculture or in paid work, in all the four districts. The percentage of women employed in Syangja is much higher than those in other districts. However, the proportion of women employed in paid work is lower in Syangja (21%) than in Siraha (35%) and Rolpa (29%), the least developed districts. This may be because, as discussed in chapter 3, women in Syangja were older than women from other regions and most of the interviews in this district were conducted in the rural parts of the district where paid employment opportunities and access to market were limited. The higher involvement in paid employment in both Siraha and Rolpa could be partly explained by the higher incidence of poverty in these districts.⁷

⁷ Siraha ranks 49th and Rolpa ranks 65th on poverty and deprivation index, compared to Chitwan ranking 3rd and Syangja ranking 22nd among the 75 districts of the country (see table 3.3).

Though Siraha and Rolpa both have higher proportion of women involved in paid work, the type of employment taken up by women in these two regions was different. In Siraha, most women in paid work were involved in home production activities (33.3%). They usually made *laathi* (traditional bangles), *bidi* (type of cigarette made from unprocessed tobacco wrapped in a leaf) and alcohol, and they only went to the market a few times per week to sell their products in the nearest *haat bazaar*.⁸ Women involved in agricultural work also participated in the *haat bazaar* on occasions when they produced more food than necessary for their consumption needs. In Rolpa, most of the women were self-employed in non-agriculture and owned and ran small businesses (most commonly convenience stores or sewing shops). Also, while none of the women from Siraha were employed in skilled labor sector, almost 7% of women in Rolpa (highest among all four districts) were involved in jobs such as teaching or working at administrative positions in local offices. One of the participants I met owned and ran a hotel by herself and another participant had converted one of the rooms in her house to a small computer institute and trained students there.

It is interesting to note that Chitwan, the district with highest development index and highest educational qualifications among women, had fewer women in skilled labor sector than Rolpa. The most common paid employment in Chitwan was opening and running a store (usually convenience stores and beauty salons). In fact, many of the women I talked to in this region had completed high school but gotten

⁸ '*Haat bazaar*' is an outdoor market, where local traders come together to sell their products. It is usually held once or twice a week.

married right after and limited themselves to domestic work. In all the four districts, the most common reason for not taking up paid employment was the intensification of household work in husband's absence. Family members restricting women from taking up market work, as a reason for not being wage-employed, was cited more often in the Terai region (Chitwan and Siraha) than in the Hill region (Syangja and Rolpa). This statistic is especially high for Siraha, illustrating the high gender inequality in this region.⁹ A discussion of the changes in women's work responsibilities, in terms of household and agriculture work as well as participation in market employment, along with factors affecting their ability to work outside home is presented next.

4.3.3 Household Work

In most cases, women mentioned that their domestic responsibilities had increased after their husband's migration. They pointed out that though they took care of almost all the household work even before their husband's migration, the increase in responsibilities came mainly in terms of managing miscellaneous tasks outside home such as going to the bank or market, taking children to school or to health center, or going to pay utility bills. A 27-year-old *Brahmin* woman who had only lived with her husband for a year in their 7 years of marriage, explained:

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

⁹ About 65 percent of my survey sample in Siraha consisted of women in Muslim and Dalit communities where restrictions on women's mobility was especially high.

Similar concerns were expressed by another woman belonging to the *Dalit* caste.

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

T. Paswan, Siraha

Most women admitted that though the increase in household work did make things difficult for them, their real struggles came from having to take full responsibility if anything went wrong. Expressions of fear of being blamed for not managing money effectively or taking proper care of children were common in the conversations I had, as illustrated by the statements below:

My responsibilities have increased by a lot and it is not easy to live without a guardian at home. I feel more relaxed when my husband is here to take care of the work outside home. Now, I have to worry about managing money and taking care of kids and if anything goes wrong, it will be my fault.

M. Khatun, Siraha

I know that if my daughters don't do well in school, I will be blamed for it. My husband is earning money and working hard there. He is doing his end of the job. My job here is to keep our household running and take care of my daughters. It would be much easier if my husband were around. I can't share responsibilities with anyone now. I have to take on my husband's work, I have to do my own work and I have to make sure our children are doing well.

S. Sapkota, Chitwan

A few women, however, mentioned that though the first few years were difficult, they had gotten used to managing things on their own and didn't feel like they were burdened with household work. In fact, some mentioned that having to take on responsibilities outside home had increased their self-confidence. Such sentiments were especially common in Syangja, perhaps because of the district's longer history of migration to India. A 39-year-old *Janajati* woman assertively stated:

It has been too many years now, so having to do all the work doesn't feel like trouble or stress to me. I can take care of things here by myself. It was hard in the beginning but you learn to do things by yourself.

M. Gurung, Syangja

Notably, husband's migration sometimes meant reduction in domestic work and relief from keeping up with husband's demands of household maintenance. A

21-year-old mother of two explained:

My workload at home hasn't changed by much. In fact, I had to work more when he was here. I had to wash his clothes, iron them and prepare good food everyday. He would be mad at me if everything were not in proper order. So, household work has actually become easier. I don't mind doing this work though; it is a woman's job to cook, clean and care for kids.

S. Sapkota, Chitwan

Reduction in domestic work was more common among women from nuclear families who had given up agricultural work after their husbands' migration. Most women who had separated from their in-laws after their husband's migration, talked about increased freedom and reduction in household work from not having to follow orders from in-laws and having fewer members to take care of. However, the relation between nuclearization of families and women's workload was not as clear. While some women talked about reduction in workload after separating from in-laws, others mentioned that their workload had increased since responsibilities were shared among household members when they lived in joint family. One woman recounted her experience:

It was very difficult living with my in-laws after my husband migrated. I did all the household work but no matter how hard I worked they complained about something all the time. I recently separated from them and rented a room here. It is much easier for me now. I just have to take care of my son and cook for the two of us.

G. Buda Magar, Rolpa

In contrast, another woman who had also separated recently from her in-laws reported:

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

R. Poudel, Chitwan

The difference in women's experience from nuclearization of family may be partly influenced by women's relationships with their in-laws. Nuclearization may have increased women's responsibilities in those cases where women received some help from other family members before separating from them. Additionally, women's position in the extended household may have affected their experience from nuclearization. Usually, women in lower ranks in the household hierarchy have much higher workloads than women above them. So, women in higher ranks could experience an increase in their workloads after nuclearization while those in lower ranks could experience more freedom and fewer responsibilities. Studies on the impact of men's migration on nuclearization of families show contradictory findings based on study location. For example, while Louhichi (1997) examining the case of Egypt finds evidence for rise in nuclearization of families during men's migration, Gulati (1986) studying the case of India finds that women are more likely to move in with their families or in-laws for support when their husbands migrate. The former case of increased nuclearization of families was more common in my study sample in Nepal. However, some women had moved closer to their kin, but not in the same

household, for support when their husbands left.¹⁰ Most extended households in my sample had that structure even before men's migration.

4.3.4 Self-Employment in Agriculture

Most of the women I talked to belonged to agricultural households. In these households, when men migrated, women would either work longer hours to replace male labor or hire people to work in the fields. Also, '*parma system*'¹¹, where women exchanged labor with close relatives or other women in the community to work in each other's farms was common in all the four research districts. Most women who continued with agricultural work mentioned that they had cut down production significantly, since they did not have the resources to produce enough to be able to sell in the market. The main source of income for most of these households was remittances; they saw agriculture as a secondary economic resource to support family's consumption needs. A 30-year-old migrant wife stated:

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

L. Lamichhane, Chitwan

¹⁰ By household, I am referring to people living in the same house and sharing economic resources. In this case, the kin usually helped women out with some work in terms of going to bank, taking care of children or managing financial matters.

¹¹ '*Parma*' is defined as exchange. In this system, agricultural work is performed by exchanging labor between close relatives, neighbors and friends to get the work done more efficiently. There are no wages paid to the workers, but the same amount of labor is provided by each family to work in each other's farmland (Upadhyaya, 2002).

In cases where women could not afford the time or resources to continue with the agricultural work, the fields were left barren.

I used to work in our field until a few years ago but it got difficult so I quit. It is difficult to find workers because most men have migrated. I am alone and I have to take care of the house and the kids.

A. Shrestha, Siraha

The lack of infrastructure development in agriculture, dependence on rain, low income from agriculture and the strenuous physical labor required to work in the farms also served as huge disincentives to continue with agricultural work. Women mentioned that there was shortage of male labor needed to drive trucks, use machinery and plough fields. Also, women who hired labor to help out with farming pointed out that it was expensive to hire workers and difficult to supervise them and that if it didn't rain enough, they could end up at a net loss after putting in all the time and money. One woman summarized such issues with continuing with agricultural work in the absence of men in the following way:

Since men are away, we hire people to work on the fields during growing season. I just hired workers and paid them Rs. 4,000 for planting crops and Rs. 1,500 for ploughing the fields. I also had to provide lunch and dinner to all the workers. I need to hire people again for cutting the crops and getting the products to the market; the total expenses could be over Rs. 8,000 and there is no guarantee that the crop yield will be of that value. I don't like to leave the land barren, so I do all this work but there is not much profit to be made in agriculture. We are heavily dependent on the rain for irrigation; sometimes it rains for days and at other times there is too much sun and no rain. What can we do if the weather is not favorable? Nothing! We just lose money. May be it is easier to make money in other fields like doing business or working for the government, but for uneducated people like us, there is nothing else to do.

R. Chhetri, Syangja

Hence, absence of men has affected agricultural production; though women may be working more hours and their participation in subsistence agricultural work may have increased, the overall production among migrant households has declined.¹²

Similar trends were seen in terms of animal farming; while some women worked longer hours to replace male labor, others sold some or all the animals to reduce their responsibilities.¹³ In some cases, women showed more interest in livestock farming than crop farming because of the higher labor input needed for crop farming. A 43-year-old migrant wife who had recently sold two cows to reduce her work responsibilities explained:

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

K. Mahara, Siraha

4.3.5 Self-Employment in Non-Agriculture

Self-employment in the non-agricultural sector seemed to be the most appealing work option for most women. Work in this sector is usually less strenuous than that in agricultural fields and the expected returns are higher. Additionally, most of this work can be done at home or close to it, making it convenient for women to manage this work along with household and childcare responsibilities.

¹² This observation is also supported by the findings from Maharjan et al. (2013) on Baitadi district, Nepal.

¹³ Maharjan et al. (2013) mention that '*adhiya system*', where livestock owned by one household is cared for by another and the output from livestock is shared between the two households is common in Nepal. Hiring workers for animal rearing was not observed for households in my survey.

Women also seemed to be more comfortable with this kind of work as they could be earning some money, while conforming to the social norms by not stepping into male-dominated public spaces. One migrant wife explained her preference for this kind of work by stating:

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

G. Sah, Siraha

In some cases, declines in home-based production was also reported as remittances became the main income source and women cut down on their production for more leisure or for providing better care to children.

I make small cigarettes (*bidi*) at home and sell them. I used to also make alcohol before but since my husband migrated we have good income from remittances, so I stopped making alcohol.

T. Shrestha, Siraha

When asked about the kind of work they preferred to do, more than half of the women mentioned some form of home-based production or opening up a store. However, a major hindrance to taking up this kind of work is the capital and skill required to start production and business. The most preferred option for women seemed to be to open a small convenience store, tailor shop or beauty salon at home or close to it.¹⁴ In fact, most women from relatively rich families, who could afford to invest in the required capital and skill training for starting a business, had given up agriculture in favor of opening their own stores. Women from relatively poor families, on the other hand, engaged in production activities with low start-up cost

¹⁴ Usually, a room in the first floor of the house is converted into a store for conducting business activities.

such as making candles, incense, mats, alcohol or cigarettes at home. Others, who were not employed in this sector, talked about being interested in getting some kind of training to start home-based production. One migrant wife expressed her wish for being self-employed stating:

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

F. Gurung, Syangja

4.3.6 Wage-employment

Only 11.5 percent of the migrant wives I interviewed were employed for wages; this is consistent with low participation in wage-employment for Nepalese women in general. Based on their skills and educational background, wage-employed women can be broadly categorized as high-skilled workers and low-skilled workers. Women, who had completed the twelfth standard in school or higher, were mainly employed in skilled-labor sector with relatively high wages. They worked at local offices or taught at schools. Women with low or no education, on the other hand, were mostly employed in low-wage low-skilled jobs.¹⁵ Women employed in this low-skill sector were often from the poorest families; they did not have the resources to invest in capital or skill training to be able to be self-employed. Hence, they worked for wages in other people's farms and stores or took on manual labor jobs in construction, restaurants or other fields.

¹⁵ In my sample, the mean years of education for women employed for wages in non-agricultural sector was 9.4 years, compared to 0 years for wage-employment in agriculture and an average of 6.7 years for women in self-employment activities.

Often, women's lack of confidence seemed to deter them from considering taking up wage-employment. Women stated that they did not think they had the knowledge or skills to work outside home and earn money like men did. In fact, a few women who were initially hesitant to talk to me mentioned that they didn't think they would have anything to contribute to my research since they were not educated and didn't know much about the world. I had to convince them that I would only be asking simple questions about their everyday lives and that they should feel free to skip questions or quit the interview if they felt uncomfortable. Part of this low self-confidence seemed to stem from their lack of education and their perception that they did not possess any valuable skills. Women mentioned that they did not know if anyone would be willing to hire them and what kind of job they could do. Also, though they stated that they wanted to work, they had not ventured into the job market to look for opportunities. One woman who seemed perplexed by my question on why she hadn't taken on market work replied:

I want to work, but who is going to give me a job and what kind of work can I do? I don't know. When my kids were small, I didn't have time to think about working but now that they are grown up and I have time, I don't know how to find a job. If I were well-educated, I could probably work at some office but there is not much for women to do around here.

M. Shrestha, Chitwan

Similar expressions on the need for education to be wage-employed was echoed by another woman:

There is no work for us to do. Agricultural work is not productive any more and I am not educated to be able to go and work at offices, so I am limited to doing household work.

J. Gurung, Syangja

Some women simply accepted that market work was not for them. A migrant wife who had given up agricultural work after her husband migrated and was solely reliant on remittances expressed:

I don't know what kind of work is available for women like us. We just stay out in the sun when it is nice and stay indoors if it rains. We run the household with whatever we receive from abroad.

D. Rana, Syangja

Even women who had stepped out of their comfort zones and started looking for jobs faced difficulties in finding a good one because of the lack of education. One woman who had quit school after she failed the 10th grade exam and gotten married right after explained:

I have been trying to find a job since the last two years. At first, I applied to some administrative jobs at offices, but they wanted people with more education, so I stopped looking for those positions. I am now looking for work as cleaning staff at hospitals and offices.

G. Thapa, Chitwan

Also, household work and childcare responsibilities added to the obstructions faced by women in taking up wage-employment activities, as illustrated by the following statements:

I had gotten a job at a community bank; they needed me to work 3-4 hours in the morning with a savings group and do couple hours of office work in the afternoon. They were adamant that I start at 7 in the morning before people left their homes to go work in the fields. I couldn't do that since I had to send my kids to school in the morning. Also, I could not manage that many hours of work, so I couldn't take the job.

C. Thapa, Chitwan

Since my kids are small, I have to take care of them and can't manage the time to work outside home. My husband has asked me to not work until the kids grow up.

P. Gharti, Rolpa

An important factor influencing women's lack of participation in the labor market seemed to be the perception about the kinds of work that are appropriate for women to do and the lack of opportunities for such jobs in the market. Women pointed out that they cannot just do any work and that there weren't too many job positions that would be suitable for women to take on. The labor market in Nepal is gender-segregated, with concentration of men and women in different types of jobs. Men dominate the wage-employment sector for all kinds of jobs from professional high-skilled work to low-skilled jobs in construction and transportation while women are limited to doing agricultural work and home-based production. In many communities, it is socially unacceptable for women to take up tasks that require high mobility in public spaces (Khanal, 2012). For example, driving public transportation vehicles or transportation of merchandize are mainly 'male jobs'. Despite the large number of male migrants moving abroad for work, women haven't replaced many of these jobs since they may be criticized for taking up such positions. Women cared deeply about what perceptions people in the society might have about them; hence, they were not comfortable breaking social norms and taking on jobs that may not be approved by their families and communities. A migrant wife illustrated this point by stated:

I used to work at a store but sometimes they sent me out on bicycle to pick up and deliver stuff; I wasn't comfortable doing that kind of work so I quit after working for a couple of weeks.

H. Chhetri, Chitwan

Perceptions about the kind of work that is acceptable for women to do were less important for women in poorer households, where the need to be employed and earn wages took priority over maintaining their social image. Women from the

poorest families were more willing to take up wage-employment in low-skilled male dominated jobs in construction and manufacturing. Women from wealthier families, however, often face much stricter restrictions on taking on work outside home and are more concerned about what kind of work might be appropriate for them to do. Often women's participation in wage-employment may be viewed as inability of the men to provide for the family; hence their husbands and in-laws may be reluctant to allow women to participate in market work. Also, fear that women may no longer remain subservient to their husbands and in-laws if they earn their own income could deter families from allowing women to work. Additionally, social taboos regarding women's participation in public spaces as well as increased suspicion on women's whereabouts if she participates in work outside home may discourage women from taking on market work. Though only about 12 percent of women mentioned restrictions from family as the main hindrance to participating in work outside home, the attitude of being more comfortable working at or closer to home was apparent in most of the conversations I had.

The type of employment women took up also depended on their caste group. Table 4.5 below shows that the percentage of women employed in paid activities is much higher for *Janajatis* and *Dalits* than for high caste Hindu women, and most high caste women are involved in self-employment activities. This could be because of the greater physical mobility as well as the lower economic standing of the *Janajatis* and *Dalits*.

Table 4.5: Women's Work Responsibilities by Caste

	High caste (n=86)	Janajatis (n=50)	Dalits (n=41)	Sample (n=177)
Market work				
Percentage of women who are currently employed	61.6%	68%	63.4%	63.5%
Percentage of women employed in paid work (wage-employed/ self-employed in non-agriculture)	34.0%	38.2%	57.7%	40.7%
Percentage wage-employed	20.9%	26%	36.6%	25.8%
Employment type (% of the employed women)				
	High caste (n=53)	Janajatis (n=34)	Dalits (n=26)	Sample (n=177)
Self-employment in agriculture/ animal care	66.0%	61.8%	42.2%	59.3%
Self-employed in non-agriculture	24.6%	20.6%	42.3%	27.4%
Wage-employed	Agriculture /Unskilled	3.8%	8.8%	11.6%
	Skilled (requiring at least high school education)	5.6%	8.8%	3.9%

A *Brahmin* woman whose desire to work was suppressed by her family explained:

My husband and in-laws don't really like me going out of the house too much. I feel like if I work I can at least contribute to family income but my husband says doing small jobs here and there is not sufficient for earning a living and he doesn't like me working for others. So, they don't allow me to take on even smaller agricultural work at other people's fields.

B. Dahal, Chitwan

Similar sentiments were expressed by a Muslim woman in Siraha.

In this culture, they don't let women move freely. My husband tells me to stay home and take care of the kids. When my daughters grow up and get married, they will probably face the same difficulties.

S. Khatun, Siraha

In some cases, improvement in a household's economic status due to receipt of remittances could discourage women's participation in market work.¹⁶ This decline in women's willingness to participate in market work could be more out of choice than restrictions on their ability to work and the households' improved

¹⁶ In the literature, this was the most commonly cited cause of reduction in women's market participation during men's migration. See, Gulati (1986), Go and Postrado (1986), Funkhouser (1992), Louhichi (1995).

economic status may add to their well-being. One migrant wife expressed relief from not having to take up market work.

I don't feel the need to work since my husband sends enough money for my children and me. I am mostly busy with household work, so I don't have the time to work outside.

N. Shrestha, Siraha

However, few others points out that their husbands or in-laws asked them to quit their jobs as the household's financial status improved. The following statements illustrate this point:

I used to run a small store here but after my husband migrated he told me that he earns enough for the family and there was no need for me to work. So, I quit the work and sold the store to my brother.

S. Regmi, Chitwan

Before I worked as a social mobilizer for a local NGO; I used to monitor some of the trainings they brought here and I earned about Rs. 5,000 a month. After my husband migrated, he told me that the pay was too low and that he was earning enough for the family so I should quit the job and focus on taking care of the kids.

H. Thapa, Rolpa

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

It is difficult being alone but we have to work hard and make compromises for our children's future. My responsibilities have increased since my husband's migration. I do the household work in the mornings and evenings and then I work for a few hours in the day; this keeps me busy but has helped us financially.

M. Gharti, Syangja

I work as a peon at a school here and I take my daughter to school with me. Staff benefits at the school include free tuition for one child, so I don't have to pay for her education. My son is still too small, so I leave him with my mother-in-law during the day. I manage all household work in the mornings and evenings, and work during the day.

K. Gautam, Chitwan

I teach at the school from 9 to 4 and I do all the household work in the mornings and evenings. My mother-in-law does not help out with any work and she complains if I cook the same food everyday. It is difficult for me to take days off and it is hard to manage all household and childcare work by myself but my husband didn't help out with much of this work even when he was here. Some days I feel like crying since my mother-in-law is not very appreciative of the work I do and my husband is also scared of his mother and always supports her, but I feel like I have become much stronger over time.

B. Poudel, Chitwan

Women who were not heavily burdened with household and childcare responsibilities mentioned that participating in wage-employment had helped them manage household expenses and reduced financial tensions at home. Usually women who were not involved in agriculture or animal farming and whose children were big enough to go to school during the day found time to take up some wage-employment. A 29-year-old migrant wife expressed content from her recently acquired wage-earning capability.

I took training for tailoring about 2 years ago but I only started working recently since my daughter started school and I have free time during the day. I feel happy that I am able to contribute to family income. I have to pick her up at 3 and after that I just go home. Sometimes, I take some work home too since I have a sewing machine at home.

D. Sapkota, Chitwan

Another woman expressed similar feelings of gratification from being able to earn.

I own and run this store and I also provide training to women around here. I did not want to depend on my husband's income and since we don't have kids yet I can manage all the work here.

L. K. Dangi, Rolpa

A 22-year-old mother, who was in the process of completing her Bachelors, shared her aspirations to become a teacher.

I am doing Bachelors in education right now so I want to teach in the long run but until my son is big enough to go to school I will work part-time at the radio station here.

B. Gurung, Rolpa

The accounts of interviewed women indicate that men's migration may have resulted in an increase in women's household work and childcare responsibilities. The impact of men's migration on women's participation in subsistence agriculture is not as clear as some women chose to reduce production or completely give up agricultural work, while others continued the work by taking up some of their husband's responsibilities. Given this expected increase in household work along with the possibility of increased subsistence agriculture and improvement in the households' financial status through receipt of remittances, women's participation in wage-employment and their involvement in self-employment in non-agricultural work is expected to decline during men's migration. Additionally, my observations on the underlying reasons for regional differences in women's experiences suggest that factors such as women's age and education, household factors such as family structure, caste group and economic background as well as regional factors associated with gender norms and socio-economic status are key to explaining the

differences in women's experiences. I will test if these observations from fieldwork can be confirmed with data from the NLSS-III and NDHS 2011 surveys in the following two sections.

4.4 Women's Work: Quantitative Analysis on based on NLSS-III

To look into the changes in women's work responsibilities due to migration of men, I compare women's work activities between migrant and non-migrant households. Here, women's work is categorized into household work, self-employment in agriculture, self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment. Based on my findings from fieldwork on the expected changes in women's work during men's migration, I test the following four hypotheses using the NLSS data set:

- H1: Women in migrant households spend more time in household work than women in non-migrant households (Model 1).
- H2: Self-employment in agriculture is higher for women in migrant households than for women in non-migrant households (Model 2).¹⁷
- H3: Self-employment in non-agricultural sector is lower for women in migrant households than for women in non-migrant households (Model 3).
- H4: Participation in wage-employment is lower for women in migrant households than for women in non-migrant households (Model 4).

Here, the dependent variable in each case is the type of work that is being compared between migrant and non-migrant household. The main independent variable is whether a woman belongs to a migrant household or not. A range of

¹⁷ Though the relationship between self-employment in agriculture and men's migration was not as clear with our fieldwork observations, in stating the hypothesis I assume that the overall relationship is positive.

other independent variables defining women's individual characteristics (such as her age, education, household headship) as well as socio-economic factors associated with the household and the location she belongs to are included in the models to control for the impact of factors other than belonging to a migrant household on women's work responsibilities. The four hypotheses listed above are tested using the following four econometric models:

Model 1:

Household work = $b_0 + b_1$ (woman belongs to migrant household or not) + b_2 (individual characteristics) + b_3 (household characteristics) + b_4 (geographic characteristics) + error term

Model 2:

Self-employment in agriculture = $b_0 + b_1$ (woman belongs to migrant household or not) + b_2 (individual characteristics) + b_3 (household characteristics) + b_4 (geographic characteristics) + error term

Model 3:

Self-employment in non-agriculture = $b_0 + b_1$ (woman belongs to migrant household or not) + b_2 (woman's individual characteristics) + b_3 (household characteristics) + b_4 (geographic characteristics) + error term

Model 4:

Wage-employed = $b_0 + b_1$ (woman belongs to migrant household or not) + b_2 (woman's individual characteristics) + b_3 (household characteristics) + b_4 (geographic characteristics) + error term

Here, b_0 represents the intercept term and b_1 ..., b_k represent the coefficients associated with the independent variables in each of the models.

4.4.1 Sample and Variable Definition

Sample: The NLSS survey collects information from 10,288 women who are above the age of 15 years. Since my research question is centered on understanding the changes in women's well-being due to her husband's migration, I only include

married women in the sample. Also, women who are not in the labor force either because they are still in school or because they are too old, sick or disabled are excluded from my sample. The analysis presented here is based on a subsample of 6,243 women, all of whom are married and in the labor force.

Dependent Variables: Table 4.6 below presents the definitions for the dependent variables in my models.

Table 4.6: Dependent Variables for Models on Women's Work (NLSS-III)

Variable Name	Definition
Household work (Model 1)	Total number of hours per week spent in household work, measured as following: <i>Household work = Hours spent on (Fetching water + Collecting firewood + Collecting fodder + Animal care + Knitting /tailoring + Processing preserved food + Household repair + Cooking/ Serving food + Clearing house + Shopping + Caring for elderly/sick + Child care + Community Service/ other volunteer)</i>
Self-employment in agriculture (Model 2)	Binary variable with value 1 for any woman who has spent at least an hour in the past week working in family-owned field for no wages, and 0 otherwise.
Self-employment in non-agriculture (Model 3)	Binary variable with value 1 for any woman who has spent at least an hour in the past week working in family-owned business or home-production, 0 otherwise.
Wage-employment (Model 4)	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are employed in agricultural or non-agricultural activities and received wages or in-kind payments for this work, and 0 otherwise.

Independent Variables: Table 4.7 below presents brief definitions of the independent variables in my models. This is followed by a discussion of the expected relationship of each of the independent variables with the four dependent variables. Since the same set of variables is expected to affect the different kinds of work I am studying here, most of the variables used for the four models are same. Variables, when used only for specific models, have been identified as such in the discussion presented.

Table 4.7: Independent Variables for Models on Women's Work (NLSS-III)

Variable Name	Definition
Belongs to migrant household	Binary variable with value 1 for women who belong to migrant households, 0 otherwise.
Remittance-receiving households	Binary variable with value 1 for women who belong to households that receive remittances, 0 otherwise
Age	Woman's age
Education	Years of schooling
Relation to household head	Binary variable with value 1 for household heads, 0 otherwise
Wage-employed	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are employed for wages, 0 otherwise
Number of adult female members	Number of women above the age of 15 present in the household
Number of dependent members	Sum of the number of children below the age of 15 and number of elderly members above the age of 60 present in the household.
Asset Index	Index representing asset ownership of a household
Land Ownership	Size of land owned by a household
Caste	Binary variable with value 1 for high caste group (Brahmin, Chhetri and Newars), 0 otherwise
Location	Binary variable with value 1 for households in rural areas, 0 otherwise
Ecological Zone	Ecological zone is divided into the following three regions: Mountains, Hills and Terai. Two dummy variables, Mbelt with value 1 for mountain region and 0 otherwise and Hbelt with value 1 for Hill region and 0 otherwise, are used to represent the ecological zones.

Woman belongs to migrant household: Since my main goal is to look into differences in women's work between migrant and non-migrant households, the key independent variable in all my models is 'whether a woman belongs to migrant household or not.' Based on my discussion above, the coefficient for this variable is expected to be positive for models on household work and self-employment in agriculture and negative for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.

Age: Women are expected to take on more responsibilities, as they get older. So, women's work in all four categories is expected to increase with age. However, after a certain age, some of the work responsibilities may be transferred to younger members in the household. Hence, a quadratic relation is expected between age and

women's work, with the coefficient for age being positive and that for age-squared being negative, in all the four models.

Education: Women with higher educational qualifications are likely to have a better bargaining position within the household. They are also more likely to be employed for wages. Hence, household work and self-employment in agriculture are expected to be lower and self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment are expected to be higher for women with higher educational qualifications. The coefficient for education is expected to be negative for models 1 and 2 and positive for models 3 and 4.

Relation to household head: Women who are heads of their household are the primary caretakers, so they may have higher work responsibilities within the house as well as in the family-owned fields. These women are also expected to have higher participation in market work (either through self-employment in non-agriculture or through wage-employment) to be able to earn and provide for the family. Hence, the coefficient of being household head is expected to be positive in all the four models.

Wage-employed: This variable is only used for the model on household work (model 1). Since wage-employed women contribute to household income, it is likely that they have higher bargaining power and less household work. Hence, a negative coefficient is expected for being wage-employed.

Number of adult female members: This variable is only used for the model on household work, since women living in the same household may be able to share household responsibilities. With the increase in the number of adult female

members, household work for each individual woman is likely to decrease; hence, a negative coefficient is expected here.

Number of dependent members: Increase in dependent members in the household increases women's household work, as women are primarily responsible for providing care to these members. Increased care responsibilities at home could deter women from participating in market work. This variable is only included for models 1, 3 and 4, and the coefficient for this variable is expected to be positive for the model on household work (model 1) and negative for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment (models 3 and 4).

Asset index: Asset index is an indicator of the household's economic status. Households with higher asset index are likely to have better access to water, electricity and cooking fuel. This eliminates tasks such as fetching water and collecting firewood and reduces women's work. Also, wealthier households are more likely to be able to hire someone to help with household and agricultural work. So, household work and self-employment in agriculture is expected to be lower for women from wealthier households. However, participation in self-employment in non-agriculture may be higher for women from wealthier families as they may have the resources to invest in capital and start their own production. Participation in wage-employment may also be higher for women from wealthier families since they may have better access to education and other resources. This relation is not as clear though, since less economic pressure in wealthier households may discourage women from participating in wage-employment.

Land ownership: Higher land ownership is likely to be related to more household work and higher self-employment in agriculture, since this land may be used to keep livestock and to do agricultural work, and women are likely to be involved in these tasks. Also, women in agricultural households are likely to be involved in processing agricultural output (such as cleaning and packaging grain), which could also add on to their work responsibilities. So, the coefficient of land ownership is expected to be positive for the models on household work (model 1) and subsistence agriculture (model 2). Lower land ownership could push women to take up wage-employment or to be involved in self-employment in non-agriculture, so the coefficient of land ownership is expected to be negative for models 3 and 4.

Caste: Gender norms, that limit women's activities within the house, are followed more strictly in households from high caste groups; hence, women from higher caste families are expected to have more household work, higher participation in subsistence agriculture and lower participation in wage-employment and self-employment in non-agricultural activities.

Location: Access to resources such as water, electricity and gas are more limited in rural areas, hence tasks such as fetching water and collecting firewood add on to household work for women in rural households. Also, most rural households are involved in subsistence agriculture, indicating higher participation of rural women in self-employment in the agricultural sector. Participation in wage-employment or self-employment in non-agricultural sector is expected to be lower for rural women because of their lower access to market and to employment opportunities in manufacturing or services sector. Hence, the coefficient for location is expected to

be positive for household work and self-employment in agriculture and negative for wage-employment and self-employment in non-agricultural sector.

Ecological zone: Ecological zone is included in the models to capture differences in women's work due to the socio-cultural differences in geographic location. Among the three ecological zones in Nepal, gender inequality is highest in Terai because the social norms in this region are highly influenced by conservative Hindu beliefs that encourage patriarchy. The social norms in the Hills and Mountains are more influenced by Tibeto-Burman culture that has less restrictive norms for women (Bennett & Acharya, 1983). So, women in Terai region are expected to have higher household work than women in Hill or Mountain regions. However, this relation is not as clear; because of the land terrain in the Hill and Mountain regions, access to facilities such as piped water and gas are more limited meaning women may have to spend more time on tasks such as fetching water and gathering fodder. Self-employment in agriculture is also expected to be higher in Terai since the land in Terai region is the most fertile and suitable for agriculture; more than 55 percent of the food crops produced in the country comes from the Terai region.¹⁸ The relation of ecological zone with wage-employment and with self-employment in non-agriculture is also not certain. On the one hand, access to labor market is better in Terai, suggesting higher participation in these activities for women in Terai. On the other hand, the more restrictive gender norms in the Terai region imply that women may not be able to take up these forms of market employment.

¹⁸ Based on the author's calculation using data from Statistical Pocketbook 2014, provided by the Central Bureau of Statistics in Nepal. Here, food crops include paddy, wheat, maize, millet and barley.

4.4.2 Regression Results

The dependent variable for household work is continuous, so Ordinary Least Squares methodology is used to estimate model 1. The dependent variables for the models on self-employment in agriculture, self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment are binary; hence probit estimations are used for these.¹⁹

Table 4.8: Regression Results on Women's Work (NLSS-III)

Variables	Model 1: Household Work	Model 2: Self Employment in Agriculture	Model 3: Self- Employment in Non-agriculture	Model 4: Wage Employment
Belongs to migrant household	1.365* (0.581)	0.233*** (0.0396)	-0.204*** (0.0463)	-0.104* (0.0442)
Age	0.482*** (0.123)	-0.0270** (0.00846)	0.0321** (0.0106)	0.0998*** (0.0114)
Age-squared	-0.00926*** (0.00149)	0.000524*** (0.000104)	-0.000344** (0.000132)	-0.00119*** (0.000146)
Education	0.0543 (0.0717)	-0.0199*** (0.00527)	-0.00851 (0.00523)	0.0465*** (0.00560)
Relation to household head	0.619 (0.762)	-0.176** (0.0567)	-0.0284 (0.0623)	0.166** (0.0574)
Wage employed	-5.089*** (0.670)			
Number of adult female members	-4.157*** (0.281)			
Number of dependent members	1.115*** (0.150)		-0.0250* (0.0126)	-0.0193 (0.0115)
Asset index	-3.544*** (0.367)	-0.274*** (0.0281)	0.260*** (0.0279)	-0.279*** (0.0301)
Land ownership	1.414*** (0.291)	0.215*** (0.0338)	-0.161*** (0.0353)	-0.251*** (0.0636)
Caste	0.736 (0.574)	0.388*** (0.0431)	-0.113* (0.0478)	-0.249*** (0.0441)
Location	4.933*** (0.682)	0.592*** (0.0566)	-0.0139 (0.0566)	-0.185*** (0.0538)
Mountain Belt	0.487 (1.020)	0.320*** (0.0710)	0.289*** (0.0837)	0.405*** (0.0795)
Hilly Belt	0.741 (0.553)	0.391*** (0.0410)	0.0424 (0.0459)	0.144*** (0.0423)
Constant term	40.44*** (2.591)	-1.023*** (0.172)	-1.834*** (0.212)	-2.350*** (0.220)
R-squared/ pseudo R-squared	0.142	0.161	0.057	0.061
Number of observations	6241	6243	6243	6241

Standard errors are in parentheses. *p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

¹⁹ Probit regression can be applied when the dependent variable is binary and the independent variables are either categorical or continuous.

4.4.3 Discussion of Results

Table 4.8 above presents the results for the four models based on NLSS-III data. The coefficients for my key independent variable, 'belongs to migrant household', confirms the four hypotheses stated above.

Model 1: Household Work

The R-squared value for model 1 is 0.142; so the independent variables in my model 'explain' about 14.2 percent of the variation in time spent by women on household work. The positive and statistically significant coefficient for the variable for migrant household confirms my hypothesis (H1) that women in migrant households spend more time on household work than women in non-migrant households.

The coefficients for most of the explanatory variables in the model are consistent with the expectations discussed above. The results indicate a quadratic relation between age and household work, with household work increasing with age up to a certain maximum age and decreasing after that. Also, household heads are likely to have more household work and women who are employed for wages are likely to have less household work. The coefficient for education is positive indicating higher household work for women with more education. Though this result contradicts my expectation, the coefficient is not statistically significant.

I find that in households with more adult female members, the work responsibility for each individual woman is lower. Also, increase in number of dependent members increases women's work responsibilities. Both these findings are consistent with my expectations. The coefficient for asset index is negative,

indicating lower household work for women from wealthier families. Also, ownership of land is associated positively with women's household work, as expected. The coefficient for caste is positive indicating higher household work for women from high caste families; however the coefficient is not statistically significant. Women from rural areas have higher workload than women from urban areas; this is consistent with my expectation. The coefficients for the variables on Mountain and Hill belt are positive indicating that women in these regions have higher workload than women in Terai region. However, these coefficients are not statistically significant indicating that there might not be much difference in women's household work responsibilities based on the ecological belt that they belong to.

Model 2: Self-employment in agriculture

The pseudo R-squared value for model 2 is 0.161, indicating that the explanatory variables in my model 'explain' about 16.1 percent of the variation in self-employment in agriculture. The coefficient for migrant household is positive and statistically significant here; this confirms my hypothesis (H2) that women in migrant households are more likely to be self-employed in agriculture than women in non-migrant households. Though some women in migrant households in my fieldwork sample claimed that they had either given up or cut down on agricultural work, the findings from NLSS data suggests that the overall participation among migrant households is higher than that in non-migrant households. This indicates that there are more women taking up their husbands' work in the fields than those leaving the fields barren when their husbands migrate. Women in non-migrant

households may also have underreported their participation in agricultural work, since in the presence of men they may have considered their own participation as being marginal.²⁰

The coefficients for age and age-squared indicate a quadratic relation between age and self-employment in agriculture. However, contrary to my expectation, I find self-employment in agriculture declines with age up to a certain age and then increases after that. This could be because women in their prime working age prefer other forms of employment than subsistence agriculture; hence, they may be working in the family fields either when they are younger and not ready to enter the job market or after they get older and retire from other forms of employment. Also, I find a negative and statistically significant coefficient for household headship; though this contradicts with my expectation, the negative coefficient may be indicative of female household heads taking up wage-employment or other forms of income-generating activities. Given the low productivity from agriculture, female heads may be incentivized to seek alternative forms of employment to be able to provide for the family. As expected, the results show that women with lower educational qualifications are more likely to be self-employed in agriculture.

For the household and regional characteristics, the results indicate that women from wealthier families are less likely to be self-employed in agriculture and women from households with larger land ownership are more likely to be self-employed in agriculture. Both these findings concur with my assumptions. I find that

²⁰ Upadhyaya (2002) points out that women usually work as helpers while men are considered the primary workers.

women from high-caste families are more likely to be self-employed in agriculture, perhaps because the restrictive gender norms in these households limit them from participating in employment outside home. I also find that women from rural area are more likely to be self-employed in agriculture; this finding is supported by the fact that most rural households are agricultural. The results indicate that women in the Mountain and Hill regions have higher participation in self-employment in agriculture than women in Terai. This result contradicts with my expectation that women in Terai may be more likely to be self-employed in agriculture given the fertile land and stricter gender norms in this region.

Model 3: Self-employment in Non-Agriculture

The pseudo R-squared value for model 3 is 0.057; so my model is only able to 'explain' about 5.7% of the variation on women's self-employment in non-agricultural sector. The coefficient for 'belongs to migrant household' is negative and statistically significant. This confirms my hypothesis (H3) that women in migrant households are less likely to be self-employed in non-agricultural sector.

As expected, I find a quadratic relation between age and self-employment in non-agricultural field. Also, I find that women who are household heads and those who have higher educational qualifications are less likely to be self-employed in non-agricultural sector. Though these findings contradict my expectation, the coefficients for both these variables are not statistically significant.

The results show that, as expected, the likelihood of women's self-employment in non-agriculture is lower in households with more dependent members. Women from wealthier families are more likely to be self-employed in

non-agriculture; this is consistent with my assumption that women from wealthier households may have the resources to invest in capital and skill-training. Women from households with less land are more likely to be self-employed in the non-agricultural sector. Also, women from higher caste groups and women in rural areas are less likely to be involved in self-employment in non-agriculture. All of these findings concur with my expectations discussed above. Finally, I find that women from both Mountain and Hill region are more likely to be self-employed in non-agriculture than women from Terai; this could be because of the less restrictive gender norms in the Hills and Mountains.

Model 4: Wage-Employment in Agricultural or Non-Agricultural Sector

The pseudo R-squared value for model 4 is 0.061 indicating that the explanatory variables in my model 'explains' about 6.1% of the variation in wage-employment for women. The negative and statistically significant coefficient for 'belongs to migrant household' confirms my hypothesis (H4) that women from migrant households are less likely to be employed for wages. This is consistent with my argument that during men's absence, women may be discouraged to participate in market work either because of increased household responsibilities and restricted mobility or because of increase in income through remittance reception.

The coefficients for all of the individual characteristics of women are consistent with my expectations and also statistically significant. Age has a quadratic relation with being wage-employed. Being the household head and having higher educational qualifications are associated with higher probability for participating in market work.

Most of the coefficients for the household and geographic characteristics also match my expectations. Increase in number of dependent members in the household decreases the probability of women being employed for wages. Women from wealthier families are less likely to be involved in wage-employment; this could be either because women from these families don't feel the need to work for wages or because they are restricted from working for wages in the name of maintaining family honor. Also, higher land ownership is associated with lower participation in wage employment; perhaps because women in these households are involved in agricultural work or in animal husbandry. As expected, I find that women from higher caste households and women in rural areas have lower probability of participating in wage-labor. For the ecological zones, the results indicate that the probability of participation in market work is higher for women in the Mountain or Hill region than for women in the Terai belt; this could be because of the higher gender inequality and more restrictions on mobility for women in Terai region.

4.4.4 Regression Results Using 'Remittance-Receiving Households'

Table 4.9 below presents the regression results for the same four models above, but the independent variable of primary interest here is 'remittance-receiving households' instead of 'belongs to migrant households.' Since most remittance-receiving households have labor migrants, women in remittance-receiving households are expected to have higher household responsibilities, more agricultural work and lower participation in wage-employment and self-

employment in non-agricultural sector than women in households that don't receive remittances.

Table 4.9: Regression Results on Women's Work (NLSS-III)

Variables	Model 1: Household Work	Model 2: Self Employment in Agriculture	Model 3: Self- Employment in Non-agriculture	Model 4: Wage Employment
Remittance-receiving household	1.662** (0.555)	0.136*** (0.0390)	-0.105* (0.0430)	-0.123** (0.0414)
Age	0.468*** (0.122)	-0.0310*** (0.00843)	0.0354*** (0.0106)	0.101*** (0.0114)
Age-squared	-0.00909*** (0.00147)	0.000574*** (0.000104)	-0.000388** (0.000133)	-0.00121*** (0.000146)
Education	0.0432 (0.0716)	-0.0201*** (0.00525)	-0.00893 (0.00521)	0.0471*** (0.00559)
Head	0.644 (0.725)	-0.118* (0.0552)	-0.0905 (0.0599)	0.156** (0.0551)
Wage employed	-5.033*** (0.668)			
Number of adult female members	-4.058*** (0.275)			
Number of dependent members	1.126*** (0.150)		-0.0284* (0.0125)	-0.0190 (0.0114)
Asset index	-3.571*** (0.366)	-0.279*** (0.0280)	0.261*** (0.0277)	-0.275*** (0.0299)
Land	1.326*** (0.287)	0.212*** (0.0340)	-0.163*** (0.0357)	-0.253*** (0.0638)
Caste	0.775 (0.571)	0.379*** (0.0430)	-0.107* (0.0473)	-0.243*** (0.0439)
Location	4.965*** (0.682)	0.608*** (0.0562)	-0.0255 (0.0565)	-0.175** (0.0536)
Mountain Belt	0.624 (1.016)	0.321*** (0.0708)	0.285*** (0.0838)	0.392*** (0.0792)
Hilly Belt	1.013 (0.556)	0.404*** (0.0415)	0.0260 (0.0461)	0.124** (0.0425)
Constant term	40.12*** (2.581)	-0.936*** (0.171)	-1.884*** (0.213)	-2.3563** (0.220)
R-squared/ pseudo R-squared	0.142	0.157	0.054	0.061
Number of observations	6283	6285	6285	6283

Standard errors in parentheses.

*p<0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p<0.001

Among the households included in my sample, 54.6 percent receive remittances. Also, 85.6 percent of migrant households receive remittances. 'Remittance-receiving households' is commonly used as the unit of analysis in

studies analyzing the consequences of migration.²¹ Using this alternative measure could provide some insight into the impacts of remittance-receipt on women's employment activities.

Based on table 4.9, we see that my results do not change by much for any of the models when I use remittance-receiving households as the key independent variable. There are slight changes in the level of significance for some of the coefficients, but the main results are same as the results in table 4.8 where I used 'belongs to migrant household' as the key independent variable. I find that women in remittance-receiving households are likely to have more household work, higher participation in family-based agriculture and lower participation in self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment than women in households that do not receive remittances.²² These results confirm the four hypotheses we stated at the beginning of this section.

4.5 Women's Work: Quantitative Analysis based on NDHS 2011

In this section, I repeat my analysis above, but using the NDHS data. This will help confirm my earlier results. Since NDHS does not provide information on household work, I only compare the results for the remaining three models (2 to 4). I will be testing the following three hypotheses, again:

²¹ For example, the study by Lokshin and Glinskaya (2008) on the impact of male migration from Nepal on women's participation in market work uses remittance-receiving households as the unit of analysis.

²² This finding is consistent with the findings of Lokshin and Glinskaya (2008) on their study of the impact of male migration from Nepal on women's participation in market work.

- H2: Self-employment in agricultural sector is higher for women in migrant households than for women in non-migrant households (Model 5).
- H3: Self-employment in non-agricultural sector is lower for women in migrant households than for women in non-migrant households (Model 6).
- H4: Participation in wage-employment is lower for women in migrant households than for women in non-migrant households (Model 7).

Here, models 5, 6 and 7 correspond to models 2, 3 and 4 in section 4.4 respectively.

4.5.1 Sample and Variable Definition

Sample: The NDHS collects data on work activities from 12,672 women between the age of 15 and 49. My analysis here is based on a sub-sample of 9,458 women, all of whom are married.

Dependent Variables: Table 4.10 below presents the dependent variables in my models.

Table 4.10: Dependent Variables for Women's Work (NDHS 2011)

Variable Name	Definition
Self-employment in agriculture (Model 5)	Binary variable with value 1 for women who spent any time in the past week working in the family land (or taking care of animals) for no wages or in-kind payment, 0 otherwise
Self-employment in non-agriculture (Model 6)	Binary variable with value 1 for women who spent any time in the past week working in home-based production or family business in the non-agricultural sector, 0 otherwise.
Wage-employment (Model 7)	Binary variable with value 1 for women who have worked in either agricultural or non-agricultural sector and received wages or in-kind payments for their work, 0 otherwise.

Independent Variables: Table 4.11 below presents the independent variables used in my models using NDHS dataset. The expected relationships between each independent variable and the three dependent variables are also included in the

table. Since most of the variables used for this analysis are similar to those used for the models with NLSS data, a discussion on the expected relationship is only provided for variables that are not present in the analysis with NLSS data.

Table 4.11: Independent Variables for Women's Work (NDHS 2011)

Variable Name	Definition	Expected sign for coefficient and Discussion
Belongs to migrant household	Binary variable with value 1 for women who belong to migrant households, 0 otherwise.	<i>Expected sign: Positive for model on self-employment in agriculture and negative for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.</i>
Age	Woman's age	<i>Expected sign: Positive for all models</i> Only women in the age group 15-49 are included here. For this age group, women's participation in all categories of work is expected to increase with age.
Years of education	Number of years of schooling	<i>Expected sign: Negative for model on self-employment in agriculture and positive for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.</i>
Relationship to household head	Binary variable with value 1 for household heads, 0 otherwise	<i>Expected sign: Positive for all the models.</i>
Ownership Index	Index on woman's ownership of land and house	<i>Expected sign: Negative for model on self-employment in agriculture and positive for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.</i> Women with greater ownership of land or house are likely to have a stronger bargaining position in the household. Hence, higher ownership index indicates greater likelihood of participation in market work and lower likelihood of employment in subsistence agriculture.
Number of children	Number of living children	<i>Expected sign: Negative for all the models.</i> Women with more children might have to spend more time in childcare and may not be able to take on any additional work. Hence, their participation in all categories of work is expected to decrease as the number of children increases.

Household Structure	Binary variable with value 1 for joint household and 0 otherwise. ²³	<i>Expected sign: Positive for model on self-employment in agriculture and negative for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.</i> Since women in joint households live with their in-laws, they could face restrictions in terms of working outside home. Hence, women in joint households are expected to be more involved in subsistence agriculture and less involved in market work than women living in nuclear households.
Wealth Index	Index for household wealth as an indicator or household's economic status.	<i>Expected sign: Negative for model on self-employment in agriculture. Negative or positive (as discussed in the case of asset index with NLSS data) for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.²⁴</i>
Caste	Binary variable with value 1 for women belonging to high caste groups and 0 otherwise.	<i>Expected sign: Positive for model on self-employment in agriculture and negative for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.</i>
Location	Binary variable with value 1 for women living in rural areas and 0 otherwise	<i>Expected sign for the coefficient: Positive for model on self-employment in agriculture and negative for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.</i>
Ecological Belt	Two dummy variables, Mbelt with value 1 for Mountain and 0 otherwise and Hbelt with value 1 for Hill and 0 otherwise, are used to represent the three ecological belts.	<i>Expected sign: Negative for both Mbelt and Hbelt for the model on self-employment in agriculture and positive for both Mbelt and Hbelt for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment.</i>

4.5.2 Regression Results

Since the dependent variables in all three of my models are binary variables, I use the probit estimation for our analysis. The regression results are presented in table 4.12 below.

²³ A household where at least one of the members is the daughter-in-law of the household head is defined as a joint household.

²⁴ Wealth index in the NDHS data is similar to asset index in the NLSS data. They are both used as indicators of a household's economic status.

Table 4.12: Women's Work and Men's Migration (NDHS 2011)

Variables	Model 5: Employment Agriculture	Self in	Model 6: Employment in Non-	Self-	Model 7: Wage Employment
Migrant household	0.223*** (0.0347)		-0.164** (0.0538)		-0.149*** (0.0354)
Age	0.0152*** (0.00204)		0.00496 (0.00358)		0.0161*** (0.00245)
Education	-0.0198*** (0.00493)		0.0178* (0.00708)		0.0241*** (0.00515)
Head	-0.0960* (0.0440)		0.192** (0.0619)		0.168*** (0.0433)
Ownership index	-0.163*** (0.0337)		0.118** (0.0403)		0.100** (0.0313)
Household structure	0.362*** (0.0361)		-0.358*** (0.0590)		-0.193*** (0.0369)
No of children			-0.0413* (0.0206)		-0.0601*** (0.0126)
Wealth Index	-0.00000615*** (0.000000228)		0.00000394*** (0.000000324)		-0.00000559* (0.000000237)
Caste	0.446*** (0.0330)		-0.134** (0.0471)		-0.308*** (0.0324)
Location	0.278*** (0.0386)		0.0853 (0.0550)		-0.109** (0.0392)
Mountain Belt	0.606*** (0.0454)		0.275*** (0.0729)		-0.420*** (0.0507)
Hilly Belt	0.511*** (0.0332)		0.112* (0.0494)		-0.275*** (0.0353)
Constant term	-1.283*** (0.0808)		-1.812*** (0.117)		-0.869*** (0.0806)
R-squared/ pseudo R-squared	0.266		0.117		0.042
Number of observations	9458		9458		9458

Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

4.5.3 Discussion of Results

Here, the coefficient for belonging to a migrant household is positive and statistically significant for the model on self-employment in agriculture (model 5) and the coefficient is negative and statistically significant for the models on self-employment in non-agriculture (model 6) and wage-employment (model 7). These results are consistent with my expectations and confirm the hypotheses that women

from migrant households are likely to be more involved in self-employment in agriculture and less involved in self-employment in non-agriculture or wage-employed.

The coefficients for most of the other variables match my expectations. I find that women's participation in all three categories of work increases with age. Also, women who are heads of household are less likely to be involved in subsistence agriculture and more likely to be involved in wage-employment or self-employment in non-agriculture; this is consistent with my findings using the NLSS data and it confirms my assumption that household heads may be motivated to take on market employment as they may be primary breadwinners of the family. Higher educational qualifications and greater ownership of assets is associated with higher participation in self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment and lower participation in subsistence agriculture, as expected.

Among the household characteristics, I find that women from joint households are more likely to be involved in subsistence agriculture and less likely to be wage-employed or self-employed in non-agricultural sector. Additionally, increase in number of children suggests lower participation in market employment. As in the case with NLSS data, I find that women from wealthier families are less likely to be involved in self-employment in agriculture or wage-employment but they are more likely to be self-employed in non-agriculture; this could be because women from wealthier families are able to invest in capital to start businesses on their own. The results also indicate higher participation in self-employment in agriculture and lower participation in wage-employment and self-employment in

non-agriculture among women from higher castes. These findings are consistent with my expectations and confirm my results from the NLSS data.

Among the regional characteristics, I find that women from rural areas are less likely to be involved in wage-employment and more likely to be self-employed in agricultural sector. The results suggest that self-employment in non-agriculture is higher in rural area; however, the coefficient is not statistically significant. As in the case of NLSS data, I find that self-employment in both agriculture and non-agriculture are higher in the Mountain and Hill region, than in the Terai. However, women's participation in wage-employment is higher in Terai than in Mountain or Hill. Though this contradicts with my finding from NLSS, it could be that better access to labor market in Terai has encouraged women's participation in wage-employment. Since I get different results, from the two data sets, on the relation between women's participation in wage-employment and the ecological zones they belong to, this finding needs further exploration.

4.6 Conclusion

My analysis from the NLSS and the NDHS data shows that women from migrant households have more household responsibilities than women from non-migrant households. This finding is consistent with my fieldwork observations, where almost 80 percent of the women mentioned that their household responsibilities had increased since their husbands' migration. My quantitative analysis also suggests that women in migrant households have greater participation in self-employment in agriculture. Though this relation was not as clear with

fieldwork data, I conclude that in general most women had replaced their husband's labor in both crop farming and animal rearing, based on my quantitative results. In terms of women's participation in market activities, the regression results indicate that women in migrant households have lower participation in both self-employment in non-agriculture and wage-employment activities. My findings from fieldwork also suggest that migration of men limits women's ability to participate in market work either because of increased household responsibilities and restrictions on their mobility or because of rise in household income through remittance-receipt.

Hence, when men migrate, women take on more of the household and unpaid agricultural work and their participation in market work declines. Such changes in women's work responsibilities could undermine their bargaining power at home and restrict expansion of their agency power, as they are limited to doing work that is mostly unpaid and invisible and they remain financially dependent on other household members. Women in non-migrant households, on the other hand, who have more time and opportunities to participate in the labor market, may have greater agency power, an issue explored further in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN'S DECISION-MAKING AND MEN'S MIGRATION

5.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to study the changes in women's decision-making ability during men's migration. Women's participation in household decision-making is an indicator of their bargaining power. Increased decision-making could tilt the distribution of household resources in women's favor, facilitate her participation in social and economic arenas and contribute towards empowering her. Women's involvement in household decision-making may change during men's migration because of transformations in their position in the household and the society due to men's absence. Here, we look into these changes, analyze what individual, household and regional characteristics affect women's decision-making abilities and examine what these changes may mean for women's empowerment in Nepal.

Studies by Hadi (2001) on Bangladesh, Yabiku et al. (2010) on Mozambique and Jayaweera and Dias (2009) on Sri Lanka all find that women's autonomy and decision-making power increase with migration of adult male members. Other scholars have argued that the impact of men's migration on women's decision-making is more complex, as women may be making more decisions but the most important decisions, especially ones related to spending remittances or investment in larger household assets, may be made by men (see De Haas and Van Rooij, 2010 on rural Morocco; Palmer, 1985 on Swaziland; and Khalaf, 2009 and Hjorth, 2011 on

Lebanon). Also, even when women make decisions, these decisions may be influenced by their husbands' interests, partly for maintaining the image of being ideal wives (Chapagain, 2006).

Household decision-making is a complex process. Many decisions may be made through some form of collaboration and implicit understanding between family members. Power relations between household members are often central to determining women's ability to participate in decision-making during men's migration. For instance, studies by Desai and Banerjee (2008) and Rashid (2013) both find that women in nuclear households enjoy higher decision-making power during men's absence, while those in extended households may see their involvement in household decision-making remain the same or even decline, as other senior household members may take the role of key decision-maker. Often, women who are daughters-in-law of the household head rely on their husbands to represent their interests. Husbands' absence could be especially difficult for these women, as they are left alone to negotiate their position with their in-laws (Kasper, 2005). However, in cases where women's relationship with other household members does not change when their husbands' migrate (as in Louhichi, 1995), the impact of men's migration on women's decision-making ability may not be as clear.

Women's ability to participate in household decision-making may also be constrained by social norms on what is expected of them. Notions of being good wives, good mothers and good daughters-in-law may influence how women behave and what decisions they make (Jetley, 1987; Rashid, 2013; Yabiku et al., 2010). Under such circumstances, increased decision-making could add stress to women's

lives because of the fear of social criticism (De Haas and Van Rooij, 2010). For example, a woman's decision to participate in market work may be affected by whether it is socially acceptable for her to work outside home and how her family and the society may perceive her participation in market work. It is important to understand these intricacies when studying decision-making as an indicator of women's empowerment.

My analysis on the changes in women's decision-making during men's migration from Nepal is presented as follows. I start with a brief discussion on women in household decision-making in Nepal. Next, a description of the key findings from my fieldwork is presented. This is followed by two sections, both presenting quantitative analysis, on whether there is a statistically significant difference in decision-making ability of women between migrant and non-migrant households. Section 5.4 is based on the data from the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 (NLSS-III) and section 5.5 uses data from the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011 (NDHS 2011) to address the same question. The final section presents some concluding remarks.

5.2 Nepalese Women in Household Decision-Making

Traditional gender dynamics in Nepal is based on men as the key decision-makers and women as economic dependents. Women have lower access to and control over household resources and they have less power in household decision-making, even for decisions related to their own health (Acharya et al., 2010). Nepalese women are often younger than their husbands, have lower education and

income and limited social and political participation; these factors restrict women's ability to negotiate a more gender equal conjugal relationship (Chapagain, 2006). Table 5.1 below illustrates participation in household decision-making, for men and women in Nepal, based on their age, education level, employment status and region of residence.

Table 5.1: Involvement of Men and Women in Household Decision-Making

Characteristics	Own health care (%)		Major household purchases (%)		Visit to her family or relatives (%)	Sample size	Sample size	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Women	Men	
Age								
15-19	35.2	51.9	18.1	33.1	21.7	792	67	
20-24	53.1	83.4	35.4	47.4	39.3	1,761	306	
25-29	68.0	83.8	57.9	51.8	61.6	1,914	471	
30-34	73.8	88.2	69.7	60.6	69.0	1,659	459	
35-39	75.1	90.9	73.8	63.3	76.7	1,461	516	
40-44	72.7	89.9	68.8	72.5	76.1	1,190	423	
45-49	70.0	90.5	68.1	70.6	77.5	832	384	
Education								
No education	62.4	86.4	58.4	72.2	63.2	4,580	504	
Primary	63.2	85.7	56.4	62.9	58.0	1,844	640	
Some secondary	66.9	85.3	55.6	55.2	57.7	1,833	799	
SLC and above	76.6	90.8	56.3	56.6	62.0	1,350	684	
Employment (last 12 months)								
Not employed	57.6	(82.4)	52.8	(43.6)	53.5	2,230	47	
Employed for cash	79.8	87.2	74.1	59.4	74.9	2,223	2,077	
Employed not for cash	62.5	87.0	51.8	67.6	58.2	5,155	502	
Region								
Urban	73.2	89.3	65.8	51.5	70.5	1,261	425	
Rural	64.2	86.6	55.9	62.5	59.5	8,346	2,201	
Ecological Belt								
Mountain	59.8	89.3	52.2	75.5	59.4	630	179	
Hill	69.9	88.4	57.4	55.7	63.9	3,784	1,057	
Terai	62.8	85.8	57.6	62.5	59.0	5,193	1,390	
Total (15 - 49 years)	65.4	87.1	57.2	60.7	61.0	9,608	2,626	

Source: NDHS 2011 report. Figures in parentheses are based on 25-49 unweighted cases.¹

From the table, we see that percentage of men making decisions on their own health care is greater than the percentage of women making decisions on their

¹ The numbers have been calculated using sample weights to adjust for sample selection to ensure that the sample is nationally representative.

health care across all age groups, education and employment categories and across the different regions. For decisions on major household purchases, a greater proportion of men participate in this decision overall; however, this does not apply to men in all age groups and employment status. Specifically, among the 25 – 39 year olds, a higher proportion of women are involved in decisions on major household purchases than men. Also, among those not employed as well as among those employed for cash, the proportion of women involved in this decision is greater than the proportion of men, suggesting that men who are not employed are less likely to be involved in big financial decisions than women, whereas when employed for cash women are more likely to be involved in such decisions. It must be noted that, despite having adjusted the sample to be nationally representative, the sample size for men is much smaller than the sample for women.

The table also indicates that in general, women's participation in decision-making increases with age. The relation between education level and decision-making is not as clear; while participation in decisions related to women's own health seems to increase with education level, for decisions on household purchases and visiting family or friends participation in decision-making is higher for women with no education than those with primary, secondary or higher education. Perhaps women with no education are from an older generation and have attained a higher decision-making power due to their senior position within the household. Women who are employed for cash clearly have a much greater say in all three household decisions than those who are not employed or those in unpaid employment. Urban women have greater participation in decision-making than rural women. Also,

women from Hill region mostly have greater participation in decision-making than those from Mountain or Terai, though the percentage of women involved in decisions on major household purchases is slightly higher in Terai. These numbers confirm the findings from other studies on Nepal that argue that women's decision-making generally increases with age, education and employment status (see Acharya et al., 2010; Chapagain, 2006).

Hence, women in Nepal generally have lower decision-making power than men. In many cases, women compromise their own rights and interests and accept their husbands' decisions in order to avoid marital tension and gain approval from their in-laws (Chapagain, 2006). The shift in power relations due to men's migration could transform women's involvement in household decision-making. We investigate if this is the case for Nepal in the following sections.

5.3 Observations from Fieldwork

5.3.1 Overview of fieldwork findings

During my fieldwork, I asked women about how decisions were made within the household and whether their participation in household decision-making had changed since their husband's migration. Before presenting women's statements on their decision-making role within the household, it is important to note that there might be a bias in their responses. Given the patriarchal structure of the Nepalese society where women's actions are constantly scrutinized, women may not be comfortable admitting that they make more decisions in their husbands' absence, as this increased decision-making may be viewed negatively. In many of the

informational interviews I conducted, women misusing their freedom and squandering the hard-earned money sent by their husbands was pointed out as one of the key social issues brought by men’s migration. For example, Mr. S. P. Luitel at People’s Forum for Human Rights, a law firm working with migrant workers stated:

Sometimes, the husband works hard and sends money home but women misuse the money by buying more clothes and beauty products and going to salons. They run the household according to their own wishes and may not completely disclose where and how the money is being spent to their husbands. Such things create marital tensions.

Perhaps because of the fear of such perceptions about them and to protect their image as dutiful wives, women may have understated their influence in household decision-making or their increased autonomy or freedom during men’s absence.

The following table presents some statistics on who makes decisions on women’s health, childcare, financial matters and smaller everyday issues. It is based on the survey sample of 178 women, all of whom were wives of migrant members.

Table 5.2: Decision-Making Pattern in Migrant Households

Decision made by	Decisions Related to			
	Women’s Health	Childcare	Financial decisions	Smaller everyday decision
Woman Only	38.2%	20.8%	7.9%	38.8%
Husband Only	2.3%	3.4%	3.9%	1.1%
Both (woman and her husband)	43.3%	56.7%	65.7%	42.1%
Other household members	16.2%	19.1%	22.5%	18.0%

The table shows that most household decisions are made jointly by husband and wife. Also, independent decision-making for men is much lower than that for women. Since men are away, they are only able to influence household decision-making by instructing their wives over the phone or Internet on what actions to take. Women, on the other hand, are the ones running the household and are likely

to make more decisions independently. In fact, women cannot always consult their husbands on smaller everyday decisions. As we can see from the table above, women make almost 39 percent of the smaller everyday decisions independently. In some cases, women may make decisions according to their own wishes without consulting their husbands, since their husbands' absence could have granted them some freedom. We see from the table that women make most decisions related to their own health by themselves. However, for decisions on financial matters, independent decision-making by women is relatively low. This could be because most women in migrant households are dependent on remittances sent by men. This assumption is consistent with my finding from the previous chapter on women's work, where we see that women in migrant households are less likely to be employed in wage-labor and more financially dependent on men than women in non-migrant households.

In order to look into differences in women's decision-making ability based on their individual characteristics, I created a decision-making index for each woman by taking the weighted average of the values for their participation in the four decisions listed in table 5.2 above.² Some descriptive statistics on differences in women's decision-making based on their individual characteristics is presented in table 5.3 below.

² The values for each decision-making index are as follows: 0 if a woman is not involved in making decisions, 1 if a woman makes decision with her husband and 2 if a woman makes decisions by herself.

Table 5.3: Women's Decision-Making by Individual Characteristics

		N	DM index (mean)	Std. dev.
Age	Less than 25 yrs.	49	0.75	0.63
	26 – 40 yrs.	104	1.19	0.54
	More than 40 yrs.	25	1.05	0.59
Education level	No education	54	1.06	0.61
	Primary education	39	0.98	0.59
	Secondary or higher	85	1.11	0.59
Caste group	High caste	86	1.08	0.56
	Janajatis	50	1.09	0.64
	Dalits/ Muslims	41	0.94	0.64
Employment type	Self-employment in agriculture	67	1.12	0.61
	Self-employment in non-agriculture	33	1.0	0.61
	Wage-employment in agriculture	5	1.25	0.50
	Wage-employment in non-agriculture	8	1.09	0.42
Ownership	No ownership	130	0.99	0.62
	Owns land or/ and house	48	1.21	0.49
Receive remittances	Yes	137	1.2	0.50
	No	38	0.55	0.65
Have children?	Yes	165	1.13	0.6
	No	13	0.42	0.5

From the table, we see that women's decision-making ability generally increases with age. However, the decision-making for women above 40 years old is slightly lower than for those in 25 – 40 age group, perhaps because as women get older some of the decision-making responsibilities may be transferred to their sons or other members in the households. The mean value for decision-making, disaggregated by education, shows that women with secondary or higher education have the highest decision-making power. We also see that women with no education have higher decision-making than those with primary education; this is perhaps because most women with no education are older. The table shows higher decision-making power for women from *Janajati* caste group than the high caste and the *Dalits*. Women employed in agricultural sector have higher decision-making ability than those in non-agricultural sectors. Though we would generally expect women who are wage-employed to have greater decision-making power, higher age of

women in agricultural sector may have influenced this number. I will explore this relationship further in my quantitative models. The table also shows that women with greater ownership of land and/or house, women receiving remittances and women with children have greater decision-making power.

5.3.2 Differences in women’s decision-making across survey districts

Figure 5.1 below illustrates women’s participation in household decision-making across the four survey districts.

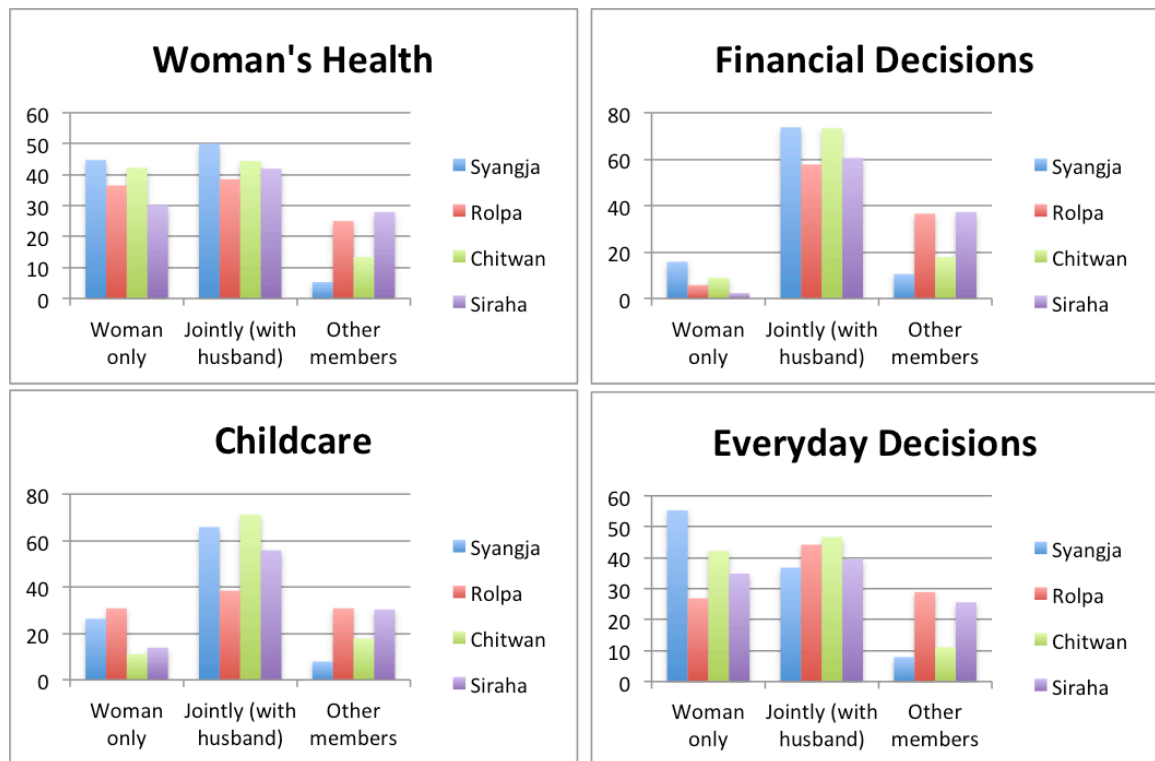


Figure 5.1: Women's Participation in Household Decision-Making

When we look at differences in decision-making across districts, we see that women in Syangja and Chitwan make more decisions independently for all decisions except childcare; this could be associated with the higher development and lower

gender inequality in these two districts (see tables 3.3 and 3.4). Also, the percentage of women receiving remittances is higher in both Chitwan (74.4 percent) and Syangja (93.1 percent) than in Rolpa (66 percent) and Siraha (68.3 percent). This greater access to remittances may also partly explain the higher decision-making for women in Chitwan and Syangja. Between Chitwan and Syangja, women in Syangja have greater decision-making power, perhaps because of the higher average age of women from Syangja in our sample and the longer history of male outmigration from this district. As for childcare decisions, it could be that childcare responsibilities are shared more equally by men and women in regions with higher gender equality. Hence, women in Chitwan and Syangja (districts with higher gender equality) may be making more of these decisions jointly with their husbands, while men's involvement in childcare decisions may be lower in Siraha and Rolpa (districts with lower gender equality). The participation of other household members in making decisions is higher in the less developed regions (Rolpa and Siraha); perhaps because the proportion of extended households is higher in these regions (see table 3.6).

It is interesting to note that though women in Rolpa had higher education and better chances of being employed in skilled labor, participation in household decision-making for these women is relatively low. This could be because about half of the women I interviewed had moved to the district headquarter to send their children to school. These were the women who reported a decline in their workloads and increased access to education and employment. However, these women had not completely disassociated with their in-laws; in many cases their

husbands sent remittances mainly to his parents and the woman's in-laws visited the woman once every few months to pay their rent, school fees and manage other tasks. So, though these women lived by themselves, their limited access to remittances and their dependence on their in-laws for major household management tasks could have restricted their participation in household decision-making.

5.3.3 Changes in Decision-Making Roles

Almost all the women I talked to mentioned that they always consulted their husbands in making important decisions, especially ones related to financial matters. They pointed out that it was essential to share information on how and where money was being spent with the migrant member, since he was the one providing for the family. Rama, a 35-year-old migrant wife mentioned:

I consult with my husband to make all decisions... small and big. He sends the money, so I have to ask him. If I use the money without asking, he will ask what I did with the money.

R. Thapa, Chitwan

Ramila, whose husband had been in Malaysia since the last two years, gave a similar response:

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

R. Shrestha, Siraha

Part of the reason for women's insecurity with managing financial matters may be explained by her financial dependence on men. Women who had access to alternative sources of income seemed to have greater say over the use of

remittances, as illustrated by the following statement by a 28-year-old woman in Rolpa, who owned a chicken farm jointly with her husband and managed a meat shop:

He sends the money but I am free to make the decisions on how to use it. I keep most of the remittances in savings because mostly the income I make from this store is sufficient for our son and me. I make most decisions by myself. My husband does not like to take such responsibilities.
T. Buda Magar, Rolpa

Some women stated that their lack of education and understanding of the outside world discouraged them from making their own decisions. When asked if they wanted to make more decisions independently or if they preferred consulting someone when making decisions, 87 percent of the women mentioned that they preferred consulting with their husbands or other household members. In some cases, women mentioned that they did not want to be blamed for misusing money if they lost any money in a bad investment or ran out of remittances earlier than expected; hence they preferred to keep the migrant member informed on how they were managing financial matters at home. Also, some women mentioned that they had been making more decisions related to children's health and education since their husband's migration but they were apprehensive that they would be held responsible if the children fell sick or did not do well in school. Perhaps because of the fear of criticism if something went wrong, most women admitted that the increase in decision-making power felt more like a burden to them than a welcome increase in their agency. The following statements from two migrant wives illustrate this increased anxiety among women who had assumed greater decision-making roles:

I make most smaller decisions by myself. When I am unsure about things, I consult my husband and do as he says. Even when he was here, I did all the work based on his decisions, but it was less stressful. When he is not here, all the responsibilities fall entirely on me. Now, if something goes wrong I have to bear the full responsibility. It is very difficult.

B. Shrestha, Siraha

Being a migrant wife is like being a single parent. I do get financial support from my husband, but I have to take complete responsibility for my kids. If they do well, both my husband and I get credit for it; but if they don't do well, I will be blamed entirely for it. If anything goes wrong here, it is always the woman's fault since we are the ones running the household; the men do their part by sending in the money.

G. Aryal, Chitwan

Some women stated that their relationships with their husbands had become more strained because of their inability to save or to explain financial matters to their husbands. They expressed tensions from having to manage the needs and wants of all household members with limited remittances and then having to explain to their husbands how and where the money is being spent and why they haven't been able to save.

Sometimes he asks me if I have been able to save anything, but it is hard to save and I explain to him how much I spent in paying loans and managing everyday expenditures. I know he works really hard to send us money here and I feel sad that I haven't been able to save. May be he thinks, we are just spending money carelessly, but that is not the case. It is hard to explain such things over the phone.

K. Sapkota, Chitwan

Women's decision-making power within the house seemed to be highly dependent on the household structure and women's position within the household hierarchy. Women who lived in nuclear households and had taken on the role of household heads during their husband's absence mostly mentioned that they had been making more decisions since their husbands' migration. Among the female

heads, a few women mentioned that their husbands still made all the decisions and they just followed their husband's instructions; and few others mentioned that they had the freedom to make their own decisions though they preferred to keep their husbands informed. One migrant wife, whose husband had been in Saudi Arabia for the past 3 years and in Malaysia for 4 years before that, mentioned that even after years of not living with her husband, household decision-making was primarily controlled by him.

My husband makes all the decisions. I ask him and do as he says. He is the guardian for this house and he won't be happy if I do things without asking him.

P. Shrestha, Siraha

In contrast, another migrant wife, whose husband had been in Dubai for 10 years and who had been with him only for a few months every 2 to 3 years in her 7 years of marriage, mentioned:

I make all decisions by myself. My husband is not much involved in such things and since he hasn't been around for a while, he does not know about things here as well as I do. So, I manage the money, take loans when needed and run the household.

K. Dhakal, Syangja

Most female heads in nuclear households, however, were somewhere in between these two extremes; they mentioned that while they made smaller everyday decisions by themselves they consulted with their husbands on more important matters, especially those related to financial management and childcare.

One migrant wife stated:

I make smaller decisions by myself. I can't ask him everything but for important things, mainly related to financial matters, I always consult with him and do as he says.

S. Bika, Chitwan

Women living in extended households and under the headship of other members mostly stated that their decision-making power had either not changed or had declined since their husbands' migration. They mentioned that most decisions were either made by their in-laws or by other senior household members. A 30-year old migrant wife who lived with her mother-in-law and three children, frustratedly explained:

My husband tells me to just follow his mother's order. He sends remittances to his mother and she manages all financial matters by discussing it with him. I don't know much about financial matters at home and my husband tells me that I don't have to worry about those things. I just do my work and follow order; they don't share much information with me.

N. Sah, Siraha

Some women stated that they had a bigger say in household decisions when their husbands were around as it was easier to express their opinions to their husbands than having to express it to their parents-in-law. One of the migrant wives living in a joint household with her mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and her two sons mentioned that it was difficult to communicate her needs with her in-laws. In her words,

When my husband was around, I could tell him if I wanted to buy some new clothes or go visit my family or friends. Now, I have to take permission and also ask for money with my mother-in-law for these things. Such conversations are awkward and difficult.

P. Bika, Chitwan

In a few cases, even women in extended households had gained some say over household decision-making. A 28-year old migrant wife, whose husband had been away for 4 years and who lived with her parents-in-law, two brothers-in-law, a son and a daughter, proudly explained her increased awareness about financial matters at home:

For decisions on financial matters, I am not directly involved. My father-in-law receives remittances and manages all the money, but he tells me how much my husband sent. He also gives me some money for personal expenses. Over time I have become more aware of financial matters at home and learned to spend money more carefully.

M. Thapa, Syangja

Table 5.4: Decision-Making Among Women Based on Their Position Within the Household

	Decisions related to	Women making decisions independently (%)	Women making decisions jointly (%)	Women not involved in decision-making (%)
Among women who are household heads (Sample size: 100)	Women's Health	47	49	4
	Childcare	25	69	6
	Financial Investment	11	82	7
	Small decisions	51	47	2
Among women who are not household heads (Sample size: 78)	Women's Health	26.9	53.9	19.2
	Childcare	16	64	20
	Financial Investment	3.8	76.9	19.3
	Small decisions	23.1	57.7	19.2

As we see from the table above, the percentage of women making decisions independently is much higher among women who are household heads than that among women who are not heads of their household, for every category of decision-making. Also, percentage of women with no involvement in household decision-making is much lower among household heads than that among women who are not household heads. These findings illustrate the differences in women's decision-making ability based on their position in the households. The only cases where women who were not household heads were making more decisions in their husband's absence was in households where the head was either sick or too old to manage domestic tasks or where the migrant member sent remittances to his wife instead of sending it to the head (which in most cases is his parents in joint households). One migrant wife explained her position:

I take care of everything around here and make most of the decisions by myself. I consult with my husband for difficult things. My parents-in-law are too old and I have to take care of them. So, my husbands sends remittances to me and I manage everything here.

J. Buda Magar, Rolpa

5.4 Women's Decision-Making: Quantitative Analysis based on NLSS-III

In order to analyze the impacts of men's migration on women's decision-making power, I compare the decision-making abilities of women in migrant and women in non-migrant households. Based on my fieldwork, I expect women's decision-making power to increase during men's migration, especially if she takes on the role of household head. Hence, the following hypothesis is tested here:

- H1: Women in migrant households have a greater decision-making power than women in non-migrant households.

5.4.1 Sample and Variable Definitions

Sample: The NLSS only collects information on decision-making from women who are either household heads or wives of household heads. So we have the following four categories of women in our sample:

- Household heads in migrant household
- Household heads in non-migrant household
- Wife of household head in migrant household
- Wife of household head in non-migrant household

In order to look into the impacts of husbands' migration on women's decision-making ability, I compare household heads in migrant households with wives of household heads in non-migrant households. This comparison will reflect the change in woman's decision-making if she assumes the role of household head

upon her husbands' migration (since household heads in migrant households were most likely the wives of household heads before their husbands' migration).

The survey collects information from 5,330 women. For my analysis here, I only include a subsample of 3,608 women all of whom are either heads in migrant household or wives of heads in non-migrant households. I drop the observations for household heads in non-migrant households since women who are heads in non-migrant households are most likely to be widowed, divorced or separated.³ I also drop observations for women who are wives of household head in a migrant household since, even though these women belong to migrant households, they are living with their husbands. In these cases, it could be that their sons, brothers-in-law or other male household member has migrated. Only married women are included in my analysis. The data does not provide information on participation in decision-making by daughters-in-law or other women in the household whose husband may have migrated, so my analysis only compares the decision-making ability of women who are household heads in migrant households to women who are wives of household heads in non-migrant households.⁴

Dependent Variable: The dependent variable here is decision-making power. I create four decision-making indices to measure women's decision-making power. The first

³ In the sample here, out of the 476 women who were heads in non-migrant household, 234 were either separated or divorced and 30 were not married. For the remaining 212 married women, it could be that their husbands are either sick or disabled or that the woman is considered the head because she earns more than her husband.

⁴ Information on participation in decision-making for women is provided by the NDHS data, so this shortcoming will be overcome when we conduct the analysis with the NDHS data.

index is created using the following methodology. The NLSS survey collects information on the following decisions:

- Up to what grade should children attend school
- Which school should children go to
- Decisions on child's healthcare
- Decisions on healthcare for women
- Number of children to have
- Which contraceptive method to use
- Spending on food
- Spending on major household items
- Selling household assets
- Whether to take loans
- How to use loans
- Whether to migrate for work
- Which crops to grow
- How to use remittances

Based on the responses to these questions, the following methodology was used to create a decision-making index:

Step 1:

The survey provided a 'Yes/No' response on whether the households had to make any of the above decisions in the past year. Observations for questions on which households did not need to make a decision were dropped and the number of decisions made by each household was counted.

Step 2:

For each decision made, the woman's involvement in decision-making was assigned the following values: 0 for 'no involvement', 1 for 'a little involvement' and 2 for 'a lot of involvement'.

Step 3:

For each decision made, information on the primary decision-maker was assigned the following values: 0 if husband or other household member made the decision, 1 if the decision was made jointly by the woman and her husband and 2 if the woman made the decision independently.

Step 4:

A composite index is then created by adding the sum of the values for responses from step 2 and step 3, and dividing this sum by the number of questions, i.e.

$$\text{Decision-making Index} = (\text{Sum of values for responses from step 2} + \text{Sum of values for responses from step 3}) / (\text{Number of questions})$$

To see if women's participation in household decision-making is dependent on the type of decision, I create three other decision-making indices based on the responses for women's involvement in making decisions on (a) children's

healthcare, (b) spending on food, and (c) spending on major household items.⁵ These three indicators are used as measures of women's involvement on making decisions on childcare, smaller everyday expenses and larger financial decisions, respectively. The following methodology is used to create each of these three indices:

Step 1:

The survey provided a 'Yes/No' response on whether the households had to make each decision in the past year. In each case, households that did not make a decision (on childcare, food expenses or big household assets) were dropped. Hence, the sample size is different for the three models.

Step 2:

For each decision made, the woman's involvement in decision-making was assigned the following values: 0 for 'no involvement', 1 for 'a little involvement' and 2 for 'a lot of involvement'.

Step 3:

For each decision made, information on the primary decision-maker was assigned the following values: 0 if husband or other household member made the decision, 1 if the decision was made jointly by the woman and her husband and 2 if the woman made the decision independently.

Step 4:

An index is then created, for each category, by taking the average of the values from step 2 and step 3.

$$\text{Decision-making Index (childcare/ food/ financial)} = (\text{Values from step 2} + \text{Value for step 3})/2$$

Hence, the following four dependent variables are used in my models here:

- Composite decision-making index for all decisions – Model 1
- Index for childcare decisions (children's health) – Model 2
- Index for decisions on everyday expenses (food) – Model 3
- Index for bigger financial decisions (purchase of large assets) – Model 4

⁵ These were the questions on which most households had made decisions in the past year. 70 percent of the households made decisions on children's health and 80 and 71 percent of the households made decisions on food expenses and larger household expenses respectively.

The four columns on the regression results table (table 5.6), presented in the next section, correspond to each of these four dependent variables.

Independent Variables: The table below presents the list of independent variables included in my model on women’s decision-making. This is followed by a discussion of the expected relationship of each of the independent variable with the dependent variable.

Table 5.5: Independent Variables for Decision-Making

Variable Name	Definition
Belongs to migrant household	Binary variable with value 1 for women who belong to migrant households, 0 otherwise.
Remittance-receiving households	Binary variable with value 1 for women who belong to households that receive remittances, 0 otherwise
Age	Woman’s age
Education	Years of schooling
Wage-employed	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are employed for wages, 0 otherwise
Presence of adult male members	Binary variable with value 1 for households where one of more adult male members are present, 0 otherwise
Asset Index	Index representing asset ownership of a household
Caste	Binary variable with value 1 for high caste group (Brahmin, Chhetri and Newars), 0 otherwise
Location	Binary variable with value 1 for households in rural areas, 0 otherwise
Ecological Zone	Ecological zone is divided into the following three regions: Mountains, Hills and Terai. Two dummy variables, Mbelt with value 1 for mountain region and 0 otherwise and Hbelt with value 1 for Hill region and 0 otherwise, are used to represent the ecological zones.

Belongs to migrant household: This is the independent variable of primary interest in my models. Women in migrant households are expected to have higher decision-making ability; hence the coefficient for migrant is expected to be positive in all the models.

Belongs to remittance-receiving household: This variable is used as an alternative for ‘belongs to migrant household’. Since most households with labor migrants are likely to receive remittances, and other studies looking into the impact of migration

often use 'remittance-receiving households' as the main variable of interest, I include this variable in my analysis. Women's decision-making ability is expected to be higher in households that receive remittances.

Age: Decision-making power for a woman is expected to increase with age since as she gets older and goes from being a daughter-in-law to a mother and then to a mother-in-law, her bargaining position in the house increases. However, after certain age, younger members of the household (especially sons) may take up some of the decision-making authority. Thus, the expected relationship between age and decision-making power is quadratic.

Education: Educated women are expected to have better bargaining position and higher decision-making power within the household. Hence, a positive relationship is expected between education and decision-making power.

Wage-employment: Women who are employed for wages are likely to have greater say in household decision-making since being able to contribute to household income could improve their bargaining position. Hence, a positive coefficient is expected here.

Presence of adult male members: It is likely that women's decision-making power is lower in households with adult male members since men usually take up the role of decision-makers. Hence, the coefficient for this variable is expected to be negative.

Asset ownership: Asset ownership is an indicator of economic status of a household. It is likely that women from higher economic classes have better access to education and employment and are more likely to have better bargaining position and

stronger decision-making power within the household. Hence, I expect a positive relationship between asset index and decision-making power.

Caste: It is likely that women from higher caste groups have lower decision-making power since gender norms are followed for strictly among high caste groups. The coefficient for caste is expected to be negative.

Location: Women in rural areas are expected to have lower decision-making power than women in urban regions because of the more restrictive gender norms in rural regions. Hence, a negative coefficient is expected here.

Ecological belt: Gender norms in Terai region are more restrictive than those in Hill and Mountain, so women's decision-making power is expected to be lower in Terai region.

Using this set of variables, I specify my model for decision-making as follows:

$$\text{Decision-making Index} = b_0 + b_1 (\text{woman belongs to migrant household or not}) + b_2 (\text{individual characteristics}) + b_3 (\text{household characteristics}) + b_4 (\text{geographic characteristics}) + \text{error term}$$

Here, b_0 represents the intercept term and b_1 ..., b_k represent the coefficients associated with the independent variables in each of the models.

5.4.2 Regression Results

Since each of the decision-making indices is a continuous variable, I use Ordinary Least Squares methodology to estimate my models. The regression results are presented in table 5.6 below. The four columns correspond to the four models with the four decision-making indices described in the section above.

Table 5.6: Regression for Women's Decision-Making NLSS-III

Variable list	Model 1: Decision-making Index	Model 2: Childcare decisions	Model 3: Smaller everyday decisions	Model 4: Major financial decisions
Belongs to migrant household	0.370*** (0.0423)	0.187*** (0.308)	0.293*** (0.0300)	0.267*** (0.0333)
Age	0.0135* (0.00597)	0.00496 (0.00426)	0.0141** (0.00438)	0.0160*** (0.00484)
Age-squared	-0.000224** (0.0000693)	-0.0000932 (0.0000488)	-0.000191*** (0.0000497)	-0.000210*** (0.0000548)
Years of education	0.0143*** (0.00283)	0.00607** (0.00223)	0.00630** (0.00217)	0.00663** (0.00244)
Wage-employed	0.103*** (0.0272)	0.0413 (0.0221)	0.0253 (0.0208)	0.0651** (0.0220)
Presence of adult male members	-0.267*** (0.0434)	-0.118*** (0.0307)	-0.122*** (0.0302)	-0.152*** (0.0337)
Asset Index	0.0190 (0.0155)	0.00457 (0.0121)	0.0274* (0.0119)	0.0242 (0.0126)
Caste	-0.0580* (0.0245)	-0.0542** (0.0189)	-0.00492 (0.0178)	-0.0271 (0.0194)
Location	-0.113*** (0.0276)	-0.0454* (0.0213)	-0.0551** (0.0208)	-0.0667** (0.0228)
Mbelt	0.0221 (0.0456)	0.0778* (0.0384)	0.0318 (0.0366)	0.0131 (0.0377)
Hbelt	0.0326 (0.0229)	0.0196 (0.0173)	0.0129 (0.0168)	0.0177 (0.0187)
Constant-term	2.678*** (0.1212)	1.468*** (0.0886)	1.197*** (0.0921)	1.140*** (0.103)
R-squared	0.177	0.102	0.154	0.149
Number of observations	3576	2593	2992	2598

Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The R-squared value for my model with the composite decision-making index is 0.177, indicating that this model ‘explains’ about 17.7 percent of the variation in women’s decision-making ability. For my other three models the R-squared values are 0.102, 0.154 and 0.149. Hence, models 2, 3 and 4 are able to ‘explain’ about 10.2 percent, 15.4 percent and 14.9 percent of the variation on decisions on childcare, decisions on everyday expenses and decisions on large financial expenses, respectively.

The coefficient for 'belongs to migrant household' is positive and statistically significant in all the four models; this indicates that women who are heads in migrant households have higher decision-making power than women who are the wives of household head in non-migrant household. This confirms my hypothesis that women in migrant households have greater decision-making power than those in non-migrant households.

In all the four models, the coefficients for variables on women's individual characteristics are consistent with my expectations. The results confirm the quadratic relationship between decision-making index and age, where women's participation in household decision-making increases with age up to a certain maximum and then starts to decline. Also, decision-making power is higher for women who have higher educational qualifications and women who are employed for wages. Though the coefficient for wage-employed is not statistically significant for the models on childcare and everyday smaller decisions, it is statistically significant for the model on larger financial decisions, indicating that women who are able to contribute to household income may have a bigger say in important financial decisions.

I find that the coefficient for 'presence of adult male member' is negative and statistically significant in all four models. Hence, women's involvement in decision-making may be lower in households with adult male members.⁶ Also, the coefficient

⁶ In the NLSS sample, only 6% of non-migrant households have no male members while 73% of migrant members have no male members. The correlation coefficient for 'presence of male member' and 'belongs to migrant household' is 0.7, indicating the possibility of multicollinearity. However, our regression results do not change

for asset ownership is positive, as expected; however, it is statistically significant only for the model on smaller every decisions. Hence, household's economic status may not have an appreciable impact on women's decision-making ability. The coefficient for 'belongs to high caste group' is negative in all the four models; this is consistent with my argument that women from higher caste face more restrictive gender norms and are likely to have lower decision-making power.

Among the geographic characteristics, the coefficient for 'location' is negative and statistically significant in all the four models; meaning women from rural areas have lower decision-making power than urban women. The coefficients for Mountain belt and Hill belt are positive in all the four models above indicating that women in these regions have higher decision-making ability than women in Terai. Though this finding is consistent with my expectation, the coefficients are not statistically significant.

5.4.3 Regression Results using Remittance-Receiving Households (NLSS-III)

Next, we repeat the analysis above but using 'remittance-receiving households' as the independent variable of primary interest. Again, the four decision-making indices are used as the dependent variables for the four models. The results are presented in table 5.7 below.

by much even when dropping the variable, so I included this variable in the analysis here.

Table 5.7: Regression for Women's Decision-Making using 'Remittance-Receiving Households'

Variable list	Model 1: Decision-making Index	Model 2: Childcare decisions	Model 3: Smaller everyday decisions	Model 4: Major financial decisions
Belongs to remittance-receiving household	0.0898*** (0.0242)	0.0756*** (0.0185)	0.0631*** (0.0179)	0.0409* (0.0200)
Age	0.0213*** (0.00595)	0.00816 (0.00420)	0.0197*** (0.00439)	0.0213*** (0.00482)
Age-squared	-0.000340*** (0.0000685)	-0.000141** (0.0000475)	-0.000277*** (0.0000493)	-0.000290*** (0.0000541)
Years of education	0.0121*** (0.00285)	0.00466* (0.00221)	0.00515* (0.00219)	0.00510* (0.00245)
Wage-employed	0.107*** (0.0275)	0.0445* (0.0220)	0.0274 (0.0210)	0.0667** (0.0221)
Presence of adult male members	-0.500*** (0.0299)	-0.223*** (0.0219)	-0.308*** (0.0215)	-0.327*** (0.0241)
Asset Index	0.027 (0.0155)	0.00993 (0.0120)	0.0324** (0.0118)	0.0292* (0.0126)
Caste	-0.0641** (0.0248)	-0.0554** (0.0190)	-0.00693 (0.0180)	-0.0264 (0.0197)
Location	-0.107*** (0.0278)	-0.0461* (0.0214)	-0.0532** (0.0209)	-0.0601** (0.0231)
Mbelt	0.00838 (0.0460)	0.0716 (0.0381)	0.0212 (0.0376)	-0.00196 (0.0383)
Hbelt	0.0485* (0.0234)	0.0314 (0.0176)	0.0239 (0.0171)	0.02458 (0.0192)
Constant term	2.784*** (0.123)	1.507*** (0.0885)	1.299*** (0.0933)	1.238*** (0.104)
R-squared	0.158	0.093	0.126	0.123
Number of observations	3608	2617	3020	2622

Standard errors in parentheses

*p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The results obtained in table 5.7 are mostly similar to the results in table 5.6, indicating that similar results are obtained when using 'remittance-receiving household' as the key independent variable instead of 'belongs to migrant household'. Also, women's decision-making ability does not seem to vary much based on the type of decision made. Based on these findings, I conclude that women who are heads in migrant households have higher decision-making power than women who are wives of household heads in non-migrant household.

One of the limitations of this analysis is that I am only able to compare the decision-making abilities of household heads in migrant households with wives of household heads in non-migrant households, since the NLSS only collects information on decision-making from women who are either heads or wives of household heads. I am unable to look into the changes in decision-making power for women who live in migrant households but are not household heads. This shortcoming is overcome in the following section, where I repeat this analysis with the NDHS data, since the NDHS collects information on decision-making for all women included in the survey.

5.5 Women's Decision-Making: Quantitative Analysis based on NDHS 2011

This section looks into the difference in women's decision-making ability between women in migrant and non-migrant households using the NDHS 2011 data set. Again, the following hypothesis is tested:

- H1: Women in migrant households have greater decision-making power than women in non-migrant households

5.5.1 Sample and Variable Description

Sample: The NDHS data set provides information on women's participation in household decision-making for all women in the household. These women can be categorized into the following four groups:

- Household heads in migrant households
- Household heads in non-migrant households
- Non-household heads in migrant households
- Non-household heads in non-migrant households

Among these women, observations on women who are heads in non-migrant households are dropped since it is likely that most of these women are separated, not married, or widowed. For the married women in this group, their husbands could either be living elsewhere for non-employment purposes (and not reported as labor migrant) or the woman could be earning more than her husband.⁷ I only include married women in my sample. Hence, though the survey collects information from 12,672 women, my analysis is based on a subsample of 9,024 women.

In order to categorize the observations into the remaining three groups of women, I create interaction terms using women's position in the household (head or not) and whether she belonged to migrant household. So, we have the following two interaction terms:

- Migrant head: Women who are heads in migrant households
- Migrant non-head: Women who are not household heads in migrant households

The base case here is women who are not household heads in non-migrant households. This categorization helps account for the possibility that the impact of migration on women's decision-making power is conditional on her position within

⁷ In the sample here, out of the 714 female heads in non-migrant households, 434 were married, 155 were widowed, 30 were separated and 95 were never married. Among the married women, 283 of them (65%) mentioned that they were not living with their husband and about 15% of these women reported that their husbands had other wives. For the rest of the women, their husbands could be internal migrants who visit home often (and may not have been reported as migrants). For the remaining 151 married women who live with their husbands, it could be that their husbands are either sick or disabled or that the woman earns more than her husband.

the household. The following table shows the distribution of women in our sample by the type of household and women’s position in the household.

Table 5.8: Distribution of Women in Sample by Their Position in the Household

	Women who are household heads	Women who are not household Heads	Total
Sample size	2,100	10,572	12,672
Non-migrant Households	714	7,367	8,081
Migrant Households	1,386	3,205	4,591
Not married	356	2,858	3,214
Married	1,744	7,714	9,458
Living with husband	196	6,382	6,578
Not living with husband	1,548	1,333	2,881

Dependent variables: The NDHS provides information on who makes the following four decisions in a household.

- Decisions on women’s healthcare
- Decisions on whether a woman can visit family and friends
- Decisions on large household purchases
- Decisions on how to use husband’s income

The following values are assigned to each of these four decision-making variables:

- If decisions are made in the house without the woman’s involvement - 0
- If decisions are made jointly with the woman’s involvement - 1
- If the woman makes decision independently – 2

An equally weighted average of these four variables is taken to create a weighted index for decision-making. In order to see if there are differences in decision-making power based on the types of decisions made, each of the four decision-making variables are also used as dependent variables. Hence, we have the following five dependent variables here:

- Weighted index (Model 5)
- Decisions on healthcare (Model 6)
- Decisions on visiting friends and family (Model 7)
- Decisions on large household purchases (Model 8)

- Decisions on using husband’s income (Model 9)

The five columns in the regression results presented in table 5.10 in the next section correspond to each of these five dependent variables.

Independent Variables: The independent variables used in the models along with their expected relationship with women’s decision-making power are presented in table 5.9 below. Most of the variables here are similar to what we have above with the NLSS data; hence, a discussion on the expected relationship is only provided for those variables that haven’t been discussed above.

Table 5.9: Independent Variables for Women's Decision-Making (NDHS 2011)

Variables	Definition	Expected relationship and Discussion
Migrant head	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are household heads and belong to migrant households, 0 otherwise.	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive</i> Women who have taken on the role of household heads upon migration of the male household member are expected to have higher decision-making power than women in non-migrant households.
Migrant non-head	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are not household heads but belong to migrant households, 0 otherwise.	<i>Expected coefficient: Negative</i> Women who are not household heads in migrant households are expected to have lower decision-making power than women in non-migrant households since women in non-migrant households may have the support of their husbands which increases their bargaining power. ⁸ However, in migrant households having to live under the leadership of other household members in the absence of their husbands could mean

⁸ Presence of husband could sometimes mean women have someone to support them; especially in joint household structures. However, it is also likely that presence of husband lowers women’s bargaining power since the husband may be making most decisions. I ran regressions on decision-making power of women based on whether they live with their husbands or not and found that women living with their husbands had lower decision-making power than women who were not living with their husbands.

		loss of an ally and a decline in bargaining power for migrant wives.
Age	Woman's age	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive</i> Only women in the age-group 15-49 years are included in the sample here. For this group, we would expect women's decision-making power to increase with age since, as she gets older, her position in the household hierarchy rises.
Education	Years of schooling	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive</i>
Wage-employed	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are employed for wages, 0 otherwise.	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive</i>
Media Exposure	Index for exposure to media based on frequency of reading news, watching television or listening to radio.	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive</i> Exposure to media is an indicator of the level of awareness about social issues. Hence, higher exposure to media could indicate greater awareness, better bargaining position and higher decision-making role in the household.
Ownership index	Index for women's ownership of land and house.	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive</i> Women with greater ownership of assets are likely to have better bargaining position and higher decision-making power.
Wealth Index	Index for household wealth as an indicator of household economic status ⁹	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive</i> Women from wealthier families are expected to have better access to education and economic opportunities; this could improve their bargaining position and give them higher decision-making power.
Caste	Binary variable with value 1 for high caste women, 0 otherwise.	<i>Expected coefficient: Negative</i>
Location	Binary variable with value 1 for women in rural areas, 0 otherwise.	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive</i>
Ecological Belt	Two dummy variables Mbelt, with value 1 for Mountain belt and 0 otherwise, and Hbelt, with value 1 for Hill belt 0 otherwise, are used to represent the three ecological belts: Mountain, Hill and Terai.	<i>Expected coefficient: Positive for both Mbelt and Hbelt.</i>

⁹ This is similar to the 'asset index' variable with the NLSS data.

5.5.2 Regression Results

Since the dependent variable is an index, Ordinary Least Squares regression is used to estimate this model. The results are presented in table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10: Regression Results for Women's Decision-Making based on NDHS 2011

	Decision-making Index (Model 5)	Decisions on women's health (Model 6)	Decisions on visiting friends (Model 7)	Decisions on large purchases (Model 8)	Decisions on husband's income (Model 9)
Migrant head	0.768*** (0.0154)	0.749*** (0.0212)	0.852*** (0.0214)	0.954*** (0.0225)	0.514*** (0.0193)
Migrant non-head	-0.128*** (0.0126)	-0.0351* (0.0173)	-0.162*** (0.0175)	-0.193*** (0.0184)	-0.117*** (0.0158)
Age	0.0148*** (0.000710)	0.0122*** (0.000973)	0.0197*** (0.000983)	0.0184*** (0.00103)	0.00892*** (0.000889)
Education	0.0104*** (0.00187)	0.0241*** (0.00257)	0.00627* (0.00259)	0.00549** (0.00273)	0.00506** (0.00235)
Wage-employed	0.184*** (0.0124)	0.193*** (0.0169)	0.182*** (0.0171)	0.209*** (0.0180)	0.167*** (0.0155)
Media exposure	0.0634*** (0.0135)	0.0192 (0.0184)	0.0513** (0.0186)	0.0980*** (0.0196)	0.0806*** (0.0169)
Ownership index	0.104*** (0.0116)	0.0597*** (0.0159)	0.111*** (0.0160)	0.159*** (0.0169)	0.0824*** (0.0145)
Wealth index	0.000000143 (8.51e-08)	5.99e-08 (0.000000116)	4.06e-08 (0.00000012)	0.00000033** (0.000000124)	0.000000182 (0.000000107)
Caste	-0.0496*** (0.0116)	-0.0217 (0.0159)	-0.0513*** (0.0161)	-0.0597*** (0.0169)	-0.0642*** (0.0145)
Location	-0.0362** (0.0137)	-0.0195 (0.0190)	-0.0768** (0.0191)	-0.0403* (0.0202)	-0.0142 (0.0174)
Mbelt	0.000117 (0.0167)	0.00124 (0.0229)	0.0459* (0.0231)	-0.0362 (0.0244)	-0.0384 (0.0209)
Hbelt	0.0602*** (0.0124)	0.0988*** (0.0169)	0.0874*** (0.0171)	0.0272 (0.0180)	0.0342* (0.0155)
Constant term	0.150*** (0.0291)	0.199*** (0.0399)	0.0577 (0.0403)	0.0331 (0.0424)	0.314*** (0.0364)
R-squared	0.341	0.186	0.258	0.282	0.147
Sample size	8964	9024	9024	9024	8964

Standard errors in parentheses

*p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

The R-squared value for my model with the weighted-index is 0.341; so the explanatory variables in my model 'explain' about 34 percent of the variation in women's decision-making power. For the models for decisions on women's health

care, visiting family and friends, large household purchases and using husband's income, the R-squared values are 0.186, 0.258, 0.282 and 0.147 respectively; thus indicating that the explanatory variables in these models are able to 'explain' about 19 percent, 26 percent, 28 percent and 15 percent of the variation in the four decision-making indices.

The results indicate that household heads in migrant households have higher decision-making power than women in non-migrant households. This finding holds for all five decision-making indices, confirming my hypothesis that decision-making power for women, who are household heads in migrant households, is higher than that for women in non-migrant households. However, the decision-making power for non-household heads in migrant households is lower than that for women in non-migrant households. This finding is consistent with my argument and observation from fieldwork that women who live under the headship of other household members upon their husbands' migration may experience a decline in their bargaining power, since they may not be as comfortable expressing their opinions and interests with other senior household members (in most cases their in-laws) as they would have been with their husbands.

The coefficients for all the variables, associated with women's individual characteristics are consistent with my expectations. Older women as well as women with higher education level, wage-employment, better exposure to media and greater asset ownership have more decision-making power. These results hold across all five models.

For the variables on the characteristics of household that a woman belongs to, we see that women from wealthier families have greater decision-making power though the coefficient for wealth index is not statistically significant in most of the models (only significant for model 8). Also, as expected, decision-making power is lower for women belonging to higher caste.

As for the variables on regional characteristics, I find that women from rural areas have lower decision-making power, as expected. However, the coefficient for this variable is not statistically significant for models 6 and 9. Also, we see that women from the Hill region are likely to have greater decision-making power than women from Terai. The differences in women's decision-making abilities between Mountain regions and Terai region is not as clear as the coefficient is positive for the first three models (models 5, 6 and 7), negative for models 8 and 9, and only statistically significant for model 7. Hence, the results indicate that women in Mountain may have greater say over their physical mobility than women in Terai; however, we don't see any appreciable difference in other aspects of decision-making between women in the two regions.

5.5 Conclusion

One of the key findings from my fieldwork as well as econometric analysis is that the changes in women's decision-making power due to the migration of men are dependent on her position within the household. Women who take on the role of household heads are more likely to experience an increase in their decision-making power upon their husbands' migration, while women who live under the headship

of other household members may experience a decline in their bargaining power and decision-making ability within the household. I also find that factors such as women's education, participation in wage-employment, exposure to media and caste group are central to understanding women's ability to participate in household decision-making.

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

On the other hand, the finding that non-household heads in migrant households have lower decision-making power than women in non-migrant households implies that these women may experience a decline in their agency during their husbands' migration. Such a decline could hurt women's well-being and disempower her.

CHAPTER 6

WOMEN'S SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND MEN'S MIGRATION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the changes in women's participation in social activities due to the migration of men. Here, women's social participation refers to their ability to move from one place to another and interact in public spaces. Hence, aspects such as going to the bank, market or health center, visiting friends, and being involved in community activities are used as indicators of women's social participation. Men's migration gives women legitimate reasons to step into public spaces as they take up tasks that were previously managed by men (McEvoy, 2012). Hence, opportunities for increased freedom and greater access to resources may be created by men's migration. For example, in studying the case of Sri Lanka, Jayaweera and Dias (2009) find that women's involvement in tasks such as going to the market or bank, taking children to health centers, negotiating loans, managing financial matters and maintaining social relationships had increased during men's absence. Such changes could have empowering effects on women.

An expansion in women's ability to participate in public spaces is dependent on the existing socio-cultural structures. The above-mentioned gains in women's physical mobility may be observed in regions with less restrictive gender norms. However, in regions with high gender inequality and strict patriarchal norms, women may face increased limitations on their presence in public spaces during their husbands' absence. Public ideology considers single women as being more

vulnerable in the absence of their husbands to protect them; hence, they may face increased risk of sexual harassment in the forms of indecent comments or inappropriate advances from other men. In such circumstances, women may feel more susceptible to 'losing their honor' not just from being harassed but also from people in the society watching them closely and gossiping about their interactions with other men (Debnath and Selim, 2009; Hjorth, 2011).

Gossip networks may be central to affecting women's ability and willingness to step into public spaces. Migrant wives may be especially sensitive to gossips, since living apart from their husbands increases suspicions about their infidelity. Also, women's relationship with their migrant husbands as well as with their children and in-laws may be directly affected by what people in the society talk about them (Dreby, 2009; McEvoy, 2012). Several accounts of family break-ups, based on gossips about the infidelity of non-migrant wives as well as migrant husbands, have been documented by Dreby (2009) in studying the case of Mexico. Hence, increased scrutiny over women's movement in public spaces, higher likelihood of being gossiped about, fear of losing their images as 'good wives' and 'good mothers' and risking their morality, as well as worries about possible family break-ups, may discourage women from stepping into public spaces (Menjivar and Agadjanian, 2007; Dreby, 2009).

Household structure and women's position in the household also influences women's participation in public spaces. In nuclear households, women become the de-facto heads and take up responsibilities requiring public interaction, while in extended households such responsibilities may be assumed by other male or older

female members (Desai and Banerjee, 2008). Also, for younger women in extended households, having to explain the reason for stepping out of the house to in-laws and getting their permission for it might be difficult and stressful (Kasper, 2005).

In some cases, women may experience contradictory effects of men's migration simultaneously, where their participation in tasks essential to household management (such as going to the market or bank) increases, but they minimize other social activities such as going out with friends to avoid raising suspicions about their whereabouts (McEvoy et al., 2012). Despite these restrictions, women's mobility in social spaces may increase as the length of men's absence increases and women start taking on responsibilities like operating bank accounts, overseeing financial matters and managing family affairs (Gulati, 1986).

During men's migration, women may develop new forms of connections with kinship and neighborhood networks for support with everyday things (Ramnarain, 2012). They may go to the market or to the bank with other women to reduce tensions associated with having to step into public spaces alone. They may rely on each other for support with childcare and domestic tasks. As women's networks expand, traditional norms limiting their engagement in public spaces may begin to dissolve. Such changes could foster solidarity among women, encourage them to resist restrictions on their freedom and contribute towards their empowerment in the long-term (Morgan and Niraula, 1996; Menjivar and Agadjanian, 2007).

In general, increased social participation is seen as being beneficial to women's empowerment. However, in some cases, increases in women's social participation may be perceived as added stress. For instance, even when women's

participation in public spaces is viewed with speculation, women may be forced to step into such spaces to maintain their everyday living by going to market, bank or health center, in the absence of male members to help out with such tasks. Under such circumstances, women may feel more stressed than empowered from increased social participation, as they may prefer to avoid breaking norms to keep their social position secured (De Haas and Van Rooij, 2010). Even when male family members are available to help women out with tasks requiring social interactions, having to rely on them for everyday matters could add tensions to women's lives (Brown, 1983). Thus, systematic transformations in social structures are essential to ensure that women's increased participation contributes towards her empowerment (Batliwala, 1994; Sen, 1999).

This chapter begins with a brief overview of women's participation in social activities in Nepal. It then presents qualitative analysis on changes in women's participation in public spaces during men's migration, based on observations from my fieldwork. This is followed by quantitative analysis on whether there is a statistically significant difference in women's participation in social activities between migrant and non-migrant households. The quantitative analysis, presented in section 6.4 is based on the data from the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 (NLSS-III) and the quantitative analysis, presented in section 6.5 is based on the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011 (NDHS 2011). The final section presents some concluding remarks.

6.2 Women’s Social Participation in Nepal

The patriarchal structure of the Nepalese society defines women’s place as being within the home, while men dominate public spaces. It is men who go to the market or bank, attend community events, take children to the health center and manage financial matters. Women are mainly responsible for care of family members and domestic tasks of cooking, cleaning, animal care and crop farming (Pradhan, 2005). Men and women are prepared for these different roles since childhood; while girls help their mothers with household work and learn the drudgeries of being a perfect homemaker, boys go to school and prepare themselves for joining the workforce and earning for the family (Majupuria, 1989). This private-public gender division of labor is illustrated in table 6.1 below, which shows that the only tasks on which men spend more time than women are shopping and participating in community or volunteer work – tasks that require interaction in public spaces.

Table 6.1: Hours Spent on Different Household Tasks

Time spent on (hours per week)	Total		Men		Women	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Fetching water	1	2.6	0.6	1.9	1.3	3.2
Firewood collecting	1.3	3.9	0.7	2.9	1.8	4.3
Fodder collecting	3.6	6.4	2.1	5.0	4.7	7.1
Care animal	3.6	5.6	3.1	6.0	4.0	5.9
Knitting/weaving /tailoring	0.2	2.6	0.1	1.2	0.2	1.8
Processing preserved food	0.4	1.5	0.2	0.9	0.6	1.8
Household Repair	0.4	1.7	0.2	0.5	0.5	1.8
Cooking/Serving food	5.9	7.0	1.2	3.2	9.4	7.1
Clearing house	4.4	5.1	1.0	2.3	6.9	5.2
Shopping	1.2	2.4	1.4	2.7	1.0	2.2
Caring for elderly/ sick	0.3	1.9	0.2	1.7	0.4	2.0
Babysitting	3.5	8.4	1.3	4.2	10.2	2.8
Other volunteer/ community service	0.3	2.4	0.4	2.8	0.2	2.1

In explaining the different set of rules for girls and boys, one of the participants in my fieldwork stated:

It is not safe for women to go out alone. Men might take advantage of them. It is natural for men to want to go out with women... that is how men are. But women have to be careful. If they are seen with men, they are characterized as having 'loose character'. People in the society will talk about them and watch them closely. Girls have to know not to risk their family's honor that way and to behave properly.

T. Sapkota, Chitwan

Such notions about the acceptability of women's presence in public spaces and the focus on her interactions with men is influenced by social and religious norms about women's sexuality, as discussed in chapter 2. Girls often get scolded for returning home late from school and need permission to go out with friends. They are constantly watched by neighbors and feel the pressure to maintain their image by adhering to social norms, while boys face no such restrictions (Majupuria, 1989). These controls have limited women's access to resources and their ability to participate in market work and are central to obstructing women's empowerment in Nepal (Morgan and Niraula, 1996).

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

In recent decades, there has been a proliferation of development programs by international as well as local government and non-government organizations encouraging women's involvement in community organizations as a means of empowering them. Most programs on microfinance, community forestry, literacy and skilled-based trainings are targeted towards women (Leve, 2001). In general, these programs are seen as being beneficial for extending women's access to social resources and increasing their presence in public spaces. For example, Burschfield (1997) finds that women who participated in literacy courses traveled outside their villages more frequently than women who had not participated in such programs. Another study by Adhikari (2015) shows that participation in self-help groups have increased women's physical mobility and improved their ability to voice their opinions. Hence, the growth of self-help groups and community programs has contributed to increasing women's presence in social space.

6.3 Observations from Fieldwork

To understand the implications of men's migration on women's participation in the social sphere, I talked to women about the following three aspects of social participation (a) if they had started going to the market or to the bank on their own after their husbands' migration, (b) if they had formed stronger ties with other women in the community as a result of their husbands' migration, and (c) if their participation in community activities (either membership in a savings group or participation in literacy or skill-based trainings) had increased after their husbands'

migration. Table 6.2 below presents some descriptive statistics illustrating the differences in women's social participation based on their individual characteristics.

Table 6.2: Women's Individual Characteristics

		No of observations	Percentage who go to market	Percentage who go to bank	Percentage who participate in social activities
Sample		178	79.8%	75.3%	24.2%
Age	Less than 25	49	55.1%	53.1%	8.2%
	25 - 40	104	88.5%	82.7%	29.8%
	Greater than 40	25	92%	88%	32%
Education	No education	54	81.5%	77.8%	16.7%
	Some primary	39	74.4%	69.2%	20.5%
	Some secondary	85	81.2%	76.5%	30.6%
Caste group	High caste	86	79.1%	72.1%	26.7%
	Janajati	50	82%	84%	20%
	Dalits	42	78.6%	71.4%	23.8%
Employment type	Self-employment in agriculture	67	80.6%	76.1%	23.9%
	Self-employment in non-agriculture	33	78.8%	69.7%	33.3%
	Wage-employment in agriculture	5	100%	100%	40%
	Wage-employment in non-agriculture	8	87.5%	50%	25%
	Not employed	65	76.9%	78.5%	18.5%
Ownership	No ownership	130	73.8%	69.2%	23.1%
	Owns land or/ and house	48	95.8%	91.7%	27.1%
Receive remittances	Yes (n=137)	137	88.3%	86.9%	22.6%
	No (n=38)	38	47.4%	36.8%	26.3%
Number of children	0	13	23.1%	23.1%	15.4%
	1 or more	165	84.3%	79.4%	24.8%

The table shows that, in general, women's participation in social sphere increases with age. Also, women with secondary or higher education have greater physical mobility than women with only primary education. However, physical mobility is highest among women with no education, perhaps because most of these women are older. We also see that participation in social activities is higher among

women from *Janajati* caste group. A greater proportion of women who are wage-employed are involved in social activities than those who are self-employed or not employed. Participation in social activities is higher among women with some ownership of land and/or house, women who receive remittances and women who have children.

6.3.1 Involvement in Going to Market or Bank

Among the 178 migrant wives I interviewed, 58.9 percent had not gone to the market and 75.3 percent had not gone to the bank by themselves before their husbands' migration. However, as we can see from table 6.3 below, among women who did not go to the market by themselves before their husbands' migration, about 66.7 percent go to the market now. Similarly, among the women who had not been to bank by themselves before their husbands' migration, 67.9 percent go to the bank now. These numbers indicate that women have taken up some of the 'male' tasks as a result of men's migration and their participation in public sphere has increased.

Table 6.3: Number of Women Going to the Market or Bank

		Went to the market before husband left				Went to the bank before husband left?	
		Yes	No			Yes	No
Go to the market now?	Yes	72	70	Go to the bank now?	Yes	43	91
	No	1	35		No	1	43
Total number of observations: 178							

Increase in women's participation in going to the market or bank was most common among women who had taken the role of household head in their husbands' absence and did not have anyone to help them out with these tasks. For women who lived with their in-laws or had a close male kin like a brother, an uncle,

or a brother-in-law live close by, these other members took responsibilities for these tasks. A Chhetri woman in Rolpa, who had moved from her parents-in-law's home to the district headquarter (which was 6 hours walk away) to send her children to school and who relied entirely on remittances sent by her husband to her father-in-law explained:

My father-in-law takes care of most of the work. He gets the remittances and manages everything around the house. He comes here every month and gives me some money for personal expenses. He also goes to my children's school to pay their fees. I just cook, clean and take care of the children.
T. Thapa, Rolpa

Though help from a kin often provided women with some relief from having to step into public spaces, not all women liked having to depend on these other family members. For example, some of the women I talked to relied on a male kin even just to pick up remittances from the money transfer agency because they did not have a citizenship card for identification. A migrant wife, whose husband left two years ago, explained with some frustration:

Sometimes he sends the remittances to his uncle and sometimes he sends it to my brother-in-law. I have to get it from them because I don't have a citizenship card. I should get one soon... It is difficult to keep asking for their help for small matters like that. They always know how much money I receive. If they want to borrow from me, it is difficult to say no.
S. Sapkota, Chitwan

Such expressions of increased tension from dependence on other members were also echoed by another migrant wife, who seemed to prefer her husband's presence to the economic gains from his migrant status.

Our status has improved since he migrated, but I have realized that just having economic gains is not sufficient to be happy in life. Even when he was here, we managed to get by with the money he made and we supported each other. Managing everything by myself is very stressful. I have to ask help

from my uncle every time I need to pick up remittances, go to the bank or manage any financial transaction.

B. Buda Magar, Rolpa

Even in cases where women took on all the household management tasks by themselves and actively participated in the public sphere, they did not seem to enjoy the increased freedom from higher physical mobility. Women mentioned that though they constantly worried about how their presence in public spaces may be perceived by the society, they had to step-out of the house and go to the market, bank or health center to manage their everyday work and keep the household running. As a 25-year-old *Dalit* woman explained:

It is difficult to go out alone; that is a problem for all women around here. When we go out, people talk about where we are going and what we might be doing when our husbands are not around. So, we usually go out with two or three other women from the community.

M. Paswan, Siraha

Another *Dalit* woman in Chitwan expressed similar feelings:

Of course it is difficult to go to the market by myself but there is no one to help out with this work. If my daughter falls sick, I have to take her to the hospital. When my husband sends money, I have to go to pick it up. When I run out of food, I have to go to the market. I can't stay at home just worrying about what people might think.

P. Bika, Chitwan

Often, women were apprehensive about dealing with banks and other formal financial institutions. As a 42-year-old migrant wife in Siraha explained:

It is difficult not having my husband around. I have to take care of all the financial matters, take loans, deal with lenders and negotiate the terms of the loans.

S. Dhakal, Siraha

Some women expressed their frustrations from having to step outside their comfort zones and take on additional responsibilities, especially when they were

already burdened with a lot of household work. A 35-year-old mother of two boys stated:

When he was here, he would take care of all the work outside home; I didn't know how to do anything and I didn't even have to worry about it. Having to take on all the responsibilities has been hard on me. I have to do all the household work, send the kids to school, go to the market, take loans when needed and manage household finances. Before all I had to do was cook and clean.

D. Thapa, Chitwan

Expressions of anxiety from being more vulnerable to harassment and robbery in the absence of a male guardian to protect the family were common in my conversations with female heads. A 37-year-old migrant wife, who lived with her two daughters, mentioned:

I feel safer when my husband is here. I have to live with two small children. If there is an emergency at the middle of the night or if someone breaks into the house, there is no one to protect us.

K. Pariyar, Syangja

Having to go to hospital, market or bank by themselves also seemed to be a source of stress, as women were not comfortable stepping into male-dominated public spaces particularly because they sensed increased scrutiny from others in the society over where they were going and whom they were meeting with in their husbands' absence. As a *Brahmin* woman in Chitwan described:

In this village, people are always talking about others. If a woman goes to the market everyday or if she talks to men, people get suspicious and start watching them closely. People are always gossiping here, so I feel uncomfortable going out alone.

P. Upreti, Chitwan

Such accounts contrast with that of the women from Mexico, in McEvoy's (2012) study, who despite facing restrictions on their physical mobility due to

increased social scrutiny, enjoyed their increased freedom from exposure to the public sphere. In my sample, a few women who had gotten used to managing things by themselves seemed to be less apprehensive about stepping into public spaces. In fact, some of them mentioned that taking up responsibilities like going to the market or bank had made them stronger and more confident. They talked about how they had learned to manage financial matters, negotiate loans and travel to other villages by themselves. A 33-year-old woman in Rolpa, who had separated from her in-laws about 2 years ago, explained:

When I first came here, I was scared to even go to the market by myself. Even until the end of my first year, I sometimes cried feeling lonely and scared but now I have friends here. We go out together, help each other out and I have become much more confident than before. When I lived with my in-laws, I had to ask permission from family members for stepping out of the house; I don't face such restrictions any more and I feel much better.

K. Magar, Rolpa

Another woman, whose husband migrated four years ago, proudly described the gains in personal skills she had made since her husband left.

When he left, it was difficult to do all the home-management tasks (*ghar-byawastha ko kaam*) by myself. I couldn't even gather the courage to go to the market or bank by myself. When people came to talk to me, I used to cover my face. I don't feel that way anymore. The women here... we go out with each other and I know more people in the village than my husband does. I am fine with managing all the work here.

J. Mandal, Siraha

These accounts suggest that men's migration has pushed women to challenge gendered cultural expectations and traditional structures that confined them to domestic roles, despite fear of social criticism, and increased their participation in public spaces.

6.3.2 Social Support among Women in the Community

Women in migrant households relied on each other for social and financial support. Most women mentioned that their friendship with one another was the strongest form of support they had in coping with the difficulties of having to live without their husbands in a patriarchal society and having to single-handedly manage all household and childcare responsibilities. One migrant wife, who belonged to a women's savings group that occasionally implemented women's empowerment programs¹, stated:

When there are problems, there is no one to help out. We, women, have to take care of everything by ourselves.
S. Magar, Syangja

One of the most common problems women cited, when asked about the challenges they faced during their husbands' migration, was that there was no one to help out if someone in the family fell sick. In such cases, women sought help from each other in getting to the health center or taking care of the sick. In many cases, health centers were located far from home and not having a male member to accompany women to the health center was a serious impediment to accessing health care. Some women also expressed their discomfort from having to rely on other women for support, but cited that there was no other way to deal with the difficulties faced when men are away, other than helping each other out.

Things are especially difficult if my daughter or I fall sick. There is no one to take us to the health center or to run to the market to get medicines. We have to seek help from others in the community, which is sometimes difficult since

¹ This savings group sometimes received funding through a local Village Development Community program to implement awareness raising and literacy training programs.

we have to bother other people, but women here help each other out in such situations... it is still not the same as having your husband around.

U. Subedi, Chitwan

Women in migrant households also depended on each other for financial support when there were delays in receiving remittances. Remittance is the main source of income for most migrant households and fluctuation in remittance receipt could directly affect the consumption needs, especially for poorer households. Since remittances are usually sent in bulk to minimize money transfer costs, there could be periods when households run out of money and have to wait to receive remittances. In such cases, women often borrowed from each other, instead of getting formal loans from banks. They mentioned that borrowing from each other was easier because of less strict terms of repayment and lower interest rates. Also, some women cited their lack of education as a reason for not being comfortable with going through formal procedures to borrow from banks. One migrant wife explained:

I have friends here. We help each other out with taking care of kids. We borrow money from each other when we don't receive remittances on time and we pay back the loans as soon as the money comes in.

R. Buda Magar, Rolpa

Another migrant wife explained why she preferred borrowing from other women to borrowing from the bank.

When we borrow from outside, we have to pay 4-5 percent interest and it takes a long time to pay them back. When we borrow from people we know, it is cheaper to borrow and they are more understanding if we are unable to meet payment terms. Sometimes I borrow from other women here and sometimes they borrow from me; that is how we manage things.

S. Bika, Chitwan.

6.3.3 Participation in Community Groups

In terms of involvement in community events through membership in savings groups or participation in skill-based trainings, women's social presence seemed to be relatively low. Among the 178 migrant wives I interviewed, only 24.2 percent mentioned that they belonged to some community group like savings groups, microfinance loan groups or groups for receiving skill-based trainings². Most women mentioned that they either did not have the time or that they did not have access to such opportunities. Some of the women I interviewed also stated that their husbands or in-laws had restricted them from participating in community events, perhaps to minimize their appearance in public spaces and to maintain the family's honor by adhering to the gendered social norms. Hence, women's participation in community activities is likely to be lower when men migrate. This lower social participation may be more pronounced for women who live with their in-laws and may face severe restrictions on their physical mobility outside home. A 23-year-old mother of three children stated:

I can't leave the house to go to these programs; there is no one to look after my kids when I am away and I also have to take care of the animals.
G. Shrestha, Siraha

Another woman, who had recently separated from her parents-in-law, expressed interest in taking some training and being self-employed as the restrictions on her physical mobility had declined. But, she also pointed to the constraints due to scarcity of time from increased household work.

² Based on the community programs present in the different regions, I asked women if they were involved in any of the community groups and whether they went to group meetings.

When I was living with my parents-in-law, I was afraid to go out and participate in these community events. Since I separated from them, I have to freedom to go to these things but I am by myself and have lots of work to do; I can't manage the time. For women around here, it would be nice to receive some training on work that can be done from home like learning to sew clothes so we can stay home and get some work done.

N. Gurung, Rolpa

It is interesting to note that though women wanted to participate in skill-based trainings, they wanted trainings on things that they could produce at home, thus indicating their inability to work outside home either because of household work and childcare responsibilities or because they were not comfortable stepping into male-dominated public spaces.

Among the regions I visited, gender disparity seemed to be highest in Mirchaiya and Chandrodyapur villages in Siraha. Most women in these regions abided by the gender norms related to their mobility in public spaces more rigorously; they had their heads covered and mentioned that they only stepped out of the house with a friend or family member. Women in Mirchaiya expressed the struggles they faced in terms of participating in social events since they had to get permission from their in-laws to step out of the house.³ Some women mentioned that when they got home after talking to me, they would be asked about why they were being interviewed and if they received anything for talking to me. After I interviewed the women in this region the social mobilizer⁴, who had helped me get

³ Mirchaiya is a relatively urbanized region in Siraha with easy access to market and to public transportation. However, the gender norms in this region were relatively strict compared to the other regions I visited.

⁴ The social mobilizer, in this case, was a young man employed by the Village Development Committee (VDC) to teach literacy classes and run other trainings and community programs. I had asked if the people at the VDC could introduce me to a

connected to the women in this community, summarized their situation in the following way:

When we get funding to run programs in this area, I go from house to house informing women of these opportunities. I encourage them to come to these events but very few women actually show up. Most of the times, they don't come either because their husbands' and in-laws won't allow them to participate in these things or because they are just too busy with household work. Here, if women walk around too much, people start talking about them especially if their husbands are not around. I have been teaching a few classes here on gender issues and I also teach them how to read and write. Since I started running these classes, some women have started coming out and participating in these things more than before but the overall participation is still very low.

Some women mentioned that they did not have the confidence or interest to participate in community activities because they were not educated and did not have an exposure to such programs. The following accounts from two migrant wives illustrate the effect of lack of education earlier in their lives.

I don't go to any community events. I am not educated. I don't know how to read or write so I don't like going for trainings. There were a few trainings on tailoring in this area but my husband did not allow me to go.
Y. Shrestha, Siraha

Because I am not educated, I don't feel comfortable going to these events. It is not like I can speak up or make decisions or lead any kind of change. May be if I had gone to school, I would understand things better.
B. Gurung, Syangja

Others mentioned that they would participate in some community program (they were referring to skill-based trainings) if they had the opportunity but most of these programs only went to women who were smarter or had some connection with the organizations bringing in the programs. One woman in Chitwan mentioned:

female social mobilizer, since the women I would be interviewing may have been more comfortable in the presence of a female social mobilizer. However, they had very few women as social mobilizers, reflecting the high gender inequality in the area, and I was unable to get in touch with them.

Even when NGOs come here, most of the help goes to people who are relatively well-to-do. By the time we hear about the trainings, people who were the first to know and people who know someone at the NGOs will have already filled the quotas. I would go if I had the opportunity to get some skill-based training for things I could make at home like mats or candles. I stay home all day long; I have no skills to go to work and I have to take care of my kids for another ten years, so I can't go out to work.

A. Acharya, Chitwan

In some cases, because the programs were targeted towards women from low-caste groups, upper-caste women complained about their lack of access to training opportunities. A *Newar* woman in Siraha complained:

Most programs that come go to the *Dalits* or to the less privileged groups. There aren't any programs for us - *Newars*. Just because we are from higher caste, we have to pay to get skill-based trainings and the *Dalits* get it for free. We are also poor but the people who bring in the programs don't understand that. Even for forming savings group, we have to have certain number of *Dalits* in our group.

M. Shrestha, Siraha

One of the key observations that I made during my fieldwork was that women's participation in social sphere was dependent on the household structure. For women who take on the role of de facto household heads upon husbands' migration and have no one around to help them with work outside home, participation in social sphere in terms of going to the market and bank or forming stronger ties with other women in the community increases. On the other hand, for women who live under the headship of other members (most likely with in-laws), participation in social sphere may be lower as household heads take responsibility for tasks requiring social interactions outside home. Also, these women may face more restrictions on their physical mobility, as they may need to take permission from their in-laws to step outside the house and they may not be comfortable doing

so. One migrant wife expressed the increased constraints on her physical mobility during her husband's absence stating:

When he (her husband) is around, I can just go to the market with him and buy things that I need. It was easier ask for things with my husband. It is difficult without him since I cannot do the same with my mother-in-law. Even to go to my natal home, I have to take permission from her a few days in advance. She has to manage all the work here when I am gone, so she doesn't like me leaving too often... it is difficult to ask for her permission.
H. Sapkota, Chitwan

Of the participants in my study, none of the women who were household heads said that they needed permission to step out of the house; however, among women who were not heads of their households, 34 percent mentioned that they needed permission from their in-laws to leave the house. Hence, women's position in the household directly influences her ability to participate in social activities.

6.4 Women's Participation in Social Activities: Quantitative Analysis based on NLSS-III data

In this section, I compare the social participation of women in migrant households to that of women in non-migrant households and explore how migration of men might have affected women's social participation in Nepal. The analysis in this section is based on the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 (NLSS-III). Here, I use information on time spent by women in community or volunteer work or in going to the market as a measure of their participation in social sphere.

Based on my findings from fieldwork, I speculate that women's participation in social activities is dependent on their position within the households. Women who take on the role of household heads may see their participation in the social sphere increase, as there may be no one else to help them out with tasks such as

going to the market or bank. However, women who live under the headship of other senior household members may experience a decline in their social participation due to increased restrictions on their mobility in public spaces during their husbands' absence. The following two hypotheses are tested in this section:

- H1: Women who are household heads in migrant households have higher participation in social activities than women in non-migrant households.
- H2: Women who are not household heads in migrant households have lower participation in social sphere than women in non-migrant households.

6.4.1 Sample and Variable Definition:

Sample: The NLSS-III data provides information on women's participation in social activities for all the women above 15 years of age; the sample size here is 10,242 women. These women can be categorized into the following four groups:

- Household heads in migrant households
- Household heads in non-migrant households
- Not household heads in migrant households
- Not household heads in non-migrant households

For my analysis, I only include women who are married since I am interested in looking into the changes in women's social participation during their husbands' migration. I also drop observations for women who are household heads in non-migrant households, as most of these women are unmarried, separated, divorced or widowed. Hence, my analysis here is based on a subsample of 6,960 women.

I am interested in studying the difference in social participation among women who are household heads in migrant households, non-household heads in migrant households and non-household heads in non-migrant households. Hence, I divide the women in our sample into these three groups by creating interaction

terms using women's position within the household (household head or not) and whether a woman belongs to migrant household or not. Two binary variables migrant head and migrant non-head are created to represent women who are heads in migrant households and women who are not heads in migrant households, respectively. Women in non-migrant households are considered the base case in the models here.

Dependent Variable: The dependent variable here is social participation; it is defined as a binary variable with value 1 if women spent any time in the past week going to market or participating in community events and 0 otherwise.⁵ In my sample, 30.2 percent of the women had participated in some social activity.⁶

Independent Variables: The list of independent variables used in my analysis is presented in the table below. This is followed by a discussion of the expected relationship of each of the independent variables with the dependent variable in our model.

⁵ I also ran OLS regressions using 'hours spent in shopping and community activities' (continuous variable) as the dependent variable; however, the coefficients for 'belongs to labor migrant household' as well as many of the other independent variable were not statistically significant. So, I used binary variable 'participates in social activity' as the dependent variable here.

⁶ I also used 'spent any time shopping' and 'spent any time in community service or volunteer work' as two separate dependent variables and ran regressions. However, only 2% of the women in the sample had spent time in volunteer work and the results for the models for volunteer work were not statistically significant. So, I put the two together and defined the dependent variable here as having spent any time on either shopping or in community activity.

Table 6.4: Independent Variables for Model on Social Participation (NLSS-III)

Variable Name	Definition
Migrant head	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are household heads in migrant households, 0 otherwise
Migrant non-head	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are not household heads but belong to migrant households, 0 otherwise
Age	Woman's age
Education	Number of years of schooling
Wage-employed	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are wage-employed, 0 otherwise
Presence of adult male members	Binary variable with value 1 for households where one of more adult male members are present, 0 otherwise ⁷
Asset Index	Index for asset ownership of the household as an indicator of the household's economic status
Caste	Binary variable with value 1 for women from high caste, 0 otherwise
Location	Binary variable with value 1 for rural area, 0 otherwise
Ecological Zone	Ecological belt is categorized as Mountain, Hill or Terai. Two binary variables MBelt (with value 1 for Mountain belt and 0 otherwise) and Hbelt (with value 1 for Hill belt and 0 otherwise) are used to categorize the ecological zones.

Migrant head: Women who are heads in migrant households are expected to have higher social participation than women in non-migrant households, since as household heads they might be responsible for all the work outside home making it necessary for them to step into public spaces. In non-migrant households, women are more likely to be living with their husbands who take responsibility for work outside home. Hence, the coefficient for this variable is expected to be positive.

Migrant non-head: Among non-household heads, women in migrant households are likely to be living under the headship of their in-laws; in such cases absence of husband could mean loss of an ally for the woman as she may not be comfortable seeking permission from her in-laws to participate in social activities. Also, these women may face higher restrictions on their participation in public spaces because of increased scrutiny over their activities and the prevalence of the perception that

⁷ There could be multicollinearity issue with this variable since the correlation of 'presence of male member' with 'woman belongs to migrant households' is 0.7. I also ran the regression without this variable and the results don't change by much when the variable is dropped.

women are more vulnerable in the absence of their husbands. In addition to this, increased workload during husbands' migration could reduce women's participation in social activities. Hence, a negative coefficient is expected for this variable.

Age, Age-squared: Women's social participation is expected to increase with age since older women usually have more freedom in terms of their physical mobility. However, after a certain age, their participation in social activities might decline either because of health reasons or because they lose interest in these activities. Hence, a quadratic relationship is expected between 'age' and 'social participation'.

Education: Since educated women are more likely to resist traditional norms restricting their mobility, women's social participation is likely to increase with their education level. So, a positive sign is expected for the coefficient for education.

Wage-employment: Women who are wage-employed are likely to have higher social participation since being employed outside home provides them with greater exposure to the social sphere. So, a positive coefficient is expected for this variable.

Presence of Adult Male Members: In households with adult male members, men could take up the responsibility of work that requires social interaction; thus resulting in lower social participation for women. Hence, a negative coefficient is expected for this variable.

Asset Index: Asset index is a measure of a household's economic status. The relationship is not certain here since in some cases higher economic status may mean better access to resources and higher participation in social activities while in

other cases community activities may be targeted towards low income groups such that higher asset index is associated with lower social participation.

Caste: Women from high caste families are likely to face more strict restrictions on their mobility; hence they are expected to have lower social participation than women from lower caste families. Also, community programs are likely to be targeted towards low caste groups, in which case women from lower caste have higher participation in social activities. Hence, a negative coefficient is expected here.

Location: Women in rural areas are expected to have lower mobility than women in urban regions because of the more restrictive gender norms in rural regions. Hence, a negative coefficient is expected for this variable.

Ecological Zone: The variable ecological zone is included to account for differences in women's participation in social sphere due to socio-cultural differences across geographic locations. Since restrictions on women's freedom is more pronounced in the Terai region than in the Hill or Mountains, women in Terai are expected to have lower social participation. Hence, the coefficients for Mountain and Hill belt are expected to be positive.

Using these variables, the model for women's social participation is specified as follows:

$$s_part = b_0 + b_1 (\text{migrant head}) + b_2 (\text{migrant non-head}) + b_3 (\text{women's individual characteristics}) + b_4 (\text{household characteristics}) + b_5 (\text{geographic characteristics}) + \text{error term}$$

Here, b_0 represents the intercept term and $b_1 \dots, b_k$ represent the coefficients associated with the independent variables included in the model.

6.4.2 Regression Results

Since the dependent variable in this model is a binary variable, I use the method of probit to estimate the models. The regression outcomes are presented in table 6.5 below. The first column in the table only includes women's individual characteristics (model 1), the second column includes individual and household characteristics (model 2) and the third column includes individual, household and regional characteristics (model 3) as the explanatory variables.

Table 6.5: Regression Results for Women's Participation in Social Activities (NLSS-III)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Migrant head	0.817*** (0.0503)	0.708*** (0.0636)	0.732*** (0.0644)
Migrant non-head	-0.250*** (0.0376)	-0.252*** (0.0391)	-0.209*** (0.0397)
Age	0.110*** (0.008)	0.101*** (0.00827)	0.102*** (0.00830)
Age-squared	-0.00122*** (0.0000967)	-0.00116*** (0.0000993)	-0.00117*** (0.0000997)
Education	0.0469*** (0.00350)	0.0187*** (0.00450)	0.0170*** (0.00454)
Wage-employed	0.0933* (0.0459)	0.148** (0.0468)	0.129** (0.0472)
Presence of male members		-0.224*** (0.0528)	-0.233*** (0.0534)
Asset index		1.173*** (0.0934)	0.705*** (0.105)
Caste		-0.149*** (0.0367)	-0.125** (0.0387)
Location			-0.404*** (0.0433)
Mbelt			-0.304*** (0.0794)
Hbelt			-0.0679 (.0360)
Constant term	-2.883*** (0.159)	-2.679*** (0.163)	-2.217*** (0.169)
Pseudo R-squared	0.101	0.120	0.133
Number of observations	6960	6960	6960

Standard errors in parentheses
 * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

6.4.3 Discussion of Results

Here, the pseudo R-squared value for the full model (model 3) is 0.133; hence, the independent variables included in the model 'explain' about 13.3 percent of the variation in women's participation in social activities.

The results show a positive and statistically significant coefficient for 'migrant head' and a negatively and statistically significant coefficient for 'migrant non-head'. These findings are consistent with my observations from fieldwork and they confirm the hypotheses that while women who take on the role of household heads upon their husbands' migration may see an increase in their participation in social activities, women who remain under the headship of other household members may experience a decline in their participation in the social sphere.

The results indicate a quadratic relation between woman's age and her participation in social activities, as expected. Also, the coefficients for women's education and their participation in wage-employment are positive and statistically significant. These findings are consistent with the expectation that women with higher educational qualifications and wage-employment are more likely to be participating in social activities.

In terms of household characteristics, we see that the presence of adult male members indicates lower participation in social activities for women. This confirms my assumption that in households with adult male members, men take up responsibility for tasks outside home. The coefficient for asset index is positive and statistically significant indicating that women from higher economic classes are

more likely to participate in social activities. Also, as expected, women from higher caste groups have lower participation in social activities.

For the geographic characteristics, we see that women's participation in social sphere is lower in rural areas. This confirms my assumption that the more restrictive gender norms in rural areas could limit women's participation in social activities. Among the ecological belts, it appears that women's social participation is lower in both Mountains and Hills than in the Terai. Though this does not concur with my expectations, it might be explained by the fact that access to market as well as the number of community programs are lower in the Hill and Mountain regions than in Terai.

6.5 Women's Participation in Social Activities: Quantitative Analysis based on NDHS data

In this section, I repeat the analysis comparing women's participation in social activities between migrant and non-migrant households, using the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey dataset. Again, the following two hypotheses are tested:

- H1: Women who are household heads in migrant households have higher participation in social activities than women in non-migrant households.
- H2: Women who are not household heads in migrant households have lower participation in social sphere than women in non-migrant households.

6.5.1 Sample and Variable Definition

Sample: The NDHS provides information on women's participation in different community groups for all women in the household. These women can be categorized into the following four groups.

- Household heads in migrant households
- Household heads in non-migrant households
- Non-household heads in migrant households
- Non-household heads in non-migrant households

The survey provides information on 12,672 women. As in the case above, I focus my analysis on women who are married. I also drop women who are household heads in non-migrant households since most of these women do not live with their husbands.⁸ Hence, in the analysis here, I compare the social participation for married women in the remaining three groups. Our sample size is 9,025 women.

Dependent variable: The survey provides information on whether women belong to *Ama Samuha* (Mother's group), *Bachat Samuha* (Savings Group), *Mahila Samuha* (Women's Group) or any other community group. A binary variable with value 1 for women belonging to any of these groups and value 0 otherwise is used as an indicator of women's participation in social activity. Hence, the dependent variable here is 'belongs to community group'.

⁸ Though these women do not live with their husbands, the household is not categorized as migrant household since their husbands could be living elsewhere for non-employment purposes (not technically considered labor migration according to the survey).

Independent Variables: The independent variables included in my models along with their expected relationships with women’s participation in social activities are discussed below. Since most of the variables here are same as those in section 6.4 (analysis using NLSS data), description on the expected relationship is only provided for variables that are not presented in section 6.4 above.

Table 6.6: Independent Variables for Model on Social Participation (NDHS 2011)

Variable Name	Definition	Expected sign for coefficient and description
Migrant Head	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are heads in migrant households, 0 otherwise	<i>Expected Sign: Positive</i>
Migrant non-head	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are not household heads in migrant households, 0 otherwise	<i>Expected Sign: Negative</i>
Age	Woman’s age	<i>Expected Sign: Positive</i> The NDHS data set only includes women in the age group 15 to 49. For this age group, women’s participation in social activities is expected to increase with age since it is likely that as a woman gets older and her role transforms from being a wife to a mother and then a mother-in-law, her freedom and bargaining power within the house increases.
Education	Number of years of schooling	<i>Expected Sign: Positive</i>
Wage-employed	Binary variable with value 1 for women who are employed for wages, 0 otherwise	<i>Expected Sign: Positive</i>
Ownership Index	Index on women’s ownership of house or land	<i>Expected Sign: Positive</i> Women with higher ownership of land or house are likely to have greater bargaining power within the house. Hence, they may face lower restrictions on their mobility in social space. A positive coefficient is expected for this variable.
Media	Index on women’s exposure to	<i>Expected Sign: Positive</i>

exposure	media based on frequency of listening to radio, watching television or reading the news	Exposure to media is an indicator of level of awareness. Women's participation in social sphere is expected to increase with an increase in exposure to media.
Wealth Index	Index for household wealth as a measure of household's economic status	<i>Expected Sign: Positive/ Negative</i> Wealth index, like asset-index in the model in section 6.3, is an indicator of household's economic status. The relationship between wealth index and social participation is not certain. In some cases, higher economic status could mean better access to resources and higher social participation; while in other cases, women from higher economic classes could face more restrictions on their mobility resulting in lower social participation.
Caste	Binary variable with value 1 for women who belong to high caste groups, 0 otherwise	<i>Expected Sign: Negative</i>
Location	Binary variable with value 1 for rural area, 0 otherwise	<i>Expected Sign: Negative</i>
Ecological Zone	Ecological zone is categorized as Mountain, Hill or Terai. Two binary variables MBelt, with value 1 for Mountain and 0 otherwise, and Hbelt, with value 1 for Hill and 0 otherwise, are used to categorize the ecological zones.	<i>Expected sign: Positive for both Mountain and Hill regions</i>

Using these variables, the model for women's social participation is specified as follows:

$$grp_mem = b_0 + b_1 (migrant\ head) + b_2 (migrant\ non-head) + b_3 (individual\ characteristics) + b_4 (household\ characteristics) + b_5 (geographic\ characteristics) + error\ term$$

Here, b_0 represents the intercept term and $b_1 \dots, b_k$ represent the coefficients associated with the independent variables included in the model.

6.5.2 Regression Results

Since the dependent variable here is binary, the method of probit is used to estimate the models. The regression results are presented in table 6.7 below. As in the case above, the first column includes only individual characteristics (model 4), the second column includes individual and household characteristics (model 5) and the third column includes individual, household and regional characteristics (model 6) for women included in the analysis.

Table 6.7: Regression Results for Women's Social Participation (NDHS 2011)

Variable Name	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Migrant head	0.335*** (0.0396)	0.313*** (0.0398)	0.301*** (0.0399)
Migrant non-head	0.00453 (0.0324)	-0.0194 (0.0326)	-0.0351 (0.0328)
Age	0.0282*** (0.00176)	0.0325*** (0.00186)	0.0325*** (0.00187)
Education	-0.00196 (0.00441)	0.0136** (0.00484)	0.0119* (0.00488)
Wage-employed	0.120*** (0.0311)	0.164*** (0.0317)	0.168*** (0.0318)
Ownership Index	0.110*** (0.0294)	0.162*** (0.0300)	0.161*** (0.0301)
Media exposure	0.304*** (0.0323)	0.445*** (0.0350)	0.461*** (0.0353)
Wealth Index		-0.00000223*** (0.000000190)	-0.00000169*** (0.000000221)
Caste		0.109*** (0.0290)	0.101*** (0.0300)
Location			0.251*** (0.0360)
Mbelt			-0.0170 (0.0431)
Hbelt			-0.00854 (0.0319)
Constant	-1.354*** (0.0651)	-1.740*** (0.0739)	-1.917*** (0.0787)
pseudo R-squared	0.048	0.060	0.064
Number of observations	9025	9025	9025

Standard errors in parentheses

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

6.5.3 Discussion of Results

The pseudo R-squared value for the full model (model 6) presented here is 0.064 indicating that this model is able to 'explain' about 6.4 percent of the variation in women's participation in community groups.

As expected, we see that the coefficient for 'migrant head' is positive and statistically significant; this confirms my first hypothesis that social participation for household heads in migrant households is higher than that for women from non-migrant households. Here, the coefficient for 'migrant non-head' is negative for models 5 and 6, indicating that non-household heads in migrant households have lower social participation than women in non-migrant households. Though this finding is consistent with my expectation, I am unable to confirm my second hypothesis, since the coefficient is not statistically significant.

The variables defining women's individual characteristics match my expectations. We see that women's participation in social activity is likely to increase with age, education level, ownership of assets and exposure to media. Also, women who are wage-employed are likely to have higher participation in social activities.

The results indicate that women from higher wealth quintiles have lower social participation; this could be because most community programs are targeted towards low-income households. We also see that the coefficient for caste is positive and statistically significant, indicating that women from higher castes are more likely to participate in social activities. Both these results contradict with my findings from NLSS data set and need further examination. For the regional

characteristics, we see that women from rural areas have greater social participation; this finding is also not consistent with the expectation and my results from NLSS data. The coefficients for variables on ecological regions are negative but not statistically significant; thus implying that there is no appreciable difference in women's participation in social activity based on ecological region.

My findings from this analysis on the independent variable of interest (migrant head and non-migrant head) and women's individual characteristics are mostly consistent with my expectations and with the results I got from the NLSS analysis. However, the results for household and geographic characteristics contradict with my expectation as well as with my findings from NLSS. One of the problems here could be that the dependent variable is a very narrow measure of social participation. It only looks at whether women are members of certain community groups or not and participating in these groups might depend on factors such as availability and accessibility to these programs, which we are unable to capture in my model here. Additionally, the dependent variable here fails to consider aspects such as strengthening of social bonds among women or increase in activities such as going to the market or bank. In fact, the dependent variable in section 6.4 (with the NLSS data) is perhaps a better measure of women's social participation than the dependent variable in this section (with the NDHS data), since the dependent variable for NLSS analysis captures participation in activities such as going to market along with participation in community groups while NDHS data focuses narrowly on participation in community groups only.

6.6 Conclusion

Based on my econometric analysis, we see that women in migrant households are likely to have higher participation in social activities than women in non-migrant households mainly if they assume the role of household heads upon their husbands' migration. I also find that women who remain under the headship of other household members during their husbands' migration may experience the opposite: increased restrictions on their social participation. These findings are consistent with my observations from fieldwork since it was mostly in households where women did not have anyone to help out with the work outside home, that women stepped out of the house to manage these tasks.

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

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This dissertation looked into the experiences of Nepalese women during labor migration of men and analyzed how these changes may have affected their empowerment. Analysis on women's empowerment is based on Kabeer's (1999) definition, where expansion of women's access to resources, agency and achievements are specified as the three main dimensions of empowerment. Using this framework, I look into women's work responsibilities and their access to income-earning activities, their participation in household decision-making, and their involvement in social activities as measures of their access to resources, agency and achievements, respectively. A mixed-methods approach, including qualitative analysis based on fieldwork and quantitative research using national-level data sets from the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 and the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011, is used for this study.

A summary of my key findings is presented in the next section. This is followed by suggestions on alleviating women's hardships during men's migration and measures for ensuring the well-being of both the migrant and their families. Then, some shortcomings of this study and possibilities for future work are discussed. The final section presents some concluding remarks.

7.2 Summary of Key Findings

This study looked into changes in women's work responsibilities (chapter 4), their decision-making power (chapter 5) and their participation in social activities (chapter 6) due to labor migration of men from Nepal. A central finding is that though women gain opportunities for increased freedom and expansion in their abilities in all three dimensions of empowerment during men's absence, these opportunities are constrained by women's position in the household, their education and employment background, the caste and class group to which the women belong, and gendered social norms.

On examining the changes in women's work responsibilities in chapter 4, I find that women in migrant households have higher domestic and subsistence farming responsibilities and lower participation in wage-employment or self-employment in non-agriculture than women in non-migrant households. This finding is consistent with my fieldwork results, which indicate that women's workloads in the house and on the farm increase during men's migration, and that this increase in domestic work along with reduced economic pressures by virtue of receiving remittances lowers their ability or willingness to participate in market work. Hence, in this respect migrant wives are more likely to be financially dependent on their husbands. Though they perform vital economic and social functions of household maintenance, their ability to contribute to the family's economic security declines during their husbands' absence, thus reinforcing their subordinate position in the household.

In chapter 5, I find that a woman's position in the household is central to influencing her participation in decision-making. Women in nuclear households, who take on the role of household head upon men's migration, generally experience an expansion in their decision-making role. In contrast, those living under the headship of other household members in extended households see no change or a decline in their involvement in household decision-making. Findings from my fieldwork suggest that in extended households a woman's relationship with her husband often determined the impact of his absence on her bargaining power. A woman whose husband supported her by representing her interest in the household decision-making may experience a loss in bargaining power. However, women who did not receive much support from their husbands before their migration experienced little or no change in their decision-making role as their in-laws primarily took charge of decision-making. Though examples of both these cases were seen during fieldwork, the quantitative results suggest that the former case is more common for Nepali women in extended households.

The results from chapter 6 suggest that women's participation in the social sphere during their husbands' absence also depends on their position in the household. Women who assume the role of de facto heads during their husbands' absence experience higher physical mobility, while those in extended households may experience increased restrictions on their participation in social activities. Findings from fieldwork suggest that most migrant wives face higher social scrutiny and increased vulnerabilities, thus limiting their participation in social spheres. However, women who are heads have to step into public spaces out of necessity to

maintain their livelihood (going to the market, health center or bank). The need for women to step into public spaces may be less severe in extended households as other household members may take up work requiring public interaction. In the former case, women complained about increased stress from having to break social barriers and step into public spaces, and in the latter case women faced tensions from limitations on their physical mobility. The only aspect of increased social participation that women seemed to appreciate was the stronger bond they had formed with other women in the society, as they depended on each other for support.

The different socio-economic conditions in the four research locations selected for the fieldwork illustrate the importance of regional characteristics in influencing women's experiences during their husbands' migration. The districts of Chitwan (in Terai region) and Syangja (in Hill region) both rank high on development index as well as women's empowerment index;¹ however, we find huge differences in women's experiences between these two regions based on the varying social norms between the Hill and Terai regions. While women's access to education is much higher in Chitwan, which is more urbanized than Syangja, women in Syangja had higher decision-making ability and higher participation in the social sphere, a difference possible attributable to, the less restrictive gender norms in the Hills. Also, though Rolpa (in Hill region) and Siraha (in Terai region) districts both have low development and empowerment indexes, women in Rolpa have much higher access to education and higher participation in community groups than

¹ The values for these indices are provided in tables 3.3 and 3.4 in chapter 3.

women in Siraha. This difference may be explained by the more equal gender relations in the Hills as well as the possible empowering effects of the civil war in Rolpa, which was under Maoist control, as fighting gender and caste inequality was one of the key expressed goals of the war. Additionally, perhaps because of the higher poverty rates in these two districts, women's employment in income-earning activities is higher than that in Chitwan and Syangja. However, the type of employment for women in these two districts, Siraha and Rolpa, is different. While women in Siraha (where gender norms are more restrictive) are more likely to be involved in home-based production and low-skilled labor jobs, women in Rolpa are more often educated and working in the skilled job sector.

The overall impact of men's migration on women's empowerment therefore is ambiguous and highly dependent on the individual characteristics of women as well as the socio-economic conditions in which they live. In general, women who assume the role of household heads had greater decision-making power and higher social participation as a consequence of male migration, but they still struggled with increased domestic workload and tensions from having to break social norms to achieve higher physical mobility. In fact, the higher workload often hindered their participation in social and economic spheres. Also, though women made more decisions, the most important decisions (especially those related to financial matters) generally were still made by men, and women worried about not being able to manage all the household and financial matters well. Women living under the headship of other household members generally did not experience a large increase in their work responsibilities, but their decision-making power weakened

and their social participation declined. Additionally, the constant worry about having to maintain their image of 'good wives' and follow traditional norms, especially because of their increased vulnerability in their husbands' absence, was a source of tension for many women. In the following section, I suggest some measures to address these problems and to ensure that the gains that some women make during men's migration, such as increased physical mobility and higher autonomy, are transformed into opportunities for expanding their abilities.

7.3 Policy Recommendations and Suggestions for Promoting Women's Empowerment

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

In order to ensure women's well-being under these circumstances, it is important to develop a socio-political framework within which women are provided with the necessary support and relevant skills to undertake their new roles. Also, transformations in social norms to discourage gender-based discrimination are vital for expanding women's abilities. Some proposals for providing women with resources to help them cope with challenges faced during men's migration along with long-term strategies for reducing gender inequality by fighting discriminatory institutional and social norms and practices are presented below. While some of the proposals are policy measures, others are suggestions for provision of services through government or non-government organizations working with migrants and their families. Finally, since migrant families are dependent on the migrants, their well-being depends on the success of the migrant member. Hence, some policy measures for providing support to the migrants and facilitating their return and reintegration are presented.

7.3.1 Financial Literacy and Training Programs

When men leave, women may take on new responsibilities of managing remittances and making financial decisions; however, they often lack the knowledge, confidence or the business know-how to use these funds effectively (Ionesco and Aghazarm, 2009). Women's reluctance to taking formal loans or investing remittances was apparent in many of the conversations I had during my fieldwork. They mentioned that they didn't feel confident signing documents, and worried about losing money from being involved in things they didn't fully

understand. Women who were illiterate were even more disinclined to dealing with formal institutions. When asked about the reason for not borrowing from bank, a 44-year Brahmin woman in Chitwan with limited education (some reading skills) stated the following:

We take loans from people in the village. Dealing with the bank is very difficult. It is more expensive. Even though the bank offers lower interest rates, I feel like we end up paying more because we have to pay every month. I have to go to the bank with my son because I don't understand all the math they do in explaining the payment terms. It is easier to negotiate the terms of payment with the people in the village. You can pay whenever you want to and you only pay interest once a year. You have to go to the bank every 15 days. It is very inconvenient.

Provision of literacy programs and basic financial management trainings could help women overcome these difficulties and increase their access to financial resources. These trainings could be an opportunity to provide women with information on accessing bank accounts, earning interest on savings, taking loans, and understanding the terms of payment. Such programs would be beneficial to women in terms of learning to keep track of their income and expenses, planning for the future and reducing the possibility of running out of remittances before expected.

Often, women struggle with explaining to their husbands how and where remittances are being spent and this is a source of tension between the migrant and the family left behind. A Chhetri woman in Syangja illustrated this point by stating that:

He asks if I have been able to save anything and it is difficult to explain. The cost of everything is increasing and it is frustrating to try to explain to him where all the money is going. He is working hard and expects us to save so he can return someday, but I haven't been able to manage the money. Somehow, whatever comes in just gets spent.

Being able to perform basic calculations, keep account of financial transactions and provide the details to their husbands might help reduce some of this tension. Also, increased access to information through these trainings could help women make better financial decisions and boost their confidence in managing financial matters. In explaining the benefits of the financial literacy programs, Dr. Meena Poudel, a Policy Advisor at International Organization for Migration (IOM), stated the following:

When husbands migrate, women receive remittances but they often don't have the managerial skills to use it properly. This could create conflicts in family, as women may not be able to save much when men return. Money is an important factor in determining family relationships. We help with financial planning and decision-making by providing information on things that women need to make decisions on. For example, if women are deciding on where to send their kids to school, we talk about the cost of going to public vs. private school or going to a school close by vs. somewhere further. So, we provide them with the necessary information. We also encourage them to use remittances for productive investment to help strengthen the bonds between migrant and their families.

Including confidence building as one of the objectives of the financial literacy programs could also be beneficial for women, as women usually have lower self-confidence due to their limited access to economic and social resources. In studying migration and development in Nepal, Prasai (2005) states that women are generally not comfortable with investing remittances because of the fear of losing money earned by their husbands if the investment fails. Providing women with financial training along with confidence-building exercises may encourage them to invest remittances on productive activities, which could secure an alternative source of income for migrant households and promote gender equality by reducing women's dependence on remittances. In fact, Dr. Poudel pointed out that building confidence

might be more useful to women than financial management skills per se, stating the following:

They know how to manage their finances. They know what they need to buy and how much they need to save. We don't need to teach them that. We just need to provide the support and information needed to make them feel more confident about handling financial matters.

Organizations working to provide support to migrants and their families, such as 'Pourakhi' and 'Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC)', have implemented a few financial literacy programs. However, the scale of these programs is very limited. For example, the financial literacy program run by Pourakhi, in partnership with IOM, only included about 100 remittance-receiving households in two villages in Chitwan district. Hence, additional resources need to be devoted to increase the availability and accessibility to such trainings. Perhaps large-scale government programs through the local Village Development Committees or through partnership with microfinance institutions, which are relatively widespread in Nepal, may increase the effectiveness and outreach of these programs.

During my fieldwork, I attended a financial literacy program run by PNCC, which included about 30 women from migrant households in one village in Chitwan. In discussing the effectiveness and the difficulties with running these programs, the program manager stated:

We believe that these programs are very helpful. In fact, some of the participants have mentioned that attending the program has helped them plan better and feel more confident. However, it is very difficult to get women to participate in these programs. They are either overburdened with domestic work or are very shy to participate in these programs. To run this program, we had volunteers go from door-to-door to encourage women to join. We also provide them with tea and some snacks, so that they are

incentivized to take a break from their everyday work and come to these programs.

Hence, though these programs are helpful in increasing awareness and self-confidence and strengthening women's social networks, women hesitate to participate because of their high domestic workload and lack of confidence. Both these factors have been discussed as reasons for lower social participation for some women in migrant households in chapter 6. A few suggestions on addressing these are presented next.

7.3.2 Reduction in Domestic Responsibilities

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

Women in migrant households also experience an increase in their workload associated with subsistence farming. Providing women with trainings on new techniques for farming more effectively and increasing their access to collection

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

7.3.3 Increased Access to Education

Access to education is central to fighting gender inequality as education makes women more aware of their rights and encourages them to shift from home-based work to market work. Hence, the government should focus on improving school systems to make education more accessible to the poor and disadvantaged; such efforts would be especially beneficial for girls, since girls are first to drop out of school when their family faces financial constraints (Moghadam, 1998). Also, because government schools in Nepal are much cheaper than private schools, girls are more often sent to government schools.² Improving the quality of education in these schools could help reduce the difference in educational attainment between men and women.

Though government schools in Nepal are tuition free, attendance is low partly because of the low quality of education and partly because attending school

² Government schools charge administrative and other fees but tuition and books are free up to 10th grade (Aryal, 2012).

comes at the cost of giving up household work (Aryal, 2012). Our discussion in chapter 2 as well as our findings from fieldwork have also illustrated that household work and parent's reluctance to sending girls to schools were among the key reasons for girls quitting school. In a study by Institute of Integrated Development Studies, it was estimated that a child in primary school in Nepal can do household chores worth USD 64 and a child in secondary school can do USD 122 worth of work per year while the cost of schooling for the child could be up to USD 25 (cited in Beardmore et al., 2010). Hence, sending girls to schools comes at a cost. In order to incentivize parents to send girls to school, implementation of some form of cash transfer programs may be helpful. For example, the Food for Education (FFE) program in Bangladesh, that provides food which can be taken home to children attending schools, have been deemed successful in terms of increasing school enrollment as well as reducing drop-out rates (see Ahmed and Babu, 2007; Meng and Ryan, 2007).³

7.3.4 Increased Access to Employment Opportunities

As discussed in chapters 2 and 4 of this dissertation, economic independence via involvement in market work is central to women's empowerment. Hence, efforts to increase women's access to employment opportunities either by providing them with the necessary resources for skill-development or by removing gender-based

³ The FFE programs have been implemented in two basic forms: feeding children at school or providing food grain ration every month for poor families with at least one primary-school-age child attending school that month (Ahmed and Babu, 2007)

social, cultural and legal barriers to entering the labor market could encourage women's participation in market work.

Women are among the poorest workers in Nepal; most of their work is concentrated in the unpaid domestic work and subsistence agriculture. Efforts to increase their access to other sectors that have higher productivity and better remuneration could strengthen their bargaining position (Acharya, 2008). During my fieldwork, almost 25 percent of the women who were not employed mentioned that they wanted to work but did not know how to find a job or did not have the skills to work. Provision of vocational trainings to gain the necessary skills and increased access to information on the opportunities in the job-market and the process for applying and getting hired could facilitate women's participation in market work. But for women to be able to find work, there must be jobs available. Hence, efforts towards creating jobs as well as discouraging gender segregation in the labor market could contribute towards increasing women's access to labor market.

Women's involvement in self-employment activities can be encouraged by providing them with trainings on developing entrepreneurial skills, building products and bringing them to market, and learning to keep account of financial transactions. Also, increased access to microfinance institutions to obtain credit for small-scale investment for home-based production or for taking skill-based trainings might motivate women's participation in self-employment activities and support their roles as entrepreneurs (Upadhyaya, 2002).

In addition to encouraging women's participation by providing them with the necessary skills, modifications in government legislation to discourage gender-based discrimination and facilitate the rights of women workers are essential. Currently, most women in Nepal are employed in the informal sector, where discrimination against women is more pronounced with lower wages, longer work hours, no fringe benefits and no incentive earnings. Even labor unions are dominated by men and do not give much attention to gender-sensitive labor policies (Upadhyaya, 2002). Export manufacturers in Nepal prefer female over male workers only because women are cheaper to employ, less likely to unionize, and have greater patience for tedious monotonous jobs involved in assembly operations (Acharya, 2008). Hence, policies that provide social protection for women along with pay equity should be implemented.

7.3.5 Changing Social Norms

I have given birth to five daughters with the expectation of having a son each time. Now I have five children and we don't have the resources to provide them with good food or education. Only two of the girls are going to school and I am not sure if we can continue sending them. I am expecting another child in a few months and I really hope it is a boy this time since we need a son to carry on the family lineage and look after us in old age.

S. Khatun, Siraha

The preference for sons and neglect of daughters, illustrated in this statement by a woman in Nepal's Siraha district, was a frequent theme in many of the conversations I had. Some women talked about having to compromise their daughter's education to be able to send their sons to schools; others mentioned how they got married early to relieve their parents of financial responsibilities. The

stories I heard merged into recurring themes of the struggles women faced in terms of their access to education or employment opportunities, limited information about their rights, lack of leisure, and restrictions on moving freely in public spaces. Such discriminations faced by women can be partly attributed to the inequitable gender norms in Nepal.

Most of the issues associated with difficulties faced by women during men's absence are rooted in the gender-based social and structural barriers in Nepal. Reducing these difficulties requires breaking the oppressive relations and structural constraints that maintain women's subordination. Restrictions faced by women in terms of their physical and economic mobility are rooted in religious and ideological beliefs that portray women as being sexually vulnerable and associating women's sexuality with family's honor. Abolishing such perceptions not only increases women's freedom and access to social and economic resources but also contributes to reducing gender segregation in the labor market. For example, women are often restricted from taking on work that requires high physical mobility, such as delivering goods or driving vehicles. Elimination of notions about the need to keep women 'protected' from the prying eyes of men in the name of family honor may help reduce such constraints. How do we change such perceptions?

One of the approaches for motivating change in social norms is by raising awareness through community programs and media outlets and educating both men and women about the social benefits of gender equality. Batliwala (1994) explains that in order to fight gender inequality, women must acknowledge that their subordinate position is unjust and reject the existing social order. Community

programs could provide women with a platform to organize and collectively fight the oppression against them within the household and in the community. Also, increasing women's access to education, employment and other social resources, as suggested above, may extend their networks, build their confidence, and motivate them to mobilize themselves and make demands on their government and their employers to create new social and political structures where women have equal rights and greater freedom (Moghadam, 1998).

Though the focus of this discussion has been on fighting gender inequality for women's empowerment, the benefits of this change are not limited to women. Increased access to resources and opportunities for women directly contributes to the health, education and well-being of their children and adds to the family's welfare. With freedom from oppression, women provide new energy, insights and leadership and bring in material resources that could empower men and also free them from their role of oppressor and exploiter (Batliwala, 1994; World Bank, 2001). In these ways, the social and economic benefits of gender equality extend to entire families and communities.

7.4 Migration Policies, Return and Reintegration of Migrants

The primary focus of this dissertation has been on the impacts of men's migration on the family left behind. These impacts are highly dependent on the well-being of the migrant member, as the main income source for most migrant households is remittances sent by migrants. Sunam and McCarthy (2016) find that the status of the migrant family is directly associated with the migrant's success,

defined by their ability to send remittances. While households with 'successful' migrants were seen to be building new houses and buying more land, the families of migrants who were not 'successful' lived in poverty. Hence, experiences of migrants influence the status of their families. Here, we present a brief discussion on the existing migration policies and the necessary measures for maintaining the well-being of migrants.

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

In Nepal, migration is facilitated through recruiting agencies that are regulated and monitored by the government.⁴ These agencies negotiate labor contracts between workers and their employers at destination countries, and the government requires them to provide migrants with detailed information on their contracts (work responsibilities, remuneration, compensation in case of injury or death, arrangement for leaves, insurance etc.), work facilities, possible consequences as well as basic information on the location, culture, labor laws, economic, political and social conditions at the destination. The service fees that the agencies charge to prospective migrants are also prescribed by the government. The agencies may face fines, imprisonment or revocation of their licenses in case of non-compliance with these rules. The migrants are also required to take pre-departure training with some government-approved agency before leaving the country. Additionally, the government has entered bilateral agreements with some destination countries to set regulations for exchanging information, maintaining the legality of migrants and protecting their rights and interests at the destination (see Sijapati and Limbu, 2012).⁵

Despite these regulations for providing migrants with information and protecting them at destination, Nepalese migrants suffer partly because of the weak implementation of these regulations and lack of proper oversight by the

⁴ Migration policies in Nepal are regulated by the Foreign Employment Act 2007 and the Foreign Employment Rules 2008 along with various national and labor regulations, bilateral and multilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding, treaties with destination countries and rules set by international conventions.

⁵ Nepal has bilateral agreements with India, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, South Korea and Bahrain.

government. There are a large number of licensed agencies involved in the recruitment process (over 900 agencies) and many of these engage in various kinds of misconduct, such as charging high fees and providing incomplete and incorrect information to migrants (see ILO, 2015 for complaints filed by migrants against these agencies). Also, a majority of organizations providing support to migrants are in Kathmandu; migrants from rest of the country struggle to receive complete information about the job position and have to travel back and forth to the capital city to make their travel arrangements.⁶ Given the existence of malpractices by the agencies and the difficulties faced by migrants in accessing information, many migrants leave the country via informal channels, often by using fake documents and travelling through India. These migrants are in a more vulnerable position, as they migrate without any protection or guarantee of employment abroad and are likely to get trafficked (Sijapati and Limbu, 2012).

In order to address these issues, the government must take steps to monitor the recruiting agencies more closely and charge them with appropriate penalties for providing falsified information to migrants. Also, organizations working to provide information and resources to prospective migrants need to be decentralized and made accessible to migrants all over the country. In addition to requiring the recruiting agencies to provide migrants with complete information, perhaps general information on the salary range, the expected cost of migration and the types of jobs available at destination countries could be made available through local government

⁶ The key government organizations for facilitating migration include Department of Foreign Employment, Foreign Employment Promotion Board and Migrant Resource Center, all of which are located in Kathmandu; though a few offices around the country are now being opened.

and non-government organizations. And, information on the resources available for planning migration could be disseminated through local media outlets. This could not only reduce the possibility of the migrants being cheated by recruiting agencies, but also discourage informal migration by warning about the risks associated with migrating through informal channels. The government must also put forth a cohesive set of plans including contracts with other countries to ensure job security, minimum wage guarantee, wage rates at par with the international standards, rescue and protection of human rights for the migrant member. Such policies would ensure better income, better working conditions and better expectations about earning potential of migrant and allow migrants and their families to make informed decisions on migration and future planning.

Another aspect of migration on which the government needs to develop a comprehensive policy measures is planning the return and reintegration of workers. Most migrants from Nepal migrate temporarily on contract-basis with the hopes of accumulating some savings and returning to their families. Currently, the government's focus is on providing support for initial migration, and no substantial policy for reintegration of workers upon their return has been formulated (Sijapati and Limbu, 2012). This is a matter of concern because if migrants are unable to return home and find comparable employment opportunities, families will have to endure prolonged separation with the associated challenges. Currently, migrants returning home are often unable to find jobs because of the dismal economic conditions in the country, the lack of good investment opportunities and the

inapplicability of the skills acquired abroad in the domestic market (Prasai, 2005). Hence, return migration has become a trend (El-Sakka, 1997; Kharel 2011).

One way to facilitate the reintegration of migrants is by encouraging investment activities within the country for job creation. Since women are the ones staying behind and managing remittances, providing them with the skill-based trainings and other resources, investing in infrastructure to reduce their household and farming responsibilities and also increasing their access to markets could motivate them to direct more remittances towards investment activities. Such investments may help women create a stable source of income for their families and also prepare for the return of their husbands. In the long-term, this could not only facilitate the return and reintegration of migrants but also strengthen the domestic economy by accelerating job creation and reducing the country's dependence on foreign migration. Hence, current policies on migration from Nepal should focus not only on facilitating migration in the short-run, but also on promoting economic growth and creating jobs in the long-run.

7.5 Limitations and Future Research

This study focused on the changes in women's work, decision-making and social participation during men's migration. Including both quantitative and qualitative methods in the analysis of each of the three aspects of women's lives has helped provide an in-depth understanding of these three aspects. However, limitations on time and resources, and data restrictions, imposed a few challenges as discussed below.

For my fieldwork, I only interviewed women in migrant households and asked them how their lives had changed since their husband's migration. So, my qualitative analysis is based on changes over time, and may be subject to recall bias as women may not be able to report perfectly on past information. In some cases, women had gotten married when the migrant came home on a vacation; hence, they had very little experience living with their husbands. In such cases, I asked women about the differences in their experiences when their husbands visited them and when they were away.

In integrating my qualitative and quantitative analysis, one key challenge was that a time-series analysis was not possible for my quantitative work because of data limitations. Hence, my quantitative work compares migrant and non-migrant households, not changes experienced by women in migrant households over time. Quantitative work using time-series analysis, if the data become available, may provide further insights into changes in women's experiences due to migration of men.

It is important to note that there may be endogeneity issues associated with my econometric models since migration is selective process and unobservable characteristics may affect migration decisions (see Acosta, 2006; Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2008). Men may be more likely to migrate from households where women are more confident and have greater decision-making ability or higher social participation. Also, the decision for men to migrate may be affected by the employment status of their wives. These caveats must be kept in mind while interpreting my results.

Another limitation of the quantitative models is that the data do not provide information on the relationship between the migrant member and the family members left behind. For this study, I specified all married women in migrant households as migrant wives; however, some of these women could be sisters, mothers, or sisters-in-law of the male members.

Finally, the measure used for women's social participation is based only on whether women spent any time in going to the market or in community activities in the past week (NLSS data) or whether they were members of certain groups (NDHS). Both these measures don't account for women's social networks or other form of social activities in which they might be involved. Availability of more detailed data on women's social participation could provide a better measure for studying women's involvement in social activities.

In their essay, 'Shadow Lives of Migrant Wives', Conway and Shrestha (2001) state that migrant wives in Nepal live in the shadow of their husbands. They rely on their husbands to send remittances to maintain their everyday living, they follow their husbands' instructions in making everyday decisions and managing household and childcare work, and they wait for their husband's return. Though this statement generally concurs with findings from my fieldwork, the portrayal of women as a homogenous submissive group living under the shield of their husbands may be inaccurate. In many instances, women may disapprove of their husbands' migration but may not have had a say in his decision to migrate. In other cases, women may have spent very little time with the migrants and formed no strong connections with them. Many of my fieldwork participants had gotten married when the migrants'

returned home for a few months' vacation and the only time they had spent together was the few months of vacation every 2 - 3 years. Living under such circumstances could come with huge emotional and social costs both for the migrant and his wife. In fact, one of the most common themes that emerged from the discussions on impacts of migration, during my informational interviews, was the rise in social issues such as higher divorce rates, marital tensions and family break-ups and the impact of these on children. The following accounts from some of my key informants provide some insight into this.⁷

Without the guidance of fathers, the school drop out rate is increasing and so is the crime rate.... Also, children are disconnected with their fathers.
Manju Gurung, Pourakhi

When men migrate, children suffer due to single parenting. They are usually shy and have problems socializing when they don't get support from both their parents.
Meena Poudel, IOM

Men get married and leave their young wives behind. They return once every 2-3 years and girls often have extra-marital relations with other men, often within the family. Such problems are rising in our society.
Saru Joshi, UN Women

Women may be involved with other men, when men are away and men may be involved with other women too. This brings social tensions and hurts children's development.
Tika Bhandari, Foreign Employment Promotion Board

Not living with your husband for long periods of time can be very stressful for women. It is highly likely for them to be involved in extra-marital relationships. Also, sometimes the husband works hard, sends money home but the wife here misuses it on other men. Many such cases have been filed. Men, on the other hand, are also likely to have their own relationships

⁷ My key informants included people working in migration-related issues (either facilitating migration, rescuing them from abroad, providing reintegration programs or working on migration-related policymaking) at organizations including Pourakhi, UN Women, IOM and Department of Foreign Employment.

abroad. In some cases, despite these relationships, men send money home. In other cases, they just abandon their family behind and start another life abroad. There are not many studies on this topic, so we haven't been able to fully estimate the extent of these social issues.

Mona Rayamajhi, Women for Human Rights

Looking into these social costs and emotional tensions would provide a deeper insight into the experiences of women left behind when men migrate. Expressions of marital tensions and pains of separation were seldom mentioned in the conversations I had with women, perhaps because they were not comfortable sharing such personal tensions with an outside researcher. Also, talking about such issues are often considered taboo and may be perceived negatively. The focus on this study on three specific aspects of women's lives to draw inferences about their empowerment left such social costs unexplored. An in-depth analysis on these other aspects could add significantly to understanding women's experiences during men's absence.

7.6 Conclusion

During my conversations with migrant wives regarding their experiences in the absence of their husbands, I heard mixed emotions expressing the joys from being able to send their children to better schools and afford better food and shelter through remittances as well as the pains from family separation, increased responsibilities and challenges of living by themselves in a male-dominated society.

Tara, a 32-year-old Newar woman, summarized these experiences stating:

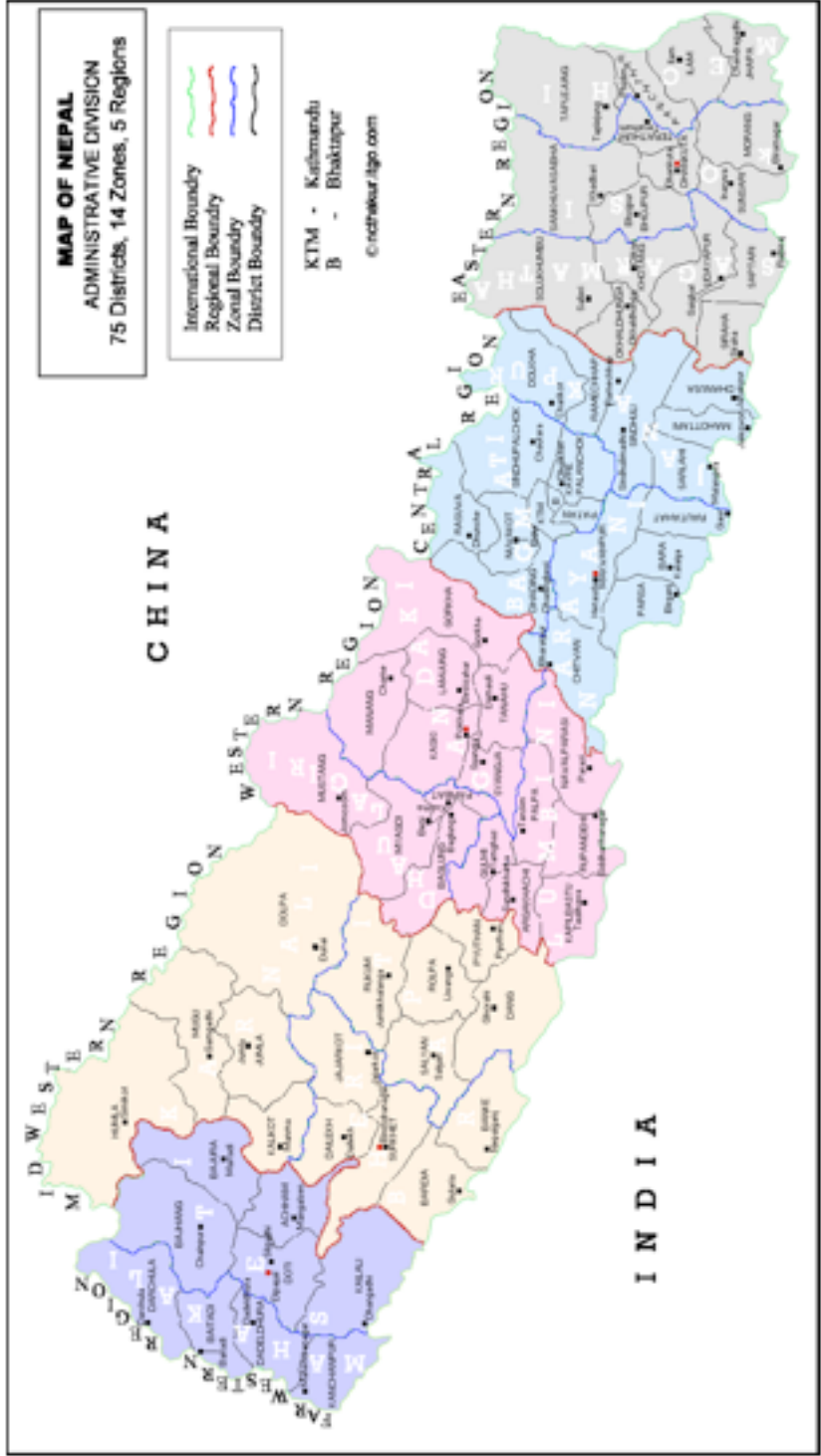
My kids were in government school, I started sending them to private school after my husbands' migration. We didn't have a house or land before he left. Even in the kitchen, we needed wood to light fire. Now, we have this house and some land, and we cook using gas. Before we didn't have cell phones and

didn't know how to use them, today I have my own phone and talk to my husband regularly. We eat good food and have been living comfortably. But it is difficult to live apart. My husband is not here to support me with everyday things. When he was here, he would take care of the work outside home, and I did not have to worry about making decisions of managing finances. Now, I have to do it all and if anything goes wrong it will be my fault. I am especially worried about my sons growing up without their father. My husband was much better at disciplining them and he also helped them with some schoolwork. I am very lenient with them and I don't know how well they are doing at school. I worry about these things most of the times."

Such accounts illustrate the ramifications of men's migration on women's lives. On the one hand, women could gain from increased access to economic and social resources and higher bargaining power. On the other hand, absence of men could expose women to new vulnerabilities due to the existing gender inequalities and add tensions through increased responsibilities. Given the mixed consequences of men's migration, it is not clear whether men's absence has empowering effects on women. However, the study has shed light on specific aspects of women's empowerment and discussed the factors influencing each of these aspects as well as the conditions and policies under which women may be able to maximize the gains from migration and minimize the associated costs.

APPENDIX A

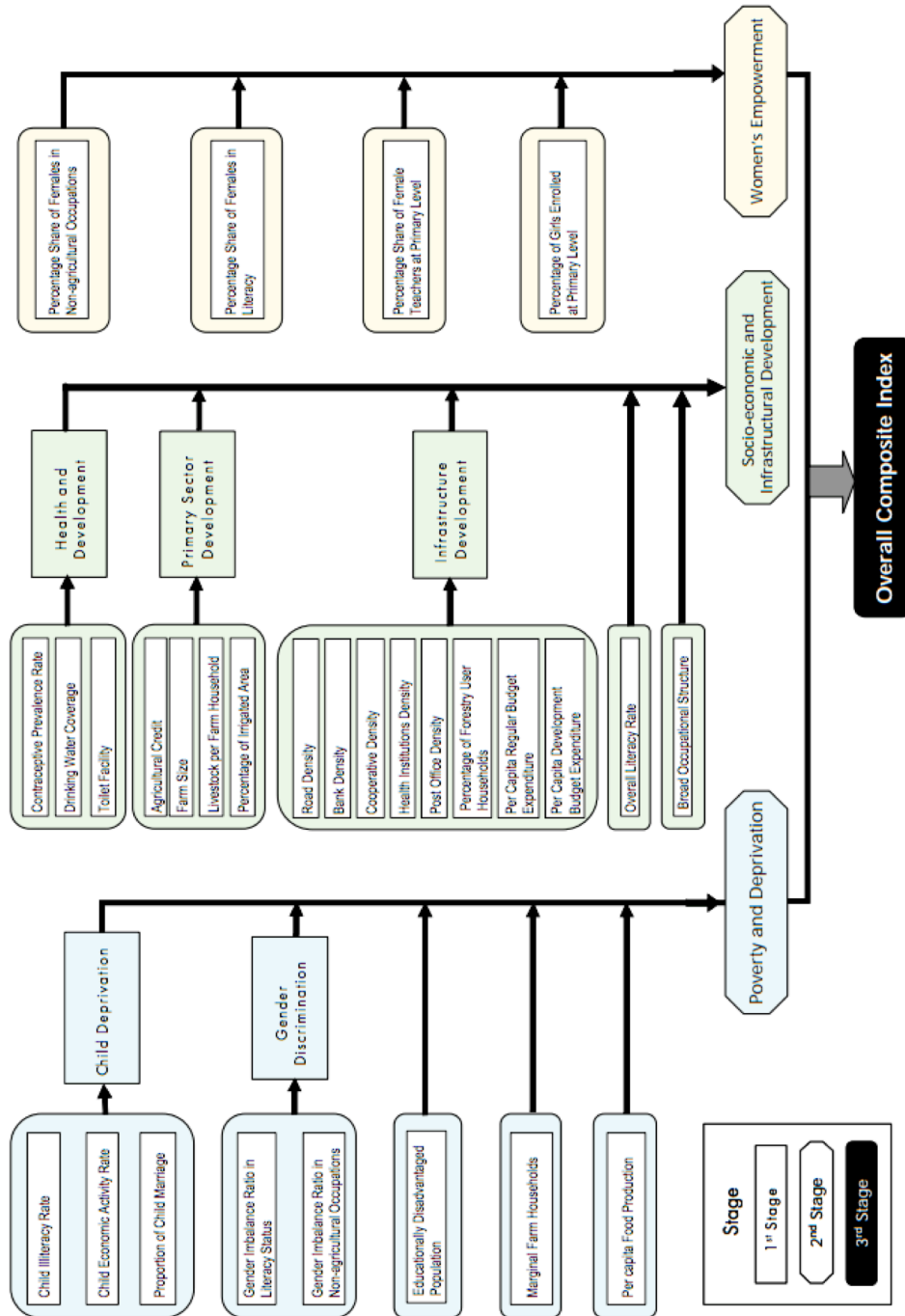
MAP OF NEPAL WITH ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION



APPENDIX B

SCHEME OF INDICATORS TO FORM OVERALL COMPOSITE INDEX

Adopted from: Districts of Nepal, Indicators of Development, Update 2003



APPENDIX C
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

District:
Village/ Municipality:
Date of Interview:

Part 1: Interviewee Information

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Caste/Ethnicity: Chhetri -1, Brahmin – 2, Newar – 3, Tharu – 4, Other -5 (list)
4. Religion: Hindu – 1, Buddhist – 2, Muslim – 3, Other - 4
5. For how many years have you been married?
6. Educational Background
 - a) What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - b) Why did you quit school?

Part 2: Household Information

Household Members

1) Who else lives in the house with you?

List household members by relationship with the interviewee	Work Information	If in school, current education level.	Any school age children not going to school?

Extra questions:

If they don't mention parents-in-law among household members, ask if they separated before or after husband's migration and why?

Part 3: Migrant Members

1. Relationship of migrant member to the interviewee:
2. Education level:
3. Current Destination:
4. Current Employment:
5. Length of absence:
6. Has he migrated to any other country for work before this?
7. If yes, where and how many times?
8. Employment before leaving:
9. Plans for return:
 - a) Stay there as long as possible
 - b) Plan to work for a few years and return but return date uncertain

- c) Working now with a certain return date in the near future (permanently)
 - d) Returning soon but possibly going somewhere else for employment again
- [Repeat the set of questions for all migrant members]

Part 4: Employment and Income

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

Agriculture:

1. Own any agricultural land?
2. List household members who work in family-owned land:
3. Hire anyone to work in the fields?
4. Agriculture products sold or for self-consumption?

Animal Husbandry:

1. Does the family own any cattle?
2. List all family members involved in taking care of the animals:
3. Hire anyone to take care of the cattle?
4. Sell any animal products or for self-consumption?

Self-employment

1. Do you or any other member of the household produce things within the house and sell them?
2. Income from self-employment
3. Employment outside home (Market and/or agricultural work for wages/ in-kind/ agricultural products):

List members who are employed in market work or in others' fields for wages	Employment Sector	Hours worked per week	Income in the past month

Remittances

1. Remittances received?

Part 5: Women's Work Responsibilities

For women who do all household work and also work outside:

1. How much more difficult is it to work outside home and manage household tasks without the men?
2. Do you face any kind of pressure from your husband or other family members to quit working?
3. Do you face any social pressure to quit working?

For women who don't work outside:

1. Why haven't you worked outside home?
 - a) Not necessary because we have enough income, by choice
 - b) Not allowed to work outside
 - c) Need to take care of the kids
 - d) No opportunities based on my skills
 - e) No opportunities based on what is socially acceptable for women to do
 - f) No time, there is lot of household work
2. Do you want to work? Why or why not?

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

1. Why did you start working?
 - a) Lack of income and interruption in remittance reception
 - b) Out of desire to work and due to increased freedom during husband's absence
 - c) Other reasons (explain)
2. How difficult is it difficult to manage both household and outside work?
3. Would you be able to manage things better if your husband was around?
4. Do you feel any kind of pressure to quit working?

For women who quit working upon husband's migration:

1. Why did you quit working after your husband left?
2. Have things become easier or difficult since you quit work?

Household Responsibilities

1. Have your responsibilities within the household increased or decreased since your husband's migration?
2. Which of the tasks of your husbands have you had to take over?
3. Has the overall workload increased?
4. How has your stress level changed?

Part 6: Financial Status and Remittance use

1. What are some of the major household expenses?
2. Is the income enough to manage everyday expenses or do you sometimes have to borrow money to meet consumption needs?
3. Have you put some of your income into savings for the future?
4. Do you have long-term loans that you are paying over time?
5. Compared to before how has your financial status changed? Discuss changes in consumption bundle for food as well as other household assets (phone, computer etc), whether the children switched from going to government school to private school and whether living standard has become better than when your husband was living here with you.
6. Has remittance income been invested in anything?
7. Have you saved remittance income for future investment for creating some form of income source for the household?

Part 7: Mobility and Autonomy

1. Under whose name is remittance sent?
2. Who manages financial matters in the house?
3. Who goes to the bank to get the remittance or make other financial transactions?
4. Who went to the bank before your husband's migration?
5. Who goes to the market to purchase everyday stuff for the house?
6. Who went to the market before your husband's migration?
7. If you had to borrow money, who goes out to seek loans?
8. Who took responsibility of getting loans while your husband was here?
9. Do you feel stressed about having to take on these responsibilities in your husband's absence or are you comfortable managing all of these stuff by yourself? (If the woman has taken on most of these responsibilities)
10. Have you participated in any skill-training or awareness raising programs (government or non-government)? Why or why not?

Part 8: Decisionmaking

[Possible answers: Husband only (1), Wife only (2), Jointly (3), Some other household member (4)]

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

Part 9 : Ownership of Assets

1. Who owns most of the household assets such as the house you live in, the agricultural land?
2. Do the women in the household own any of these assets?

Part 10: General/ open-ended questions

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

APPENDIX D

NLSS-III DATA DESCRIPTION

1) Defining Employment Status:

The survey provides the following information for all household members above 5 years old:

- a) Hours spent on market work in the past week (market work including wage employment in agriculture and non-agriculture as well as self-employment in both agriculture and non-agriculture)
- b) Hours spent on household work in the past week

The total number of observations is 25,617. I categorize all the observations into one of the following three groups: 'Employed', 'Unemployed', and 'Not in labor force' using the following methodology:

Anyone who spent more than one hour in the past week in market work is classified as being employed. (11,160 observations)

Hours spent on market work is either 0 or missing for the remaining 14,457 observations. These people are either unemployed or not in the labor force. These 14,457 observations are divided into three groups based on number of hours spent in household work.

Group 1 – hours spent on household work is 0.

Group 2 – hours spent on household work is greater than 0 and less than 40.

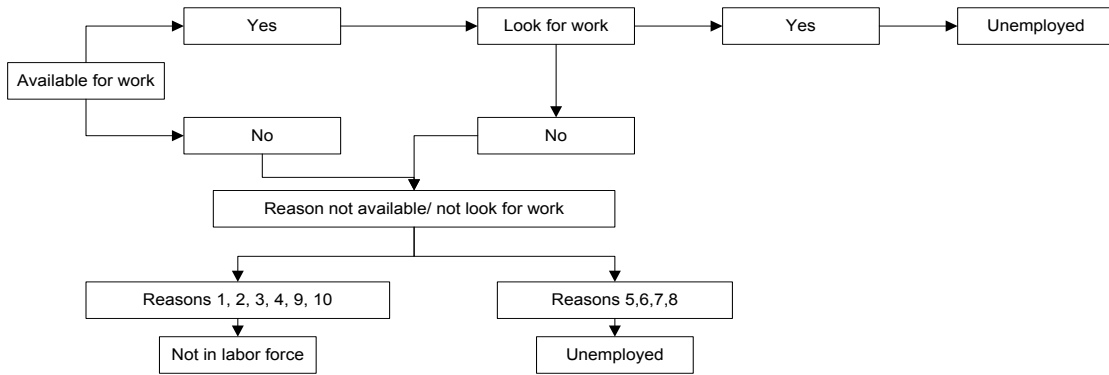
Group 3- hours spent on household work is more than 40.

For Group 1, the following information is provided.

- a) Available for work: Yes/No
- b) Looking for work: Yes/No
- c) Reason not available/ not looking for work

1	Household duties	4	Thought no work was available	7	Off season
2	Old/Sick	5	Awaiting reply to earlier inquiries	8	Not available
3	Disabled	6	Waiting to start arranged job/ business	9	Others

I separated people who are not in the labor force and people who are unemployed by using the following definition.

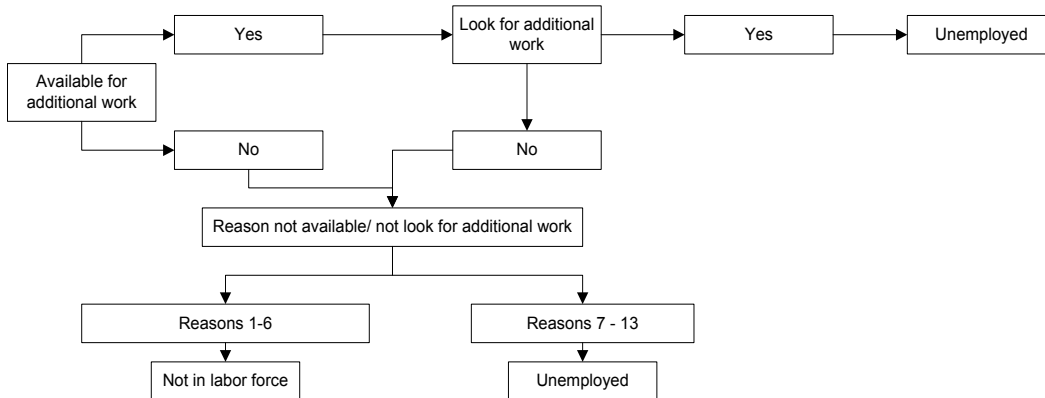


For Group 2, the following information is provided:

- a) Available for additional work: Yes/No
- b) Looking for additional work: Yes/No
- c) Reason not available/looking for additional work:

1	Could not find more work/ lack of business	8	Household duties
2	Lack of finance/ raw materials	9	Student, unpaid training
3	Machinery, electrical, other breakdown	10	Illness, disability
4	Offseason inactivity	11	Vacation, family reason
5	Industrial dispute	12	Pregnant/ delivery
6	Other involuntary	13	Other voluntary
7	Have sufficient work		

For this group, I separated not in labor force and unemployed people in the following way:



For Group 3, no information is provided on whether or not they are looking or available for additional work, perhaps because they are already spending over 40 hours on household work. These people are identified as not being in the labor force.

2) Defining asset index

Two asset indices are created for measuring the economic status of a household on the basis of five housing characteristics and ownership of eight assets as listed and defined in the table below.

Housing Characteristics	Variable Name and Description	% of households with value 1 for each variable
Material of the outside wall	wall=1 for cement-bonded bricks or stone wall wall = 0 for mud-bonded bricks, stones, wood, other (bamboo/ leaves/unbaked bricks/other) , no walls	wall = 1 for 38.5% households
Source of drinking water	water=1 for covered well or piped water water=0 for hand pump, open well, spring water, river, other	water = 1 for 50.7% households
Type of toilet used	toilet=1 for non-flush or flush toilet=0 for no toilet or communal toilet	toilet = 1 for 62.5% households
Source of light	light=1 for electricity or solar light=0 for biogas, kerosene or other	light = 1 for 78.5% households
Main cooking fuel	fuel=1 for kerosene, biogas or cylinder gas fuel=0 for firewood, dung, leaves, rubbish or other	fuel = 1 for 30.3% households
Own a camera?	Yes=1, No=0	Yes for 15.5% households
Own a television?	Yes=1, No=0	Yes for 50.1% households
Own a computer?	Yes=1, No=0	Yes for 9.5% households
Own a heater?	Yes=1, No=0	Yes for 6% households
Own a refrigerator?	Yes=1, No=0	Yes for 12.6% households
Own a telephone?	Yes=1, No=0	Yes for 65.9% households
Own a motorcycle?	Yes=1, No=0	Yes for 12.1% households
Own a fan?	Yes=1, No=0	Yes for 36.9% households

The variables are defined such that higher values indicate better economic status. Information on ownership of assets such as bicycle and pressure lamps was not used since the correlation coefficients of these variables with the that of other thirteen variables was low and often negative, perhaps because it is more likely for the relatively poor to own these assets. Also, assets such as utensils, furniture and jewelry that were owned by about 90 percent of the population was not included since they would not contribute much to defining economic status based on ownership of assets.

These variables were used to develop two indices using different methodologies. The first index is an equally weighted average of the values of all the thirteen variables. A second index is constructed using the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) method, which assigns different weights to each variable based on the distribution of the data for each variable across all observations and then sums the weighted values to give an index. We use the first component of the MCA

analysis as our MCA index since this first component alone explains about 93.5% of the variation in the data.¹

A comparison of the equally weighted index and the MCA index showed that these two indices were very similar. The indices had a correlation coefficient of 0.99 and when the indices were used alternatively in the different empirical models, they had similar relationships with the dependent variables. Hence, in the regression analysis, only the MCA index is used as an indicator of the economic status of a household.

¹ The inertia of the first component was 0.935.

APPENDIX E

CORRELATION BETWEEN INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (NLSS-III)

	Mig_HH	Rem HH	Age	Educ	Head	Wage	Members	Women
Mig_HH	1.0							
Rem HH	0.529	1.0						
Age	0.008	0.015	1.0					
Educ	-0.091	-0.043	-0.525	1.0				
Head	0.216	0.191	0.111	-0.120	1.0			
Wage	-0.035	-0.041	-0.069	0.059	0.072	1.0		
Members	0.013	-0.019	-0.10	-0.039	-0.286	-0.071	1.0	
Women	0.104	0.040	-0.227	0.199	-0.203	-0.039	0.650	1.0
Men	-0.261	-0.216	-0.073	0.062	-0.328	-0.048	0.585	0.397
Dependents	0.098	0.074	0.085	-0.180	-0.137	-0.073	0.669	0.182
Asset	-0.161	-0.086	-0.004	0.471	-0.052	-0.026	-0.016	0.180
Land	0.056	0.084	0.038	-0.006	-0.093	-0.084	0.180	0.128
Caste	0.101	-0.096	0.041	0.287	0.005	-0.030	-0.127	-0.024
Location	0.196	0.153	0.019	-0.310	0.000	-0.043	0.102	-0.040
MBelt	0.003	0.015	0.015	-0.071	-0.002	0.015	-0.005	-0.046
HBelt	-0.077	-0.172	0.025	0.137	0.038	0.035	-0.161	-0.083
	Men	Dependents	Asset	Land	Caste	Location	MBelt	HBelt
Men	1.0							
Dependents	0.094	1.0						
Asset	0.189	-0.163	1.0					
Land	0.100	0.123	-0.024	1.0				
Caste	-0.002	-0.145	0.348	-0.027	1.0			
Location	-0.106	0.187	-0.590	0.148	-0.229	1.0		
MBelt	-0.032	0.007	-0.128	0.044	0.045	0.182	1.0	
HBelt	-0.049	-0.135	0.142	-0.075	0.269	-0.184	-0.269	1.0

Variables names:

Mig HH – Migrant Household

Rem HH – Remittance receiving Household

Educ – Years of education

Wage- Wage-employed

Members- Number of members

Women – Number of women

Men – Number of men

Dependents – Number of dependents

Asset – Asset Index (MCA)

Land – Land ownership

As the table illustrates, it is not very likely that we have multicollinearity issues with our models since the correlation between the independent variables is low in most cases. The following sets of variables have relatively high correlation:

- a) Migrant Household and Remittance-Receiving Households: Since migrant households are likely to receive-remittances, the correlation between the two is high. However, I use these variables in different models, so multicollinearity is not a concern for this case.

- b) Age and years of education: Younger women are more likely to have had an opportunity to go to school, explaining the high negative correlation between these two variables.
- c) Years of education and MCA index: More educated women are also likely to be from wealthier households.
- d) Number of female adult members, number of male adult members, number of dependent members: Larger families are more likely to have more male, female and dependent members.
- e) MCA index and Location: Ownership of assets is likely to be higher in urban regions, explaining the high correlation between these variables.

I tested for multicollinearity for each of the models. The variance inflation factors for the independent variables was less than 2.5; hence multicollinearity is not a severe issue in any of our models.

APPENDIX F

CORRELATION BETWEEN INDEPENDENT VARIABLES (NDHS)

	Mig_HH	Age	Educ	Head	Children	Wage	Own-Ind
Mig_HH	1.0						
Age	-0.012	1.0					
Educ	-0.061	-0.464	1.0				
Head	0.276	0.205	-0.137	1.0			
Children	0.025	0.731	-0.549	0.168	1.0		
Wage	-0.046	0.066	0.003	0.052	0.005	1.0	
Own-Ind	-0.017	0.287	-0.007	0.165	0.163	0.059	1.0
Med-Exp	-0.073	-0.219	0.630	-0.088	-0.370	0.039	0.061
Wealth	-0.128	0.021	0.494	-0.033	-0.202	0.061	0.189
HH Str	0.193	-0.100	0.038	-0.219	-0.088	-0.049	-0.079
Caste	-0.048	0.056	0.233	-0.004	-0.024	-0.103	0.076
Location	0.143	0.002	-0.242	0.018	0.115	-0.065	-0.091
MBelt	0.019	0.014	-0.111	-0.008	0.052	-0.077	-0.043
HBelt	-0.003	0.009	0.033	0.031	0.009	-0.064	-0.029
	Med-Exp	Wealth	HH Str	Caste	Location	Mbelt	Hbelt
Med-Exp	1.0						
Wealth	0.559	1.0					
HH Str	-0.004	-0.037	1.0				
Caste	0.205	0.196	-0.047	1.0			
Location	-0.317	-0.527	0.080	-0.058	1.0		
MBelt	-0.081	-0.288	-0.002	0.083	0.199	1.0	
HBelt	-0.023	-0.096	-0.034	0.128	0.018	-0.351	1.0

Variables names:

Mig_HH- Migrant Household

Educ – Years of education

Children- Number of children

Wage- wage-employed

Own-Ind – Ownership Index

Med-Exp – Media exposure

Wealth- Wealth Index

HH Str – Household Structure

The correlation coefficients for most of the independent variables are low. The following set of variables have a relatively high correlation:

- a) Age and years of education
- b) Age and number of children
- c) Years of education and number of children
- d) Years of education and media exposure
- e) Years of education and ownership index
- f) Media exposure and number of children
- g) Media exposure and wealth index
- h) Wealth index and location

I tested for multicollinearity in my models and found little evidence for it based on the low variance inflation factors for the independent variables.

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