

# Migration, Refugee and Conflict

Week 7– Social Cost of Foreign Labour Migration in Nepal

Bijaya Dahal

Department of Conflict, Peace and Development Studies

Tribhuvan University

May, 2023

# Understanding Labor migration

- Labour migration is an integral global agenda.
- The high income country is likely to have increment in migrant workers.
- The benefit of labor migration in diverse forms is witnessed by both the origin and the destination countries.
- This refers to the economic growth and development.
- The issue of migration interlinks with diverse cross-cutting issues in society .
- Foreign employment has an immense economic benefit but is also interlink with certain social worries.
- The returnee migrant workers are sometimes largely affects while being integrated in the society.
- Remittances has been a key aspect to uplift the individual, family and national economy. However the questions of sustainable economic practices arises?

## Contd...

- Labor migration simply is understood as the movement of people for the purpose of work or employment that has affected communities and countries all over the world.

People migrate for improving Livelihood conditions; for prosperity, better opportunities, and better lives for themselves and their children.

Foreign Employment brings economic benefits to families and the country.

There is always BUT ...

- It also causes certain social strains. The strain of labour migration in Nepal has come with a significant cost affecting diverse aspect.

# Contd..

- Why Nepalese migrate abroad?

It is to fulfill their economic and social needs ; the push and pull factors of migration are considered.

- Push and pull factor of migration can be considered
- Push factors could include; limited employment opportunities, existing poverty, the unbalanced governance at the origin, state in transition
- Whereas, pull factor include the diverse employment opportunities, quality of life.
- Labor migration contributes largely in GDP of Nepal.

# Understanding terminologies in migration context

Country of destination:

The country that is a destination for a person or group of persons

This is irrespective of travel pattern they proceed that includes regular as well as irregular.

Country of origin:

The country of nationality is the country of nationality , their habitual residence

Migrated abroad irrespective of travel pattern they proceed that includes regular as well as irregular.

# Contd...

## Country of Transit:

This is the country through which an individual or group of individual during their journey pass in between origin and destination countries.

Migrants who proceed with migrating irregularly visit more transit countries as reaching destination from origin takes time.

In addition, they face diverse notions of vulnerability and risks.

Remittances : This is the private international money transfers made by migrants. Remittances in sent to people in countries of origin as well as sent to close family members in other countries destination.

These days the term social remittances as well social capital transfer are used in regards to non-monetary value gained from migration.

# Contd...

Returnee Migrants : United Nations Statistics Division, UNSD defines returnee migrants as persons returning to their country of citizenship after having been international migrants (whether short term or long term) in another country and who are intending to stay in their own country for at least a year.

Social Capital : Social Capital according, to Bourdieu(1986) states “the sum of resources, actual and virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”.

Basically, socially capital requires an investment of personal relationship.

In addition, social capital also can be understood as the engagement of migrants in their habitual residents while they are living abroad.

# ILO defining international migrant workers

International migrant workers are defined as persons of working age present in the country of measurement and who are in one of the following two categories.

- a. usual residents: These are the international migrants who, during a specified reference period, were in the labour force of the country of their usual residence, either in employment or in unemployment.
- b. not usual residents, or non-resident foreign workers: These are the persons who, during a specified reference period, were not usual residents of the country but were present in the country and had labour attachment to the country, i.e., were either in employment supplying labour to resident producer units of that country or were seeking employment in that country.

- Labor migration is defined as the movement of persons from their home country (habitual residence) to another country (destination) country for the purpose of employment.
- The definition of migration covers labor migration covering the migrants moving within the country and across international borders.
- The United Nations Statistics Division (UN SD) defines foreign migrant workers as “Foreigners admitted by the receiving state for the specific purpose of exercising an economic activity remunerated from within the receiving country. Their length of stay is usually restricted as is the type of employment they can hold (UN SD, 2017).

## Contd...

- ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers: Results and Methodology mentions that in 2019 the international migrant workers in the global Labour force were nearly five percent.
- This is huge contribution in the world economy.
- These migrant workers still in large number are involved in temporary, informal or unprotected jobs with several vulnerabilities at work space with a concern towards their protection at workplace.
- In this regards, diverse aspects of migration can be viewed in the contemporary world of work.
- Furthermore, the issues of families left behind is also another main concern while discussion of migration facets.

“Migrant workers are an asset to every country where they bring their labour... "Migrant workers provide valuable services with their labour and furnish an often invisible subsidy to the national economies that receive them. They work in factories, produce food, provide domestic service, staff hospitals and contribute to a wide range of basic needs, often for low wages and with little recognition of the value of their contribution”

Juan Somavia , Former ILO Director-General

# Important International Convention on Migrant Workers

- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- It is an international treaty with a focus on the protection of migrant workers rights.
- Its emphasis is on the linkage between the migration and human rights.
- This convention considers diverse rights of migrant workers and ensures those rights are protected and respected.
- This convention also has set standards for the laws and the judicial and administrative procedures of individual states.

# Contd...

- The convention is applicable to all migrant workers and their families irrespective of distinction in terms of sex, race, colour, language, religion, political opinion, ethnic origin, nationality, age, economic position, property, marital status and birth status.

This convention applies during the entire migration processes such as;

- preparation for migration
- departure
- transit
- Stay at destination countries
- Return to origin countries

# Contd...

- This convention defines migrant worker as a person who is to be engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national
- It has defined and categorized migrant workers,. They include;

Frontier worker : Refers to a migrant worker who retains his or her habitual residence in a neighboring state to which he or she normally returns every day or at least once a week.

Seasonal Worker: Refers to a migrant worker whose work by its character is dependent on season conditions and is performed only during part of the year.

## Contd...

- Seafarer: It includes a fisherman, referring to a migrant worker employed on board a vessel registered in a State of which he or she is not a national.
- Worker on an offshore installation: It refers to a migrant worker employed on an offshore installation that is under the jurisdiction of a State of which he or she is not a national.
- Itinerant worker: Refers to a migrant worker who have his habitual residence in one State, has to travel to another State or States for short periods, owing to the nature of his or her occupation.

# Contd..

- Specified-employment worker : refers to a migrant worker:
  - i. Who has been sent by his or her employer for a restricted and defined period of time to a State of employment to undertake a specific assignment or duty.
  - ii. Who engages for a restricted and defined period of time in work that requires professional,commercial,technical or other highly specialized skill
  - iii. Who, upon the request of his or her employer in the State of employment, engages for a restricted and defined period of time in work whose nature is transitory brief; and who is required to depart from State of employment either at the expiration of his or her authorized period of stay, or earlier if he or she no longer undertakes specific assignment or duty or engages in that work.

# Contd...

- Self-employed worker: Refers to a migrant worker who is engaged in a remunerated activity otherwise than under a contract of employment and who earns his or her living through this activity normally working alone or together with member of his or her family and to any other migrant worker recognized as self-employed by applicable legislation of the State of employment or bilateral or multilateral agreements.
- Project-tied worker: Refers to a migrant worker admitted to a State of employment for a defined period of work solely on a specific project being carried in that State by his or her employer.

## Contd...

- This convention defines members of the family referring to persons married to migrant workers or having with them a relationship that, according to applicable law, produces effects equivalent to marriage, as well as their dependent children and other dependent persons who are recognized as members of the family by applicable legislation or applicable bilateral; or multilateral agreements between the States concerned.
- The non-discrimination with respect to rights is one of the main focus of this law.
- This also focuses on the human rights of all migrant workers and members of their families.

# Cost of Migration?

Several costs of migration can be considered . These includes ;

1. Social Cost of Migration
2. Economic Cost of Migration
3. Cultural Cost of Migration
4. Political Cost of Migration
5. Psychological Cost of Migration

# Social Cost of Migration

- Social cost of migration has an adverse effect in society.
- The social costs on the community and families left behind needs to be addressed timely as it causes great consequences.
- The social cost in the migration management debate remains in shadow as the highlight remains in the remittances.
- Social stigmatization and tainting images of returnee migrant workers has been common.
- The rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of migrant workers needs to be focused while discussing on social cost of migration.
- Therefore, the concern of social cost needs to be addressed as incorporates diverse aspects.

# Social Cost of Migration

- Separation of Family members
- Estrangement in husband-wife relationships
- Disputes between family members for control over resources; remittance money
- The Social stigma attached to women

Wrongfully accusing women returnee migrants and judging them .

- Questioning on the the images of wife left behind
- Diverse concerns of children left behind;

The socialization concern, the family bonding related concerns

## Contd...

- Migrants being unable to participate in the political process in the origin.
- Nexus between migration and human trafficking.
- Multiple workloads by women left behind:

Most Nepali men migrate GCC countries and Malaysia for unskilled, low-paid and in unprotected jobs.

Women work hard and are not able to improve the quality of their life.

In the absence of the men, wives take on additional responsibilities and multiple workloads such as labour work, farming jobs and selling products in the market.

## Contd...

- This work used to be performed by men.
- In addition, women who leave the house for work are often judged by the relative and neighbors and also are blamed of infidelity
- Also those who do not work are blamed for wasting money.
- Women returnee migrants are finding difficulty to reintegrate upon her return.
- This is because she is questioned, judged and she becomes a subject of gossip as people tend to destroy her image questioning on her character.

# Contd..

- The social stigma attached to women returnee migrants remains creating difficulties to be a part of community.

The dilemmatic Condition of Women can be summarized as ;

- The burden of household responsibilities and additional responsibilities in the absence of men is done by women.
- Women proceeding with household income activities.
- Women taking care of their children and elderly.
- Women moving outside house to public spaces to work that was earlier done by men.
- Doing all these responsibilities also women are suspected

# Contd...

- Women migrants and women left behind face anxiety, depression and high levels of reputational/social stigma.
- They face harassment and discrimination.
- They also have to cope with situations where the husband is unable to earn or is stuck in a difficult situation in the country of destination
- Children's left behind also face a multiple problems
- Their socialization is questioned.
- Despite remittances contributing on their education, health care and day-to-day commodities they may face problem in their upbringing.
- The absence of the parents can cause psychological implications and negative impacts on their personal development.

Contd..

- The worst case highlighted is children's might be vulnerable as they will be neglected or exposed to violence.
- Children rely on parents for the support in every stages of development so the importance of parents in their upbringing is necessity.
- Also , the family dynamics changes when one member of the family migrate.
- When a mother migrates there are fewer percentages of men who primarily become a caregiver and parenting job is done by grandparents.
- The research carried by SaMi and Save the Children in Nepal have found the declining school attendances and performances of the children of migrant households. This might be due to parent's migration.

# Families left behind

- The changing dynamics in household can make spouse vulnerable as number of challenges arises.
- The left behind members need to work both in the private and public spaces as per the necessity.
- They should be prepared for the shock regarding death or injuries of the migrant member. This is the reality.
- The husbands migrating for work leave behind wives as the household heads with over pressure and burden of work and also playing a role in socialization of children's.
- The migration of men has left behind women, children and aged people.
- In the absence of male member, due to migration for labour, women are required to take decisions and responsibilities of managing household affairs.

# Contd...

- In the article “Socio-Cultural Dispositions and Wellbeing of the Women Left Behind: A Case of Migrant Households in Nepal” has found that remittance do not increase subjective wellbeing of migrants’ wives who are staying with their in-laws.
- Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee in its publication has highlighted that the death of migrant workers can have a great impact on the dependents left in the home. Many women are widowed at a young age, the elderly parents are left without support and the children are forced to grow up without one or both parents. The children facing the death of their migrant parent have had to drop out of school.

# Facts

- The media monitoring assessment at the national level was conducted by Safer Migration Project (SaMi) in Nepal.
- In 2015 it conducted three month media monitoring assessment.
- The findings showed that media also played a major role in creating negative perceptions and contributing to diverse facets of social cost of migration.
- Some media broadcasted stories which directly blamed women of remarrying through elopement
- It also broadcasted that women were wasting husbands money or spending unnecessary (remittances)

# Narratives

A study on the social implications of men's migration on women and children in Sarlahi, Saptari and Dhanusha District

*"Yes, I was not happy. My father-in-law always wants to buy land and build house. I want to send my son to good school and save some money. My husband's money is now spent on joint property. It will be divided later on. The brothers who stay here do not give money to the father-in-law. So only our money is used to buy land now and the brothers will take it later. So, I thought it is better to separate and go our own ways. I told this several times to my husband and later he agreed". - woman left behind, Sarlahi*

There were cases where parents have left the house to live separately due to feeling of humiliation.

*"Well most of the times, it's due to financial issues. At the time of going to abroad, the parents find the money to send their son. But later, when he sends money in the name of his wife, they feel angry about it." – KII, Sarlahi*

## Contd..

*Some women submit to sexual coercion of one male head of the family so she does not have to face violence from other men in the family or other kind of violence. Such is the state here" KII, Dhanusha*

*Yes, we talk about women's bad behavior among our friends in Qatar. We say friend, what to do, we are here, so and so's wife eloped with another man so he is going home. Y's wife spends a lot of money and he does not know where his wife is spending their money, so he feels tense. We hear about it when we call our friends in the village or when we surf in Facebook. We are more suspicious when we migrate"*  
in-depth interview with returnee migrant, Saptari

*"I like to live in a joint family. If we live in joint family then, all will help each other in trouble. Workload will also be divided. Sometimes, small disputes happen but it is not big issue."* in-depth interview with left behind children (Boy), Saptari

# Economic Cost

- The major economic costs of migration for individuals involve those relating to information, documents and transportation.
- Obtaining the necessary information on employment opportunities is the first economic cost of migration.
- Documents is the second economic cost. These documents are required to move legally from one country to another to work.
- Documents include passports, visas and work contracts as they depart from origin and destination governments require job offers from employers, health and criminal certificates from workers before they issue work visas.

Regarding, the documentation costs governments require particularly low-skilled migrants to receive pre-departure training and orientation.

## Contd...

- Cost of Welfare Fund is Nepali Rupees 1500
- Health Check-up (Insurance) is also required
- Training and orientation fees are also required
- Free Visa and Free Ticket provision is a major concern
- Fraudulent Encounter; Fair and ethical recruitment practice ?
- People of working age moving out reducing country's potential workforce

# Issues to consider in economic cost

- Brain Drain: High skilled migrating can cause scarce in human capital.
- Loan, Credit and Indebtness: linkages between migration and remittance on the one hand and debt burden on the other.
- Interest rate on loans
- Landownership and Land Transactions: Buying land is often considered a sign of successful migration. But again differences in landownership patterns along caste/ethnic and class can be seen.
- Changing Patterns of Livelihoods

# Cultural Cost and Political Cost

## Cultural Cost

- Cultural differences play an important role in shaping migration patterns. Cross Country Cultural differences arises, language barrier occurs. Issues of common language, ethnicity, religion arises.
- Cultural distance.
- Cultural Cost can also be understood as non-monetary migration costs.
- Shift in Cultural Practices ; norms and values ( Extinct of Culture)

## Political Cost

- The political participation of a labour migrants is a major concern; voting rights.

# Psychological Cost

- Psychological costs of separation from family and friends
- Physical Growth and Development of Children of Migrants

Example ; Study in Bangladesh ; The study finds that children of migrants were less healthy in terms of height and weight compared to children of non-migrants when controlling factors like income, age, gender, etc. However, the study findings suggest that children of migrants are in a better situation than children of non-migrants in terms of having three or more meals per day.

- Self-esteem and coping strategies; Psychological disharmony and economic migrant's stress.
- People Left Behind ( Life satisfaction, Happiness and Depression ? )
- Reintegration Process of Returnee Migrant Workers

# Common worries and fears of left behind women

- Loan
- Health of husband and children
- Fear of violence
- Arranging money for daughters marriage
- Bearing expenses of children's education and necessities
- Workload and possible hardships
- Husband's work in foreign employment
- Insecurity when husband will return back from foreign employment

# References

- Antman, F.M. (2012). The Impact of Migration on Family Left Behind. *IZA*.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (241–258). New York: Greenwood Press. Retrieved from <file:///C:/Users/Personal/Downloads/Bourdieu%20The%20Forms%20of%20Capital.pdf>
- Gartaula, H. N., Visser, L. & Niehof, A. (2012). Socio-Cultural Dispositions and Wellbeing of the Women Left Behind: A Case of Migrant Households in Nepal. *Soc Indic Res.*
- Ghimire, A., Bhujel, S., & Tiwari, R. (2019). The Social Implications of Men's Migration on Women and Children In Sarlahi, Saptari and Dhanusha District. *Nepal Institute for Social and Environmental Research.*
- ILO. (2021). ILO Global Estimates on International Migrant Workers: Results and Methodology.
- ILO. (2015). Labour markets trend analysis and labour migration from South Asia to Gulf Cooperation Council Countries, India and Malaysia.

# References

- KC, G.(2014). *Kamaune: The Cultural and Economic Imaginaries of Migration*. CESLAM
- Obeng-Odoom,F.(2000).Afro-Chinese Labour Migration. *Forum for Social Economics*,1-21 DOI: [10.1080/07360932.2020.1724554](https://doi.org/10.1080/07360932.2020.1724554)
- Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (2017). *An Analytical Report on Death Cases of Nepalese Migrant Workers in Destination Countries*.
- Singh, K. M., Singh, R. K. P., Kumar, A. & Kumar, A. (2014). *Male Worker Migration and Women Empowerment: The case of Bihar, India*.
- United Nations.(1990). *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*.