

Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Migration and work

Are women's work patterns
changing in Bardiya, Nepal?

Working paper 85

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Cover photo: Farmer Sunita Bainey checking her maize as it comes out of a shelling machine powered by 4WT. Credit: Sirkohiya, Bardiya, Nepal 2016.

Preface



The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on state-building, service delivery and livelihood recovery in fragile and conflict-affected situations. It began in 2011 with funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and the European Commission (EC).

Phase I: 2011– 2017

SLRC's research can be separated into two phases. Our first phase was based on three research questions on state legitimacy, state capacity and livelihoods, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase. Findings from the first phase of research were summarised in five synthesis reports produced in 2017 that draw out broad lessons for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers.

Phase II: 2017–2019

Guided by our original research questions on state legitimacy, state capacity, and livelihoods, the second phase of SLRC answers the questions that remain, under three themes:

- Theme 1: What are the underlying reasons for continued livelihood instability in post-conflict recovery situations?
- Theme 2: How does the experience of conflict link to how people experience trust, fairness and expectations of the future as part of their recovery?
- Theme 3: How does service delivery influence the negotiation of state legitimacy?

Theme 1: Livelihoods instability

This paper is one of eight pieces of research from Theme 1 conducted in Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. The research was conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA - Sri Lanka), Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University - Uganda),

Nepal Institute for Social and Environmental Research (NISER), Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI - Pakistan). The research lead was Vagisha Gunasekara.

The studies under this theme question currently held assumptions about the nature of exchange and economic behaviour in rural economies. These studies demonstrate that livelihoods in conflict and post-conflict settings are in socially embedded economies - driven by patron-client relationship and noncontractual obligations.

In Afghanistan, we delve into the role of informal borrowing as a buffer in sustaining livelihoods. In Sri Lanka, we examine the suitability of 'entrepreneurship' promotion as a development intervention for people in war-affected areas. The study in Nepal looks at work and livelihood patterns of women in migrant households. The Pakistan study investigates how households access credit, the impact of indebtedness on families, and develops a framework that explains household indebtedness and its impacts. Lastly, the research in Uganda focuses on the internal migration of young people and their experiences with employment, the livelihoods realities of the war-wounded, and how livelihood trajectories of the war-affected influence decisions related to education of young people.

The evidence generated by the studies offers a number of insights into why people in conflict settings can no longer sustain their own lives through direct access to a living wage, why policies and aid interventions aimed at socio-economic recovery fail and the mechanisms people use in order to stay afloat within these economies.

For more information on who we are and what we do, visit: www.securelivelihoods.org/about-slrc

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Abbreviations



BFMG	Budget and Financial Management Guidance
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CSI	Coping Strategies Index
DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment
GCC	Gulf-Cooperation Council
GoN	Government of Nepal
IDI	In-depth Interviews
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
NSOC	Nepal Standard Occupational Classification
PDO	Pre-Departure Orientation
RLS	Rural Livelihoods System
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
VDC	Village Development Committee

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Executive summary



A large body of literature exists on the contribution of migration to poverty reduction in countries of origin (see Hagen-Zanker et al., 2017). Most of this research focuses on how remittances and financial outcomes change lives back home. Yet, migration does more than lead to money to be sent back to family members. The migration of an adult household member means that the household has lost a worker. As a result, household composition, dynamics and division of labour are likely to change—but exactly how is often not known. Bardiya district had the highest rate of migration among the three districts surveyed by the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) in 2013, 2015 and 2017. An objective of this research was to compliment earlier SLRC studies on livelihoods using the panel data with a complementary qualitative study on livelihoods options for migrant households.

More specifically, this study uses multiple methods to deepen an understanding of how outmigration of male family members affects the livelihoods and work patterns of female family members who are left behind in Bardiya, Nepal.

Main findings

Women's experience of men's migration is not universally positive

Women's experiences of their husband's and/or sons' migration are mixed. Women who receive remittances as a regular source of income are less worried about food insecurity than women who do not receive remittances. They can get emergency loans more easily than women from non-migrant families. They are also more able to meet the educational and other expenses of children, build savings and buy assets. Remittances thus make their lives easier in multiple ways. At the same time, challenges that come with single parenting and additional work in agriculture cannot be understated. We also found evidence that women can experience

more violence, for instance from their in-laws, when their husbands migrate.

In nuclear households, women's unpaid workload increases and changes after the migration of their husbands

Women often have to take on agricultural and animal husbandry work, including management of farms, taking on such duties as hiring and supervising labourers, planting and threshing, and taking care of cattle in the absence of men. Moreover, often migrant families construct houses from remittances and women need to arrange for and supervise the construction process. This includes hiring and supervising labourers, and purchasing construction materials, amongst other tasks. This adds significantly to their workload and is also stressful, requiring them to interact with men in public, which they may not be used to. Social functions that men tend to take responsibility for also fall to the women—such as attending weddings, funerals and school meetings. Women often struggle to manage with this additional work.

Women's unpaid work in non-nuclear families does not change when men migrate

In households where women live with in-laws (referred to as joint families), women's unpaid work is not affected by migration, as other male household members can pick up any additional work. The type of unpaid work women from migrant households do depends on their age and the type of household they live in. Older women tend to contribute more towards animal husbandry and ad-hoc childcare, while younger household members, e.g. daughters-in-law, do more household and care work. Younger women in joint households tend to continue doing the same activities, with other male household members picking up the household work, such as feeding cattle, attending children's school meetings and buying household goods from the market. Migration has no effect on these work patterns.

Migration does not change the kind of paid work women do or can get

While households with international migrants are associated with fewer women in paid employment (in the SLRC survey, we found that 46% of women in migrant households do paid work, compared to 53% of women in non-migrant households), migration does not change the type of paid work women do or can get. Women's paid work is mainly shaped by social norms, ethnicity and class – which are not affected by migration. Personal preferences and availability of work also play an important role. We see that:

- Dalit¹ women, who are from one of the most vulnerable and poor castes in Nepali society, often do paid work regardless of whether or not their husbands have migrated. They also continue working irrespective of their husbands' income from migration.
- In high-class Madhesi and Muslim families, where gender norms dictate that women are not mobile or to be seen in public, women never do paid work. This does not change with the migration of men from their households.
- In the Tharu² community, which has a matriarchal system, women have traditionally migrated internally and taken on paid work – this does not change with the migration of men.
- In communities of hilly origin ('Pahade' hereafter)³ there is no restriction on women taking on paid work. Women occasionally partake in agricultural wage labour, against their husband's preferences in such

households. However, women often prefer not to work once they start receiving remittances.

Generally, few opportunities exist for women, particularly from poorer migrant households, to take up paid work. The opening of a noodle factory in Belwa was one of the few new employment opportunities for women that was observed during this study. However, even if opportunities existed, these would be unlikely to significantly affect women's ability take up paid work in Muslim and higher/middle class families where restriction on mobility and stigma towards paid work by women remain. They might, however, increase in women taking up work from other classes/ethnicities.

Migration amplifies existing social structures

The migration literature has long viewed migration as a tool for empowerment, not just for women migrants but also for remittance recipients (see for instance, Kulczycka, 2015 on Nepal). We however find that **migration is not automatically the disrupter it is often thought to be**. Whether women do gain paid work depends on broader social structures, including gender relations and their caste and ethnicity. These do not change considerably following the migration of male household members. This means that for migration to facilitate women's empowerment, broader systematic changes are necessary. Social norms define gender roles and what type of work is acceptable for women, restrict women's mobility and girls' attitudes and self-confidence towards career building as they are growing up. Changing those also requires better aligning development interventions to local realities.

¹ Dalit in general Nepali context is used for the so called 'untouchable groups' as per division of people according to the Hindu system.

² Tharu is an ethnic group of Nepal.

³ Unless otherwise stated, Pahade here refers to both high caste and indigenous Pahade groups.

1 Introduction

A large body of literature exists on the contribution of migration to poverty reduction in countries of origin (see Hagen-Zanker et al., 2017). Most of this research focuses on how remittances and financial outcomes change lives back home. Yet, migration does more than facilitate money to be sent back. The migration of an adult household member means that the household has lost a worker. As a result of this, household composition, dynamics and division of labour are likely to change—but exactly how is often not known. Focusing on the Bardiya district of Nepal, which is known for its high rates of migration, this study uses multiple methods to deepen an understanding of how the outmigration of male family members affects the livelihoods and work patterns of female family members who are left behind.

The effects of migration upon women's work back home are not immediately apparent. The existing literature discussed in this chapter highlights two important points. Firstly, women whose husbands migrate work less in paid employment as a result of remittances, which replace previous sources of income. Secondly, women work more frequently in the agricultural sector and other areas where work is more likely to be unpaid. Our research thus contributes to the limited literature on livelihoods of women in migrant households. It does so through qualitative research conducted in Bardiya in 2019 and an analysis of the SLRC household panel survey⁴ to understand impacts on paid/unpaid work for women, as well as which factors explain these changes. This introduction offers relevant background information, including a discussion on migration patterns in Nepal and a review of the existing literature on the impact of men's migration on women's work.

1.1 Migration patterns of Nepali men

International migration for work is a well-established practice in Nepal. Nepalese men have long migrated to work in the Pakistani, Indian and British armies. Cross-border migration to India has been an important documented livelihoods strategy of men until recently and a large number of Nepalis, particularly from Western Nepal, still migrate to India as seasonal labourers. However, the true extent of migration between Nepal and India is unclear because of a lack of data on migrant numbers – a result of the open border policy between these two countries.

⁴ A panel survey conducted by the SLRC in three districts. See Sturge et al. (2017) for more information.

Nepalis, however, do not just migrate to India. Today, labour migration is one of the most common livelihoods strategies for Nepali men, with 7% of the population (1.9 million people) absent from Nepal during the 2011 Census (CBS, 2011). There has been a steady increase in the number of people migrating for work, with Nepalis now migrating to 153 countries worldwide. Indeed, 56% of all Nepali households received remittances in 2010/11 according to the latest living standard survey (CBS, 2015).

While the number of women pursuing foreign employment is increasing, men still account for the bulk of international migration. Just over 95% of all people who migrated in the last nine years were male. Excluding India, for which there is no data, Malaysia and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member countries are the most common destination for Nepali migrants. Women mostly migrate as domestic workers -except for Malaysia, where they work in factories -while men work in construction, as agricultural labourers and in manufacturing.

1.2 Women and work in Nepal

Migration is just one variable that potentially affects what type of paid or unpaid work women can, or do, get. Women's work is also shaped by broader social norms and policy changes and patterns, as we will elaborate.

National labour surveys show that there has been an overall increase in labour force participation of women in the past decade. Except for a slight decrease in 2008, the labour force participation rate of women experienced a rapid increase between 2008 and 2016, with around 83% of women participating in the labour

force in 2018 (World Bank, 2019). While this makes Nepal's gender gap in labour force participation smaller than that of other South Asian countries, 20.1% of women are still outside of the labour force. The majority of both men and women in Nepal are employed in the agricultural sector (Table 1), which is a low-return employment sector. Moreover, when employed, women tend to work in part time jobs (CBS, 2015). Most women occupy low positions in the labour market: there are few female managers (Nepal enterprise survey, 2013). However, women are increasingly accessing more diversified employment opportunities.

Reviews of women's employment in Nepal find barriers for women in terms of access to assets, mobility and information (UNDP and NIWF, 2018; IOM., 2016). Existing laws around access to family property are discriminatory. In contrast to men, women do not get a share of family property or family savings. Without a share of family property, women do not have collateral and may struggle to get credit from formal institutions to enable them to start their own business. Men can use family land as collateral or use family savings to invest in a business. While legally women can claim a share of family land if they live with the family, are above 35 years of age and are unmarried, once married, they will not have access to the family property. Similarly, there are other procedural and social barriers to women who want to access family property. For instance, families may be reluctant to invest in a girl's career or financially support the entrepreneurial enterprises of women in the family. Moreover, women are restricted in their mobility from early adolescence, which limits access to information and inhibits self-confidence to approach institutions and build networks that are important for employment.

Table 1: Employed persons 15 years and above by Nepal Standard Occupational Classification (NSOC) occupation (in %), 2014/15

Occupation	Female (%)	Male (%)
Managers	1.2	3.6
Professionals	2.0	4.2
Technicians and associate professionals	0.7	2.3
Clerical support workers	0.8	1.4
Service and sales workers	5.2	7.5
Skilled agricultural, forestry	74.5	51.8
Craft and related trades workers	4.1	14.6
Plant and machine operators	0.2	2.9
Elementary occupations	11.1	11.3

Source: Annual household survey report, 2014/15

However, women are not a homogenous group: there is a huge difference according to class, age, geographic region, caste and ethnicity, as this study will also show.

1.3 Literature review: the life and work of women who are left-behind

In this section we review some of the empirical literature that looks at the impact of male migration on their wives and other household members who are left behind. There is a relatively small evidence base on the effects of male migration on the nature and quantity of work of women in migrant households.

Some of the studies that do consider this question emphasise a so-called 'remittances effect', in which higher incomes potentially enable women in migrant households to decrease their labour force participation (Antman, 2013). A number of studies show this pattern in Nepal (Lokshin and Glinaskaya, 2009; Kasper, 2005), for informal work in Mexico (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo, 2006), for formal work in Egypt (Binzel and Assaad, 2011), for wage and family work in China (Mu and van der Walle, 2011) and for paid work in Albania (Mendola and Carletto, 2009).

However, women may actually *increase* their labour force participation in the short-term to finance the costs of migration and to financially support the household during the period in which they are waiting for remittances to start. Furthermore, women do not always work less when they receive remittances. While women may engage in less paid or formal employment, their overall workload, caring activities or agricultural work often increases. Women in migrant households may choose to increase time spent on unpaid 'family work' (Karymshakov and Sulaimanova, 2017), and there is an increase in care burden and unpaid work for women (Ye et al., 2016; Mendola and Carletto, 2009; Binzel and Asaad, 2011). Several studies also highlight that women often have to take on additional duties in agriculture, on top of caring duties, in Nepal (Adhikari and Hobley, 2015; Gartaula et al., 2012; Jacquet et al., 2015; Kasper, 2005; Antman, 2012). Similar evidence has also been found in regard to the relationship between

migrant men and increases in women's workload in China (Ye et al., 2016 and Mu and van der Walle, 2011).

Women may also change the *nature of their work* outside of the household. Migration can lead to manpower shortages in local Nepali labour markets (Gautam, 2005). One study on Kandebash VDC in Baglung district found that in irrigation canal construction projects - a traditionally male-dominated employment sector - 70% of workers were now female (ibid). Some studies highlight that women take on more prominent roles in their villages, such as taking part in community decision-making (Ratha et al., 2011).

Finally, a subset of the literature also looks at women migrant's empowerment. A study by Kulczycka (2015) suggests that male migration improved women's empowerment in Nepal. In the study, many female respondents reported that their responsibilities had increased after their husband's migration, but they did not necessarily perceive this as a negative change. Some women viewed this as a positive challenge. Where women felt empowered it was more a result of their individual capacity than any other factors (ibid). However, while women had authority over minor everyday decisions, migrant husbands retained authority over more strategic household decisions (Jacquet et al., 2015; Kulczycka, 2015). In the absence of husbands, other male members (such as male in-laws) were also involved in decision-making (Kulczycka, 2015). The literature, however, is divided on the impact of this: another study by Chapagain (2015) in Sidhupalchowk and Sunsari (of Nepal) districts showed that the temporary separation of husbands and wives enhanced the women's negotiation and bargaining power and their ability to challenge the patriarchal institutions, redefining gender relations in the rural context.

Our study adds to this body of evidence and seeks to investigate whether women's livelihood and work patterns change and to what extent women are able to overcome gender norms and societal constraints related to ethnicity/caste and class after migration of a male household member.

2 Methodology

This study uses a predominantly qualitative methodology, mixing basic quantitative analysis of the SLRC household survey. The survey was conducted in 2012 and 2015 in the Ilam, Bardiya and Rolpa districts of Nepal.⁵ The SLRC data provides general context around migration and characteristics of migrant households, presenting an overall picture of women's working patterns in Nepal. The qualitative research methods employed in this study thus enabled us to undertake a much more detailed analysis of migrant household and women's work within our chosen sample site – Bardiya district, Nepal.

2.1 Sampling and sites covered

Bardiya lies in the mid-western part of Nepal and is a district of the plain (Terai). It was chosen as a study site primarily for two reasons: First, we had access to a rich data-set on this region from the SLRC household survey in Nepal, conducted in 2013 and 2015. Second, among the three districts surveyed in the SLRC survey, Bardiya has the highest levels of net migration. Bardiya is also interesting because it is developing into the economic hub for the western region of Nepal, but to date there has not been much research on migration in this region. Fieldwork was completed in Gualriya Municipality (urban area) and Belwa Rural Municipality (rural area). Interviews were carried out with migrant's wives and mothers from different class and ethnic backgrounds, returnee migrant men, and with key informants such as local political and social leaders (both male and female), women activists who helped in gender based violence (GBV) for migrant and non-migrant women, local ward officers, co-operative members and employers in local brick kilns.

2.2 Qualitative analysis

We conducted qualitative fieldwork between March and November 2018, using participatory qualitative methods including 16 in-depth interviews (IDI) with migrant's mothers and wives. The IDIs included a component on 'time-use' that sought to understand women's day-to-day time-use pattern before and after their husband's migration. This component enabled us to gather data on changes to women household members daily schedule, changes to household divisions of labour and coping strategies. Furthermore, we conducted historical timeline tools to understand

⁵ A further round of data was collected in 2018 but is not included in the analysis here.

the history of migration and change in labour migration patterns from the area. We also conducted outlier case studies, in-depth study of life of women, including interviewing the respondent women in question and also interviewing a reference member about the women. Such outlier case studies were conducted with the following two groups of women: 1) women who had taken up work after the migration of their husbands and 2) women who left existing paid work; these studies helped us to understand more about how men's migration affects life and work of women. Besides this, we carried out IDIs with returnee men and focus groups discussions with men and women from migrant households (four with men, four with women). Finally, we conducted key informant interviews with knowledgeable stakeholders and employers at the district and village level, including VDC chairmen, female political leaders and female social leaders, among others. Our interview methods are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Qualitative interviews conducted

Type of interview	Number of interviews
In-depth interviews with migrants' mothers and wives	16
Outlier studies with women who took up paid work	4
Outlier studies with women who didn't take up paid work	4
In-depth interviews with returnee men	6
Focus group discussions	4 with men 4 with women
Community time line in Belwa	1
Key informant interviews	15

Interview recordings were transcribed and translated into English by team members who did the fieldwork. We developed codes based on emerging themes from qualitative and quantitative analysis. Qualitative data analysis was completed using MaxQDA-pro software to ensure a more rigorous analysis of data compared to manual analysis.

This structured content analysis helped us to compare differences according to gender, caste and other cross-cutting issues and to identify broader gender and social norms and other factors that influence the type and quantity of work that women do whose husband have migrated.

2.3 Quantitative analysis

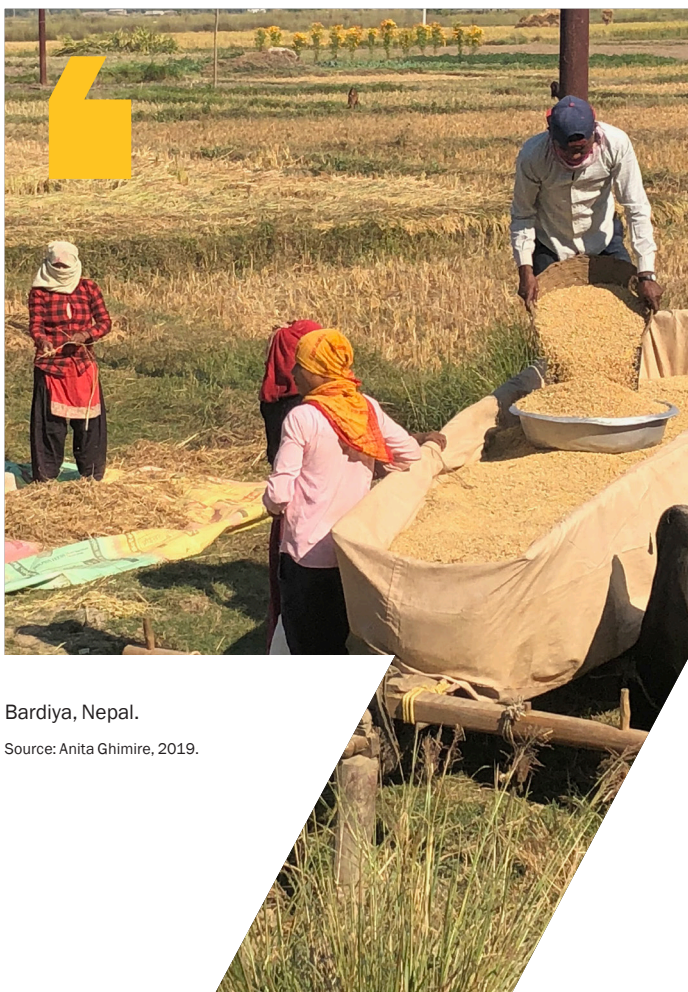
The quantitative analysis was based on two waves of the SLRC panel survey, which surveyed people's livelihoods, access to and experience of service delivery and perceptions of government in three districts of Nepal (Bardiya, Ilam and Rolpa). These districts were sampled to ensure variation in terms of geography, conflict experience, livelihoods and economic activities (for instance Ilam is known for tea production and tourism) and levels of service delivery. The survey sampled 3,176 households (geographically significant at the then Village Development Committee (VDC) level) in 2012 and re-interviewed 2,855 in 2015 -an attrition rate of 10%. The survey tracked survey respondents, but also collects detailed information on other household members.

In the Bardiya sample, less than 100 households had migrants. We therefore conducted a quantitative analysis of the entire sample (i.e. Bardiya, Ilam and Rolpa) to ensure a sufficient sample size. The resulting analysis mainly conveys broad trends, instead of findings specific to Bardiya.

Migration is a self-selective process, which means that migrants are systematically different from non-migrants, often in ways that cannot be measured. This means that comparisons between migrants and non-migrants may be biased - they may over-or understate the impact of migration on livelihood outcomes. This means the comparisons between migrant and non-migrant households needs to be made with care. In addition, we also analysed households over time, looking at households that went from having a migrant in wave 1 to not having a migrant in wave 2, or those that went from not having a migrant to having one in wave 2.

The analysis mainly focuses on international migration, drawing on an individual level variable that asked whether adult household members had migrated abroad for work. A total of 217 households had a migrant in wave 1, and 328 households had a migrant in wave 2. The SLRC survey only asked about current household members and thus does not capture longer-term migrants who may have previously left the household. This is a major limitation of the SLRC survey; it is likely that it underestimates levels of migration within households. It is worth noting here that around 18% of households received remittances in both waves, indicating that our data under measures migrants.

Migration and work: are women's work patterns changing in Bardiya, Nepal?



Bardiya, Nepal.

Source: Anita Ghimire, 2019.

Around 1% of the SLRC survey households had an international migrant in both waves. Almost 9% of households in wave 2 had an international migrant, but didn't have one in wave 1, whereas 5% of households

went from having one in wave 1 to not having one in wave 2. In Bardiya, 2% of households had an international migrant in both waves (17 households), 9% of households gained an international migrant between wave 1 and 2, and 6% of households had a migrant in wave 1 but not in wave 2. As such, we see quite a bit of change within households in terms of having international migrants.

The analysis presents descriptive statistics of migration patterns, household outcomes (e.g. food security) and livelihood and employment patterns. Its purpose is to show general trends, without being able to draw conclusions on causal linkages, complementing the more detailed qualitative analysis.

2.4 Ethics and limitations

The study followed the ethical protocols of the Nepal Institute for Social and Environmental Research (NISER) and ODI. Informants were given details of the objective of the interviews and the usage of their data. Verbal consent was given for recordings. Notes were taken from three informants who did not want to record the interviews (one key informant and two in-depth interview respondents). As assured to respondents, all the names and any other details that might lead to recognition of respondents were anonymised. In follow-up fieldwork, emerging findings were discussed with the key informants from the first round of the fieldwork for validation. A two-pager consisting of findings in Nepal will be shared with interested key informants.

3 Findings

The following sections present findings from the research. First, we describe international labour migration patterns in Bardiya before discussing the impact of migration on members of migrant households, with a focus on wives and mothers of migrants. We focus on women's changes in livelihoods and work. We then seek to understand which other factors shape these changes.

3.1 Migration patterns in Bardiya

Migrating abroad to seek employment is a common livelihoods strategy for all ethnic groups in Bardiya. Men from middle income families and households who have more working-age male members are likely to migrate. While rapidly increasing, very few women take up foreign employment due to stigma of female mobility and restrictions from the government on migration for domestic work, which is a crucial sector for working women. Women who do migrate go through unregistered channels using brokers who take them via India and other countries.

Our historical timeline conducted in Belwa of Bardiya shows that migration from Bardiya has historically been internal, with the majority of people between 1924 and 1989 travelling from Bardiya to the cities of Nepalgunj and Bhairawa for work. It wasn't until much later that India became a common destination where people travelled to Bihar state and to Delhi for seasonal work, in agriculture and the service industry. As per the participants in the historical timeline, due to better income and new social networks formed in the GCC countries and Malaysia, fewer people now travel to India. Today, more people from Nepal travel to Gulf countries and Malaysia – a trend that began around 15 years ago. Malaysia and Saudi Arabia were two common destinations earlier; this has recently diversified to include Dubai and Qatar.

We find that both male and female migrants from Nepal to Malaysia and GCC use unregistered brokers. Apart from those travelling to India for work, it is mandatory for all Nepali migrants to be registered with a government recognised recruitment agency, locally known as 'manpower', in order to get work permits for foreign employment. To connect with these agencies which are located in the capital city of Kathmandu, people need local brokers. Such brokers are usually extended family members, men from neighbouring communities or others who are recommended by migrant families or

friends but are not registered with the government and hence work informally.

Funding for migration usually comes from loans. Average loans are lower in Bardiya compared to other districts: 84,000 NRs on average in wave 1, compared to 129,500 NRs for the entire SLRC survey sample. Our qualitative study shows two reasons for this: first, men from Bardiya have largely migrated to Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, which are relatively low-cost (to travel) destinations. Another reason for the existence of smaller loans might be related to the ethnic and religious composition of migrants in Bardiya. Many of the male migrants in this district are Muslim or Madhesi. These groups typically have large families, with many siblings and joint households. For example, in households where multiple male siblings plan to migrate, the first person to migrate will often bear the migration cost of the other siblings. This would reduce the amount of loans such migrant families would have to take.

Having an existent family member who is a migrant decreases the cost of migration for additional family members who are planning to migrate. Migrants abroad can provide information about job vacancies to their households. Employers usually have partner recruitment agents in Nepal who hire workers on their behalf. Migrants can provide information to family members back home on which recruitment company in Nepal has been commissioned to hire for particular employers abroad. This way, the family member aspiring to migrate can go directly to that company and does not have to pay several layers of intermediaries. This decreases the cost of migration. In some cases, migrants at destination may find employment for aspiring migrants – assisting with the organisation of visas and travel. This means that the aspiring migrant will have to pay lower fees to the recruitment agent.

Internal migration is common among women from the Tharu community; they have traditionally migrated for business and wage labour. However, migration is highly restricted among the Madhesi and Muslim communities in Bardiya. Tharu women migrate internally to Kathmandu, Surkhet, Nepalgunj and Bhairawa and are largely employed in construction work as labours. There is also an increasing trend among Pahade Dalit women to migrate to the Gulf, particularly to Kuwait and Malaysia. According to our community timeline exercise, this trend began around seven years ago.

The SLRC survey also shows that migration is gendered, with low migration rates found amongst women. Only 3% of households had a female migrant – internal and international combined – in wave 1, and 5% had a female migrant in wave 2, compared to 10% and 16% of households with a male migrant in waves 1 and 2 respectively. The numbers are even lower for international migration only, and in both waves only 1% of households had an international female migrant.

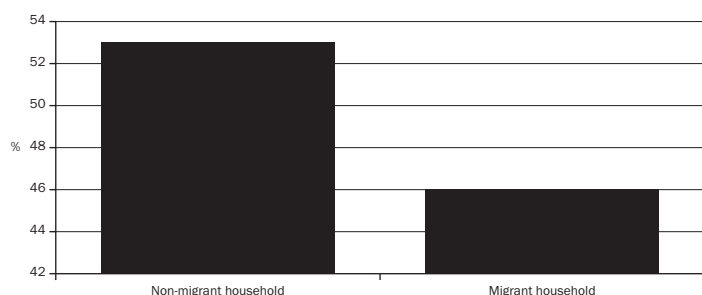
Women have a mixed experience of their husbands' and/or sons' migration. Remittances are the main source of income for migrant household. These are received once every two to three months, with an average payment of Rs 40,000 (360 USD). The major portion of remittances are used for regular household expenses, but families have also been able to pay off debts or to save, invest, buy land and construct houses, which are regarded as important assets to maintain social class and status in Nepal.

Respondents communicated that remittances have made their lives easier in multiple ways, but that they also face challenges related to high workloads and the difficulties of single parenting. Having remittances as a regular source of income has meant that women are less worried about food security, can get loans for emergencies more easily than women from non-migrant families, are able to better meet the educational and other expenses of children, have greater savings and can buy assets.

3.2 Effects on work patterns of women in migrant households

The SLRC survey paints a complex picture of work patterns of women in migrant households. Households with international migrants are associated with a lower share of women in paid employment (46% of women in migrant households are engaged in paid work in wave 2, compared to 53% of women in non-migrant households), as shown in Figure 1. This suggests evidence for the 'remittances effect' discussed in the literature, with women in migrant households working less as there is a reduced need for them to earn an income. This is explored further in section 4.4. This is, however, not the case for all types of work. The proportion of women in casual labour is substantially higher for households with international migrants, as is the proportion of women engaged in farming, though to a lesser extent (Table 3). Both patterns hold for both waves. There are no clear trends for women owning a business.

Figure 1: Share of women in the household doing paid work



Source: SLRC, 2015

The survey data also suggests that women in migrant households engage in a greater number of livelihood activities. On average, all households witnessed an increase in the number of livelihood activities between wave 1 and wave 2, with migrant households reporting a slightly higher number of livelihood activities than

The study finds that households in Bardiya, and especially Pahade⁶ community, are likely to become nuclear⁷ households after the migration of husband. Women reported feeling that in-laws did not treat them well after the migration of their husbands (e.g. giving them too much work, discriminating against them and fie emotional violence). There is also a significant dissatisfaction over the use of remittances with women mostly feeling the in-laws who tend to be the official recipient of remittances do not consult them in how the remittances sent by their husband is used. However, such violence does not happen only once the husband migrates. Violence is embedded in the intra-household relationships in joint families, and the scope, nature/form of it may change in the absence of a husbands. In some cases, mothers-in-laws disclosed

Table 3: Share of women in household engaged in different livelihood activities

	Wave 1		Wave 2	
	Non-migrant household	Migrant household	Non-migrant household	Migrant household
Percentage of women in own cultivation	75%	79%	82%	84%
Percentage of women who own a business	12%	7%	14%	14%
Percentage of women in casual labour	38%	47%	53%	63%
Percentage of women who are employed	6%	8%	7%	7%

Source: Annual household survey report, 2014/15

non-migrant households. However, this is based on data from the entire survey and not specific to Bardiya, which might explain why it is not consistent with findings from the qualitative interviews. The qualitative data shows mixed effects on patterns of paid and unpaid work for migrant women, which we now elaborate on.

3.3 Effects on unpaid work

The type of unpaid household and care work undertaken by women from migrant household differs according to the type of family arrangement they have (joint or moving away to live separately) and the age of the women and children.

that they beat up their daughters-in-law to control them if they were disobedient. They also reported that their sons consented to them beating up their daughters-in-laws. Wives of migrants said that, in absence of their husbands, in-laws often accuse them of infidelity and laziness and complain about it to the migrant husbands. In such circumstances, wives of migrants often choose to live separately from their husband's family.

The living arrangements and the workload of women who choose to live separately from their in-laws differ between ethnic groups. We found that Pahade women tend to move away from the joint household

⁶ Unless otherwise stated, Pahade here refers to both high caste and indigenous Pahade groups.

⁷ In the context of Bardiya, 'nuclear' refers to a situation whereby a man, his wife and children move out from the joint household where they would have been living with the parents and other married/unmarried siblings and their families ('mul ghar' means main house).

into other communities. In doing so, the family that moves away also takes their share of the ancestral property. Having left a shared-household, women who find themselves in this situation will have to look after the children and manage their share of the farm, taking on responsibilities such as planting, harvesting, taking care of livestock, construction work, collecting remittances and attending social functions on behalf of the household (e.g. school meetings for children, marriages and death functions in village and of relatives, community work such as construction of roads, canals, forest and water user groups meetings). Hence, their workload increases. In joint household, these responsibilities are delegated to male members.

Women from non-Pahade communities, such as Madhesis, are less likely to split fully from the household. They usually only have separate cooking arrangements from the rest of the family but continue to live with the in-laws and help on the family farm. While they work, the elderly care of the children. Madeshi women were among the groups least likely to become decision-makers, economically independent or resist violence and discrimination, reflecting findings from similar research in other countries (see Section 1).

In Muslim households, families do not become nuclear at all after the husband's migration. Here, workloads are divided according to gender. Men and elderly women generally do outdoor work such as farm work and, care work - taking on the work of the male migrant - while women are responsible for household work or helping on the farm when men are present. Remittances are sent to the father or the male guardian of the household and all household items are bought by them. Hence, the migration of husbands does not change the unpaid work of women in Muslim households. Furthermore, we found no link between male migration and improvements in gender relations and women's economic empowerment. Young women from Muslim households explained that even their clothes are purchased by their in-laws. They only buy jewelry, such as bangles and earrings, which they can purchase from peddlers who come to their courtyards.

'No, I don't have to do the work of my husband. My father-in-law takes up the work previously done by my husband. If I was alone and there were no parents, then that was another thing. ' (In depth interview, wife of migrant, Belwa)

For all ethnic and religious groups, however, work patterns differ according to age. Interviews with mothers

of migrant revealed that a large portion of care work is taken up by the younger female members, usually daughters-in-law. In such cases, elderly women from migrant households focus on animal husbandry and some ad-hoc childcare, as they also would without a migrant in the household. Therefore, migration of sons did not impact the workload of mothers.

Women who have to work alone often struggle to take on additional work after their husbands migrate, for example, women living in nuclear families from Pahade households. Such women often end up leaving farm work, relying on hired labourers or sharecroppers to manage their land. In other cases, women draw upon the 'parma system'- a system of labour exchange where women help each other with agriculture work. However, according to the women interviewed for this study, hiring labour also places an additional burden on them (finding and calling labourers, negotiation, and supervision of their work) – responsibilities that they are not used to.

Labourers in both the agricultural and construction sectors are predominantly male. According to the women we interviewed, such men do not obey the women (the migrant's wife who hire them for work). They waste time at work, do not come home on time and do not prioritise their households. Managing male workers at home requires interacting more frequently and working with them in the evening. Women shared that they already face relentless scrutiny in how they carry themselves after the husband's migration. Many reported that their neighbours had become increasingly nosy, taking a deep interest in where they went, their mobile phone use and their interactions with outsider men. Having to deal with male labourers adds to this complexity. Due to these reasons, some respondents thought managing labourers was more difficult than physical agricultural work.

Male family members of migrant men initially help their wives following migration if they are constructing houses. Such help usually consists of contacting merchants for construction materials and hiring labourers. But building a house is a long process and women are left on their own after this initial support. This significantly adds to their work burden.

Inside the house, the workload of women does not change after the migration of their husbands - even for women who live in nuclear households. When the children are small, women have more work, but this would not be any different if the husband was around

as he would have not helped taking care of the children. Once they are older, children have lower care needs and can help out, too. Hence, intra-household workload is not determined by the husband's migration, but rather by the age of children and the help women get with care work (e.g. if the in-laws are available to help). Women with small children and those who have school-age children who cannot help in the house have the highest workload, but this would be the same regardless of whether or not their husbands migrate. The only help they generally get from their husbands is taking the children to hospital if they become sick and attending school meetings.

3.4 Effects on paid work

We see little effect on women's paid work or their ability to participate in paid work. While the SLRC survey shows that households with international migrants are associated with a lower share of women in paid employment (46% of women in migrant households are engaged in paid work in Wave 2, compared to 53% of women in non-migrant households), our qualitative analysis uncovered few changes in women's paid work lives. Women's participation in paid work is mainly a result of social norms that are rooted in their ethnicity and class – which are not affected by migration – and to a lesser degree shaped by personal preferences and availability of work. These norms are related to wider community orientation, which in turn shapes family and personal orientation and opens or closes space for paid work by women.

3.4.1 Dalit households⁸

In Dalit families, women from migrant households often took paid jobs before their husbands migrated and continued working irrespective of their husband's new income following migration. Dalit women tend to see additional income as necessary, as they don't consider their husband's income from migration as a long-term income. Unlike high-caste people, in most cases Dalit women do not have land and are concerned about spending the entirety of remittances on daily needs and their inability to save money. As a result, women from Dalit households (continue to) take up paid work and contribute to family income to save money, buy land or build their own homes.

Moreover, women in Dalit households take on paid work because of poor access to resources (e.g. assets, services and opportunities). Dalit families have been excluded from mainstream development for generations and are usually poor. Due to the outlawed but still common practice of 'untouchability', there was a ban on Dalit's education until fairly recently. Dalit women are still less educated and have worse access to good jobs than all other caste groups. A further ripple effect this created was exclusion from access to assets, services and economic opportunities. Thus, Dalits were usually restricted to caste-based occupations, and although things have changed immensely, they still have limited general labour market access due to lower education and skills levels. As a result, Dalit women often work alongside men to support the household. This has made gender relationships within Dalit households more equitable. It is accepted and expected of Dalit women to take up paid work. Over time, this has meant that the worldview of the community towards Dalit women participating in work has become flexible and the self-confidence of women in this caste group to take up work has increased. This has not change with the migration of men from Dalit households and women continue doing paid work. **In other words, Dalit women continue to work both because of economic necessity, but also because of deeply engrained gender norms developed over the course of generations which has normalised the work of women.** They are also more likely to seek foreign employment or migrate internally for work – practices that are largely stigmatised by other groups.

3.4.2 Madhesi and Muslim households

In the high-class Madhesi and Muslim families, women never take up paid work and this did not change with the migration of men from their households. In both communities, gender norms particularly around mobility and public interaction of women are highly restrictive. In Muslim communities such norms are reinforced in daily lives, delegating earning responsibility to men. Norms of interaction between opposite sexes both in household and public spaces are divided by gender. There is a strong belief among both men and women that women are to refrain from interacting with any outside men. Inside households, it is men and elderly women who make decisions around women's lives and work and women are restricted from entering public spaces without a male guardian. When the husband migrates, these norms are exacerbated:

⁸ Dalit in general Nepali context is used for the so called 'untouchable groups' as per division of people according to the Hindu system.

women from migrant households shared that they faced psychosocial violence from the family and community after the husband's migration. Violence included shaming and being mean, backbiting and complaining/provoking the in-laws by neighbours as well as provoking migrant husbands by in-laws. Such norms shape the orientation of women toward taking up paid jobs. Since taking up paid work usually requires going out in public space, which makes it likely that women interact with outsider men, paid jobs are neither allowed nor generally considered by women of migrant households as an option:

'Yes, my elder brothers do not allow their wives to go out to the market or to take up work. If my sister in law asks to take up work, they will say no.'
(Focus group discussions with male relatives of migrant, Gulariya)

However, in poorer households, restrictions on moving out of the households for paid work were more relaxed. When the household is poor, women accompany their husband to work, assisting in agricultural work. Community attitudes towards women working alongside their husbands are not negative. Since husbands are understood to be the guardians of their wives (Ghimire and Samuels, 2017), it is acceptable for women to work in public spaces as long as they are accompanied by their husbands. However, the migration of husbands stops this practice – women are unable to continue paid work outside of the household, and this tends to be obeyed. An excerpt from discussions with a male returnee illustrates these norms:

Respondent: 'She used to go with me to work in field as daily wage labour when I was here. After I went abroad, I have told her not to go and she does not go.'

Interviewer: 'Why do you not want your wife to go for daily wage labour now?'

Respondent: 'When she is a single woman from another household, other people will give her difficult work and will not treat her well. Besides, she is simple-minded and ignorant. There are other men working in the field. When they see that she is alone, these men might entice her and exploit her. She will not know about it. She can go to work again with me when I am back' (IDI, male migrant worker, Belwa)

3.4.3 Tharu households⁹

In contrast to Madeshi and Muslim households, women in the Tharu community have traditionally undertaken paid work and this does not change with the migration of men from the household or an associated shift in their economic status. Unlike in the previous two communities where social structures are patriarchal and norms very stringent for women and girls, Tharu communities have a matriarchal system (Muller-Boeker, 1999). Women have always had a strong position and norms including those around mobility and social interaction with outsiders are flexible. Here, women face no restriction in mobility, access to public spaces and interaction, or taking up paid work outside households. They work as traders selling their farm produce, take wage labour or leave their district to find construction work, irrespective of the husband's migration status. However, as in the case of Dalit women, international migration is still not very common for Tharu women. Key informants explained why this might be the case:

'[Tharu women not going for foreign employment] might be because women have only recently started going for foreign employment. Women largely migrate with the help of local unregistered brokers. These are usually with their own brother-in-laws, uncles and extended family members. So far, there are no Tharu brokers, so Tharu women do not have a network for migration. As these networks are Pahade households

In the 'Pahade' community, there are no restrictions on women taking up paid work. While their community is still patriarchal, norms, particularly around mobility, are not very stringent. Women have generally always taken up paid work and hence, a migrant whose wife takes up paid work is not stigmatised. However, women face closer scrutiny about their demeanour when their husband migrate as shown by quote below:

'I had no fear to go out of the households when my husband was around. No one would suspect me of anything. But, now [after husband's migration] if I go outside, people keep on asking where and why I am going out?' (IDI, wife of migrant, Belwa).

But women are able to overlook this as they do not need to fear physical punishment, or estrangement as in case

⁹ Tharu is an ethnic group of Nepal.

of Muslim and Madhesi households. We also found that in some cases husbands want their wives to leave paid work to spend more time with their children, but that these women continued working in agriculture with their friends, which they had been doing prior to the migration of their husbands.

However, some women, particularly from the Pahade community, were found to have left paid work after their husbands had migrated. We found that migrants' wives viewed physically intensive labour, such as agriculture and brick kilns, which are the most common forms of employment, negatively. They regard people who do physical labour as low-class people. Class consciousness is strong in the society. While it was not made explicit, discussions with women from the Pahade community showed that they did not think working in fields was in line with their improved social status. Since the aspiration to take up foreign employment stems from a desire to increase one's social status (through improving economic status), women from middle class households from the Pahade community refrain from taking up locally-available paid work. A common narrative was that, since the migration of the husband, they are less used to physically demanding work and cannot do jobs which require physical labour.

***'Before my husband migrated, I used to live in a joint family and used to go for agricultural labour. Now, after my husband's migration, I do not work in the field. It is hot in the fields and the work is hard. I can't do such hard work now. I hire labours even for my own fields.'* (IDI, wife of migrant, Gulariya)**

Due to these attitudes towards work, Pahade women from high caste and indigenous groups who had previously worked in agriculture tended to leave employment once the economic condition of the family had improved following their husband's migration. They also chose not to return to work, even when they had time to do so.

Other reasons we discovered for leaving paid work once husbands migrate included: managing care work, age (for mothers of migrants), economic security, and a desire to invest more time in children. As shown earlier, women who live separately from the husband's family are burdened with more work. They cannot take on paid work which is time bound (i.e. where they would have to reach the place of work and remain at work until a designated time). They preferred to earn a living by rearing livestock where the working hours are



Bardiya, Nepal.

Source: Anita Ghimire, 2019.

more flexible. Women from households that had large landholdings preferred working on their own farms as opposed to taking up paid work. Since they are not highly skilled or educated, the only jobs available for them in Bardiya are daily wage labour. They earn more from farming their own land and rearing livestock than from other jobs. Even men who had less land did not want their wives to take up paid labour after they migrated.

A desire to invest in children's education emerged as another factor that explained why women decided not to take on paid work after their husbands migrated. There is a strong commitment, particularly in Pahade communities, to invest in children's education. Women from this group held the opinion that, if they took up paid employment, household work would be left to the children. This would take time away from their studies, which they did not want to happen.

'I do not work because if I go out for work my children will have to do the household work. This will disturb their studies. I am not educated, but I have learnt from it and I want my children to be highly educated.'

I do not want to take time off from their study for household work' (IDI wife of migrant Gulariya).

While some women left paid work when their husbands migrated, in other cases women who had not worked before sought employment. This happens for two reasons: first, it can be the result of migration failure, in which the husband is unable to find employment in the country of destination. Second, women may decide to take up paid jobs following the creation of new employment opportunities that are deemed respectable for women. Migrants' wives who had not worked earlier started to work in brick kilns, to take care of the household's economic needs and to pay off debts incurred during migration when their husbands stopped supporting the family economically. Such

cases arose when husbands failed to earn in the country of destination or in cases where men had had extramarital affairs -spending money on their new love interests. Women also took on paid work when the job opportunities were perceived by them and their families to be appropriate for women. In Belwa, wives of migrants who had not taken up paid work earlier started working in the newly-opened noodle factory. They perceived this work to be less physically demanding and cleaner than other forms of work that had been previously available to them. The salary of Rs. 13,000 per month was also very good compared to the average daily wage (Rs. 500) for seasonal farming or working in brick kiln factories. However, this new opportunity has not changed work patterns for women from Muslim and Madhesi households.

4 Conclusions

Migration is one of the most important livelihood sources for a large proportion of families in Nepal, and it affects households with migrant family members in many ways. Existing studies often focus on the effects of remittances. Yet, migration does more than just result in money being sent back home. An adult household member migrating means that the household has lost a worker. As a result, the composition of the household, dynamics and divisions of labour are likely to change. However, little is known about how migration affects paid and unpaid work of women in migrant households and what drives the choices they make in regard to work. This study sought to address this gap. We focused on how outmigration of male family members in the Bardiya district of Nepal affects livelihoods and work patterns of the female family members who are left behind.

We find that:

- 1 The amount and type of unpaid work migrant women engage in depends on their *age* and the *type of household* they live in. Older women tend to do less household and care work but contribute more in terms of animal husbandry and childcare. Migration has no effect on these work patterns. Younger women who live with their in-laws tend to continue doing the same activities, while other male household members pick up the migrant's jobs. Since they do not get help with 'women's work' from their husbands or sons before migration, men's migration does not change the unpaid work-load of younger women. Rather, it depends on the age of children, with older children more able to contribute to household work. **Hence, when they live together with their in-laws, women's unpaid work is not affected by migration.**

For women living in nuclear households, their unpaid workload can increase and change in nature after migration. In our research, this finding mainly applied to women from Pahade communities. In these cases, women had to take on agricultural work, animal husbandry, construction work/supervision (if building a house), but also social functions that men tend to be responsible for, such as attending marriages, funerals and school meetings. These findings are consistent with the broader literature on livelihoods in Nepal, which find that unpaid work increases for women whose husbands migrate (Adhikari and Hobley, 2015, Gartaula et al., 2012, Jacquet et al., 2015, Kasper, 2005, Antman 2012). Women often struggle to take on all of the additional work and might leave land fallow or hire labourers to manage their land.



Bardiya, Nepal.

Source: Anita Ghimire, 2019.

- 2 We see little effect on women's paid work or their ability to participate in paid work.** While the SLRC survey shows that households with international migrants are associated with a lower share of women in paid employment (46% of women in migrant households are engaged in paid work in Wave 2, compared to 53% of women in non-migrant households), our qualitative analysis shows few changes in women's paid work lives.
- 3 Women's participation in paid work is mainly a result of social norms according to their ethnicity and class.** These factors are not affected by migration but may be shaped by personal preferences and the availability of work. Specifically, we find that:
 - In Dalit households – amongst the most vulnerable and poor castes in Nepali society – women were often already in paid work before their husbands' migration and continued working irrespective of their husbands' income following migration.
 - In high class Madhesi and Muslim families, where gender norms around mobility and public interaction are highly restricted, women never take up paid work and this does not change with

- the migration of men from their households.
- In the Tharu community, which has a matriarchal system, women have always migrated internally and taken on paid work – this does not change with migration of men.
- In Pahade communities, there is no restriction on women taking on paid work. Even prior to migration, women occasionally partook in agricultural wage labour, against their husbands' preferences, if they were really interested. However, women often prefer not to work and since their husbands now send money, they prefer not to take up paid work after migration.

- 4 Generally, there are few work opportunities for women that could encourage women from poorer migrant households to take up work.** The opening up of a noodle factory in Belwa, encouraged some to take up jobs. However, even greater opportunities are unlikely to affect women's take up of paid work, especially in Muslim and higher/middle class Madhesi families in which restrictions on mobility and stigma around women who decide to work remains.
- 5 On the whole, we find that migration is not automatically the disrupter it is often thought to be.** Whether women do end up taking on/not taking on paid work is the result of broader social structures, including gender relations and their caste and ethnicity and has much less to do with migration of men. **It is only when men do not contribute economically that women from migrant households who did not previously work, start taking jobs.**

4.1 Recommendations

Our findings imply that broader systematic changes are required, including to social norms, if migration is to become the facilitator of women's empowerment that it is often thought to be. This is a long-term and complex process and it should be noted that existing programming on social norms has had mixed results. Alongside this, a set of interventions could focus on improving livelihood opportunities available to migrant and non-migrant women. Interventions should improve the range of livelihood opportunities available to women, their productivity and financial pay offs.

This dual-pronged approach would then tackle both the demand and supply of work for women. We suggest a number of specific actions donors, aid programmes and policy-makers could take towards achieving this aim:

Extend agricultural services for women

The case of Bardiya shows that in places with high levels of male outmigration, fertile land and no other desirable alternate source of employment, women will take up farming. The study also demonstrates that women prefer farming among available livelihood options as it allows time for other care work. Despite its high potential to economically empower women (such as the availability of irrigation, easy transport, availability of market for both agricultural inputs like fertilizers and agricultural produce), farming only provides subsistence. **Agricultural extension services** could be used to encourage women to undertake more commercial farming. For example, teaching them about cash crop farming, monitoring visits and classes by agriculture officers on farming techniques and pest control, and provision of medicine to cattle. Initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Employment Programme and Agriculture Modernisation programme need to work together with the Ministry of Women Children and Senior Citizen-led Women Development Programme to increase investment in commercial farming education initiatives for women.

Make agricultural tools more women friendly

Similarly, in Bardiya (and other plain districts in east Nepal) people rarely use modern farming techniques such as irrigation pumps and tillers. Programmes aimed at teaching women to use **machines in agriculture and making agricultural tools more women friendly** (e.g. lighter tillers and pumps) is critical to increasing women's productivity in agriculture. Relevant programmes should consider these aspects in their current activities.

Scale up agricultural education

The case of Bardiya demonstrates that agriculture could be an important avenue in the future for increasing the economic engagement of women. However, due to traditional agricultural methods which are regarded as menial and unproductive, migrants' wives do not want to pursue farming. Awareness raising activities around agriculture and livestock rearing could play an important role in improving the livelihood prospects of women in Bardiya.

To change young people's negative attitude towards agriculture work, girls and boys should learn modern farming methods and they should be encouraged to consider it as a viable livelihoods option. Some schools

include **agricultural education as part of the curriculum** and have farm plots for students to practice on. Such initiatives could be scaled up by leasing farms, using riverbeds and public land as well as connecting to agriculture extension services to introduce students to modern agricultural technologies. When introduced in adolescence, this will not only increase their knowledge and self-confidence but might also change negative attitude towards agricultural work when they are adults.

Scale up financial literacy classes for migrant women but also extend it to men, including potential migrants

Financial literacy classes for women, including those from migrant household, exist elsewhere in Nepal. These have been run by several donor-funded programmes such as Helvetas, the International Labour Organization (ILO) as well as the government of Nepal. We did not find examples of such programmes in Bardiya. **Basic financial literacy classes** to help potential migrants and their families to understand what to expect financially from migration, manage their finances and plan how they will use remittances would be useful. Such classes would be most useful when provided to both the potential migrant and a relevant family member.

Incentivise women and households to use remittances for commercial farming

Remittances receive a lot of criticism in Nepal as it is perceived that many people spend them on consumer items rather than on productive activities. However, people are not widely incentivised to invest their remittances in agriculture. At the same time, Nepal relies heavily on imports for food including meat and dairy products. **Incentives to use remittances for commercial farming and rearing animals** could encourage both productive use of remittances and reduce Nepal's dependency on imports. This could be done by building inter-linkages between existing migrant orientation programmes and agriculture development programmes. The central and the local governments are working together with donors such as Safer Migration Project (SDC) and ILO (Work in Freedom project) to run orientation programmes for migrants. They run classes on financial literacy and teach women to save and invest in small enterprises. However, the livelihood activities pursued by women tend to be very similar, for example, opening small shops or providing tailoring services, for which there is already a huge amount of competition. The orientation programmes could link up with agricultural development programmes such as

from International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Bank and the two programmes from Ministry of Agriculture mentioned previously. They could also look for investment from the agriculture sector to help women benefit from commercial farming.

Scale up norm change interventions

Alongside efforts to increase the number of productive jobs for women, more attention needs to be given to challenging existing norms around women's work and women's place in employment.

Nepal has a rich history of **norm change interventions** run both by donors (such as UNICEF, UNFPA, World Vision, DFID, SDC) as well as by the government. These programmes have sought to address norms regarding son preference, child marriage, early pregnancy and GBV. These initiatives have had mixed results - varying across different ethnic, geographic and religious communities. Effective programmes should be identified and scaled up. Given that migration has become a new norm in Nepali society, they should address the interaction between migration and social norms.

Furthermore, communities need to be made aware of the importance of the economic contributions of women to households. Most communities, excluding Tharu, view paid work as a male responsibility. Using women's earnings towards household expenses is seen as putting the man to shame. This norm needs to be changed if women are to engage in the work force. Some national **counselling programmes** such as 'Sama Jodi' where husbands and wives are brought together

and taught about division of labour between men and women in and out of households are already doing this. However, these programmes are scattered and not run regularly. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Sama Jodi programme was useful for women, but systematic evidence is lacking. Such programmes should be further evaluated and, if effective, scaled up.

Today's adolescents are the migrants and left-behind family members of tomorrow. **Increasing girls' awareness and self-confidence in being economically independent and making families and boys more aware of the importance of investing in the careers of girls** is vital. Girls should be taught to plan for and work towards having their own means of livelihood. Adolescent and parental education programmes are already doing this in some areas of Nepal, but they need to be further expanded.

Increase awareness of GBV

Our study in Bardiya shows that migration has the potential to exacerbate gender discrimination and GBV. Social norm change interventions need to target community and migrant families to raise **awareness of GBV** that left-behind women and children might face. Such interventions should teach family members how they might be perpetrating violence in households and in the community as well as teaching potential victims how to identify and resist violence that is committed against them. Local protection mechanisms that exist in Nepal such as GBV monitoring groups, local police, women's desks and child welfare boards should be particularly sensitive to the needs of left-behind household members.

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Cover photo: Farmer Sunita Bainey checking her maize as it comes out of a shelling machine powered by 4WT. Credit: Sirkohiya, Bardiya, Nepal 2016.



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