

## **MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN MID AND FAR-WESTERN HILLS: WITH REFERENCE TO DAILEKH, JAJARKOT, KALIKOT AND ACHHAM<sup>†</sup>**

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Emigration has been an emerging phenomenon in Nepal. Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot, and Achham located in a single cluster of mid- and far-western hill are no exceptions to this phenomenon. These districts are at the bottom in terms of socio-economic development indicated by HDI. Poverty has been a main circumstance that accelerates migration out of country to choose one of the livelihood options. With limited data, evidence suggests that migration is as high as in other districts and the destination is overwhelmingly to the different parts of India. As the coping strategy for their livelihood, not only men but also women are involved in both short term and long term migration. Migration of men to various cities in India is closely linked with HIV/AIDS and that of women is linked with both HIV/AIDS and sex trafficking. HIV/AIDS and sex trafficking vulnerability seem unavoidable in these districts.

### **OVERVIEW OF EMIGRATION IN NEPAL<sup>1</sup>**

Nepal has a long history of migration especially to India. After the Sugauli Treaty 1814-15, which followed the War between the British East-India Company and then Nepal the War ended in 1814, British began to recruit Nepalese men in their army as Gurkha Regiment. Civilian migration also emerged to other various parts of India, especially to North-East such as Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam, and Meghalaya responding to the need of labour in newly established tea estates. Recruitment in British Army continued and, after the Independence of India, British recruited Gurkha to serve in its regiments. These are some of the main gateways for the history of Nepalese emigration. Due to historical and cultural tie and open border between India and Nepal, India is a major destination country for Nepalese for seasonal and temporary migration for work. Migration to India does not need any legal documents.

In 1952/54<sup>2</sup>, the emigrants were 2.3 percent of the total population (KC, 1995) which increased to 3.4 percent in 2001. Increment is only one percentage points during the half century, but the volume has increased tremendously. The percentage increase in emigration during this period is estimated to be 285 percent (762,181 vs. 198,120). India has been an overwhelming as a destination since the beginning of migration history. The percentage of Indian migrants was 79.4 in 1952/54, which increased to 93.1 in 1981, and then began to decline and again increased to 77.3 percent in 2001 (KC, 1995). Declining proportion of migrants to India is due to increasing migration of Nepali to third countries (23%) due to expansion of the destinations to third countries following the government's legal recognition of foreign employment with its "Foreign Employment Act" in 1985. The newly explored destinations are Arabian countries, East and South-east Asian countries with a large demand of labour for their infrastructural and industrial development. Since then, Nepal has been experiencing mass labour migration, especially to the Middle-east, Malaysia, and Korea. The Nepal Government has adopted "Foreign Employment

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'emigration' is known as migration but that occurs across the international boundary. Emigration is termed from the origin perspective and 'immigration' from the destination.

<sup>2</sup> The Census 1952/54 was the first modern population census of Nepal.

Act 2007” and “Foreign Employment Regulations Act 2008” in order to manage foreign labour migration legally and institutionally.

Ministry of Labour and Transportation (MOLT) records that two hundred seventeen thousand migrants departed to foreign countries in the fiscal year of 2008/09, of which 4 percent were females (Bhattarai, 2009). Various sources report that there is no less than three million Nepalese in foreign employment (Thieme, 2006; Brusle, 2010; NIDS, 2010). Around 40 percent of the migrants leave for India and 60 percent for the third countries, primarily to the Gulf countries, Malaysia, Lebanon and the Republic of Korea and among overseas migrants women account for around 9 percent (NIDS, 2010).

### MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

As migration is one of the important livelihood strategies, its linkage with poverty and development has been well established. In case of Nepal, remittances have contributed to at least 20 percent of the decline in poverty in Nepal between 1995 and 2004 (Lokshin et al., 2007). Currently, the foreign labour migration is contributing to about 25 percent in the national GDP. Remittances benefit around one third of the population in Nepal.

UNDP (2009a) suggests that migration can contribute to human development, especially if the rights of movers are improved. Human development, therefore, may be linked with migration to understand overall socio-economic development. Human development index (HDI) is an appropriate summary measure of three important indicators representing a wide range social and economic wellbeing. It includes access to knowledge, long and healthy life, and decent standard of living.

Nepal’s mid and far-western districts are economically as well as socially less developed than that of eastern districts of Nepal, with few exceptional cases. So, it is assumed that there is association between HDI and foreign labour migration. An example can be seen with a correlation between migration and human development (Table 1).

Table 1: Correlation coefficients for migration destination by HDI at district level

Variables	District (east to west)	HDI, 2004	Migration to India	Migration to abroad
District (east to west)	1.0000			
HDI, 2004	-0.5071 (0.000)	1.0000		
Migration to India	0.6650 (0.000)	-0.6878 (0.000)	1.0000	
Migration to abroad	-0.7417 (0.000)	0.5554 (0.000)	-0.8868 (0.000)	1.0000

Note: Seventy five districts have been arrayed systematically from east (Tapejung) the west (Darchula). Numbers in parentheses represents P-value and all the coefficients are statistically significant at 0.001 levels.

Source: Data set from Population Census 2001; UNDP, 2004.

When 75 districts are systematically arrayed from the very east (Tapejung) to the very west (Darchula)<sup>3</sup> and examined against its HDI values, it is found that districts are negatively associated with HDI values and migration to other countries and positively associated with migration to India. This indicates that level of development gets lesser and lesser as one moves from east to west in Nepal and that is associated with higher migration to India and fewer to other countries. On the other way, HDI is negatively associated with migration to India and

<sup>3</sup> The array of districts is based on the code of districts established by Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal in order to use for conducting Censuses and Surveys.

positively with migration to other countries. The result suggests that western districts are poorer in terms of human development and they have higher proportion of migration destined to India, whereas lower proportion of those who destined to other countries. This provides the evidence that poorer migrate to India – seasonally as well as permanently – while those a little better-off migrate to beyond India. This finding holds for Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot and Achham as well.

### EMIGRATION FROM JAJARKOT, DAILEKH, KALIKOT AND ACHHAM DISTRICTS

Now, this section is concentrated in four districts – Jajarkot, Dailekh, and Kalikot from mid-western and Achham from far-western hill districts – located in a single cluster. Former section has established these districts as among the lower strata in terms of socio-economic development based on HDI with higher level of migration destined to India and lower migration destined to third countries. The analysis is focused on demographic induction, migration pattern, reasons for migration and its relationship with development.

#### Basic Characteristics of the four Districts

Basic characteristics of the four districts are discussed based on the 2001 census data. The population is one percent of the total population in Achham and less than one percent of the total population in each Dailekh, Jajarkot and Kalikot (Table 2). Compared to the national average (99.8 males per 100 females), the sex ratio is fairly less in Dailekh (95.7) and Achham (89.1) indicating considerable deficit of male population and slightly higher in Jajarkot and Kalikot.

Population density is less than national average (157 persons per sq. km) in Achham and Dailekh and far less in Jajarkot (60) and Kalikot (61). Except Achham (5.3), Jajarkot, Dailekh and Kalikot have slightly higher household size compared to the national average of 5.4 members per household. The level of literacy is less than the national literacy rate (54.1%) in all four districts. Among them, Achham has the lowest literacy rate (33.8%), which is 20 points lower, and Dailekh has the highest literacy rate (48%), which is still 6 points lower than that of national level. In case of economic activity, all four districts have a considerably higher percentage of economically active population as compared to the national level (63.4%).

Table 2: Population density, household size, and literacy

Districts	% of population	Sex ratio	Population density/ sq. km.	Household size	Literacy rate	Economically active population
Nepal	100.00	99.8	157	5.4	54.1	63.4
Jajarkot	0.58	103.2	60	5.6	39.5	73.8
Dailekh	0.97	95.7	150	5.5	48.0	73.8
Kalikot	0.46	101.5	61	5.7	38.5	74.4
Achham	1.00	89.1	138	5.3	33.8	83.3

Source: CBS, 2002 (Volume I - Table 1 & Volume II - Table 12 & 26).

#### Migration Patterns

These districts are in the region of higher dependency of livelihood on labour migration. Labour migration in these districts is characterized by both short term and long term. Short term is basically for seasonal agricultural work and long term for employment in the service sectors such as manual labourer in factories/industries and construction works and security guards in

private and public sectors. Seasonal migration includes both, migration within Nepal and to India, while long term migration includes migration to India and third countries mainly Malaysia, Arabian countries, and others. Evidences suggest that seasonal migration from the mid- and far-western hills is a routinized livelihood strategy for many people.

The population census 2001 recorded that percentage of absentees<sup>4</sup> in Achham (9.4%) is almost three times higher and that in Dailekh (4.4%) is one point higher than the national average of 3.4 percent (Table 3). However, the proportion of absentees is fairly less in Jajarkot (0.4%) and Kalikot (1.2%). Share of female absentee is highest in Achham (14%) but considerably lower in other districts. The percentage of those who go to India is overwhelming in all four districts that almost cent percent of those being absent. Females are also significant in proportions for those going to India, especially from Dailekh (11%), Jajarkot (10%) and Achham (14%). For those going to other countries, number of females is minimal.

Table 3: Absentee population in four districts by country of destination, census 2001

Area	Total population	Absentee	% Absentee	Destination			Total
				India	Third countries		
					Labour receivers**	Other countries	
Nepal	22,736,934	762,181	3.4	77.3	18.4	4.3	22.7
Jajarkot	134,868	556	0.4	97.3	1.6	1.1	2.7
Dailekh	225,201	9,809	4.4	99.2	0.5	0.4	0.8
Kalikot*	11,510	136	1.2	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Achham	231,285	21,707	9.4	99.6	0.2	0.3	0.4

Source: CBS, 2002. Population Census 2001: National Report, Volume I, Table 12.

\* Enumeration did not cover all the VDCs and wards due to political insurgency led by Maoist.

\*\* Labour receiver countries include Middle-east, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Russia and ex-USSR countries, etc.

The population census data provides only a glimpse of emigration in aggregate. There are no previous studies available to comprehend even in a brief detail the migration situation in these four districts. Pkhakadze (2002) conducted a study on poverty and migration in Dadeldhura district, which is from the same region and also quite similar to these four districts in case of migration. He found that over 46.5 percent in the sample population were migrant workers. The overwhelming majority of them were in the age range of 20 to 49 years. Among migrants, 78.7 percent destined to India and 21.3 percent were internal migrants. Far-western Terai was the main destination for internal migration from Dadeldhura. Of the total migrants destined to India, more than 62 percent migrated to different cities. He also cited a study in Doti district carried out by Poudel (1999)<sup>5</sup> which states that 33 percent of migrants go to Mumbai, 25 percent to Punjab, 16.3 percent to Madras and 2 percent to Delhi. Thieme (2006) citing Muller (2001)<sup>6</sup> suggests that, in two villages in Bajura districts (from the same region as the four study districts), 9 percent were absent from the household in 2000. Most of them were destined to Delhi and stayed there from a few months to several years. Jill (2003) found migrants from Jajarkot mainly destined to Delhi and Mumbai. FHI (2002) found, for migrants from Achham district, Maharashtra was the most frequently visited destination (55%), followed by Haryana (20%) and northern parts of India. Most of them migrated when they were 18 to 25 years old.

<sup>4</sup> Population Census defines the absentee population as the persons who are absent from the household for six or more months at the time of enumeration.

<sup>5</sup> Poudel, K.C., 1999, *Migration Patterns of Doti, Participatory Planning and Management of HIV/AIDS* (Kathmandu: UNDP/NCASC).

<sup>6</sup> Muller, 2001, *Die Kombination von Photogrammetrie/GIS mit sozialwissenschaftlichen Methoden: Ein Untersuchung der Pufferzone des Khaptad Nationalparks in Nepal*, Master Thesis, University of Zurich.

Bhattarai (2007) found that migrants originated from Dailekh are mostly involved in factory works in Delhi and from Achham and Kalikot are mostly working as watchman in Mumbai.

Migration from the mid- and far-western districts destined to third countries is low compared to that from the districts of eastern Nepal. Similarly, in Jajarkot migrants destined to third countries are only 2.7 percent, whereas it is almost none in Dailekh and Achham and none of the migrants in Kalikot were recorded to go to third countries (Table 2). However, the volume of migration destined to third countries from Jajarkot is fewer (15) than from Achham (92) and Dailekh (83) and the third countries are mainly Malaysia and Arabian countries. Among those who went to third countries, relatively more were recorded from Jajarkot who went to labour receiving countries.

### Reasons for Migration

Table 4 provides the reasons for absence from the households in the four districts in comparison to the national aggregate. Census data with reason for absence not specific according to destination and with a considerably higher proportion of population with reason classified as "other" has limited interpretation. Beside this category, it is clear that 'personal service' (non-agricultural work in private and unorganized sector) is the main reason why people leave home for foreign countries in all four districts and Nepal. Population reporting personal service as the reason for their absence are in considerable majority for Jajarkot (65.8%), whereas it is quite lower for Kalikot (33%). The second important reason is business that was reported for Dailekh (33.2%), Kalikot (16.2%), and Achham (25.1%). This pattern is comparable to national aggregate. Institutional service (non-agricultural work in organized sector) is also found to be somehow important reason for absence as recorded for Dailekh (5.1%) and Achham (4.3%).

Table 4: Reasons for absence from the households by four districts

Reasons of Absence	Nepal	Jajarkot	Dailekh	Kalikot	Achham	Total (4 districts)
Agriculture	1.0	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.3	0.4
Business	18.4	2.3	33.2	16.2	25.1	27.1
Personal Service	48.5	65.8	43.9	33.1	47.6	46.7
Institutional Service	11.4	1.3	5.1	0.0	4.3	4.5
Study	2.5	1.1	1.5	0.7	3.9	3.1
Marriage	1.6	0.4	1.9	0.0	0.9	1.2
Others	16.6	28.8	13.8	49.3	17.9	16.9
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total N	762,181	556	9,809	136	21,707	32,208

Source: CBS, 2002. Population Census 2001: National Report, Table 13.

Even though the share of females among absentee population is few especially in Jajarkot and Kalikot, reason for absence by gender provides some indications of migration pattern. Proportion of females reporting 'study' and 'marriage' as the reasons for absence is significant in Dailekh and Achham but not significant for other reasons. In Dailekh, 14.5 percent of females were absent for the study and 85.5 percent for the marriage. Similarly, in Achham, 19.2 percent of females were absent for the study and 87.2 percent for the marriage. This indicates that females were absent particularly for accompanying their spouse or brothers or parents, but not specifically to earn livelihoods.

The above discussion shows mainly economic reasons for migration outside country. There are also some more reasons beyond economic. They may be the outcomes of social, cultural and political construction. The reasons for migration cited by Thieme (2006: 96-98) may useful for

two reasons. First, the reasons she compiled covers both economic and non-economic sphere. Second, as she claims these reasons apply to the migration of far-western Nepalese to Delhi, they may also be applied to the four districts (Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot and Achham) belonging to the same region.

- People could not earn a living in their home districts and many cannot even satisfy their subsistence needs because they do not have sufficient land and agriculture products to provide food throughout the whole year.
- People lack financial capital to buy consumer goods, to finance health care, education for children, and life cycle events such as weddings and funerals.
- Social discrimination based on caste system: People particularly from scheduled castes felt restricted in carrying out work and often did not get paid for it. So, they want to escape from it.
- Availability of modern facilities in Delhi and unavailability in the home districts is also the reason for migration to Delhi. Medical treatment is one of its important reasons that it is rarely available in the home districts. Others are modern infrastructure, possibilities to buy clothes, possibilities of leisure activities, etc.
- Political conflict: People go to Delhi more frequently because they feel in the frontline between the Maoists and the Nepali government and fear for the lives. This reason may be less relevant today. However, threat from the Maoists, especially due to the activities of Young Communist League (YCL), still exists at the local level.

### Migration and Development

Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot and Achham are from the cluster of the poorest districts in Nepal in terms of social and economic development. In 2001, out of the 75 districts, Dailekh was ranked at 66, Jajarkot at 71, Kalikot at 73, and Achham at 69 based on HDI (UNDP, 2004). UNDP (2009b) for the period 2006 estimated HDI as of 0.448 in mid-western hill and 0.443 in far-western hill region, which is fairly less than the national aggregate (0.509).

Migration in this region is found to be one of the main strategies for people's livelihood. Both seasonal and long term migration are equally evident for the livelihood. The main destination for such migration is India. Table 1 suggests three important indications: *First*, these four districts (Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot and Achham) fall under the poorest region indicated by HDI. *Second*, nature of association between migration and HDI varies with destinations. There is negative association between migration to India and HDI ( $r=-0.6878$ ) and the positive between HDI and migration to the third countries ( $r=0.5554$ ). *Third*, association between migration to India and to other third countries is strongly negative ( $r=-0.8868$ ). The result clearly indicates that there is strong association between migration and development. These four districts are poor. Poor are more likely to go to India and less likely to go to third countries.

Now, what other implications of migration of these districts may be desirable to understand. Mass migration in India on both seasonal and temporary bases has been a supporting strategy for the livelihood in these districts but only at the subsistence level. Migration does not seem to contribute in improving the poverty level. So, Gill (2003) concludes that seasonal migration from hills and mountains to India is no more than coping mechanism but not a means to overcome more (structural) issues of poverty.

FHI (2002) found that HIV epidemic was more prevalent among those who migrated to India from remote rural corners. One in every eight male members of the study area was infected with STDs and that has a positive correlation with the HIV epidemic.

Sex trafficking is another issue linked with migration especially of women from Nepal. The vulnerability of sex trafficking is high when the destinations of migration of women are different big cities in India such as Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, etc. For example, as cited by Bhattarai (2007)<sup>7</sup> there are 200,000 to 375,000 Nepali women in Indian brothels. Hennink and Simkhada (2004) highlights the complex nature of sex trafficking and the links between sex trafficking, other types of trafficking and migration of women in Nepal. Sex trafficking does not always begin at the village level, it may also occur after migration to urban areas or after young women have been trafficked for other purposes such as labour exploitation in circus, carpet industries, etc.

However, there are no previous studies and data that indicate sex trafficking from Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot and Achham and these districts are also not from the trafficking prone districts. At the same time, the possibility of sex trafficking from this area cannot be denied. It is because migration of women from these districts is considerable and the migration is heavily destined to Delhi and Mumbai. Migration of women destined these cities is closely linked with sex trafficking in one hand, and sex trafficking may be occurred after the migration to these areas of India.

### **Limitations**

Very few surveys and studies previously carried out are available for the Mid- and Far-western hill region. And, none of the surveys and studies previously conducted and devoted to migration issues are available for the four districts - Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot, and Achham. For Achham, FHI has conducted a study on HIV/AIDS among migrant males but did not provide the nature and extent of migration.

There are three big periodic surveys regularly conducted in Nepal. They are Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS), and Nepal Labour Force Survey (NLFS). NDHS is designed for and focussed basically on fertility, mortality and health behaviour, which does not provide information on migration behaviour. NLSS and NLFS have migration components but with less focussed on migration issues in one hand, and they cannot provide district level estimates. It is because they are based on nationally representative sample survey, which are only to estimate national aggregate. They do not have representative sample for the district level estimate. Some micro level studies are available for the same region but not particularly focussed on these four districts.

Therefore, this brief report on migration in four districts is based on secondary information. First, it has utilized census 2001 data, which does not provide details on the migration issues. Second, it is also based on some previous studies carried out for other districts in the same region but focussed mainly on the issues other than migration.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Four districts – Jajarkot, Dailekh, Kalikot, and Achham – are at the bottom in terms of socio-economic development indicated by HDI. Unavailability of any research on migration issue in this area may further suggests that these districts are backward and left behind the scene by

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<sup>7</sup> AIDS fuels traffic of Nepali girls to India, By Sugita Katyal, Reuters AlertNet, UK - 9 Jun 2003.

any kind of concern as well as national and international non-governmental development activities, which could promote and develop knowledge.

However, migration is as high as in other districts and the destination is overwhelmingly to the different parts of India. As the coping strategy for their livelihood, not only men but also women (11.6% in 2001) are involved in such migration on both short term and long term bases. Migration of men to various cities in India is closely linked with HIV/AIDS and that of women is linked with both HIV/AIDS and sex trafficking. So vulnerability in HIV/AIDS and sex trafficking is unavoidable for the people in these districts.

There is a lack of knowledge base in these districts not only in case of migration but also for other various development issues. These districts have urgent needs of both development programmes and generating basic knowledge on social and development issues including migration. This is because human development, knowledge and the migration are interrelated each other.

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