

Impact of men's migration on gender norms in Nepal

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Labour migration from Nepal

- Largely migrate for employment opportunities and so we are focusing on labour migration
- Government started to keep migration records (labour approvals) since 2008 and since then 4 million people have got labour approvals
- Contractual migration- 2-3 years
- Majority of migrants are between 35-45 years of age, however significant (eg 17.72%) continue foreign employment after 45 years of age.
- Migration to 110 countries with Gulf countries, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan being predominant.

What gender norms are we looking at

- Norms around Ideal women
 - Norms around mobility
 - Norms around women in family systems
- Women's paid and unpaid work
- Women and autonomy
- Women and political participation

Norms around ideal women

Norms around women in family systems

“Should serve in-laws and be submissive and supportive to in-laws”

“Should live in joint family with the in-laws”

“..does not complain about in-laws to neighbours”

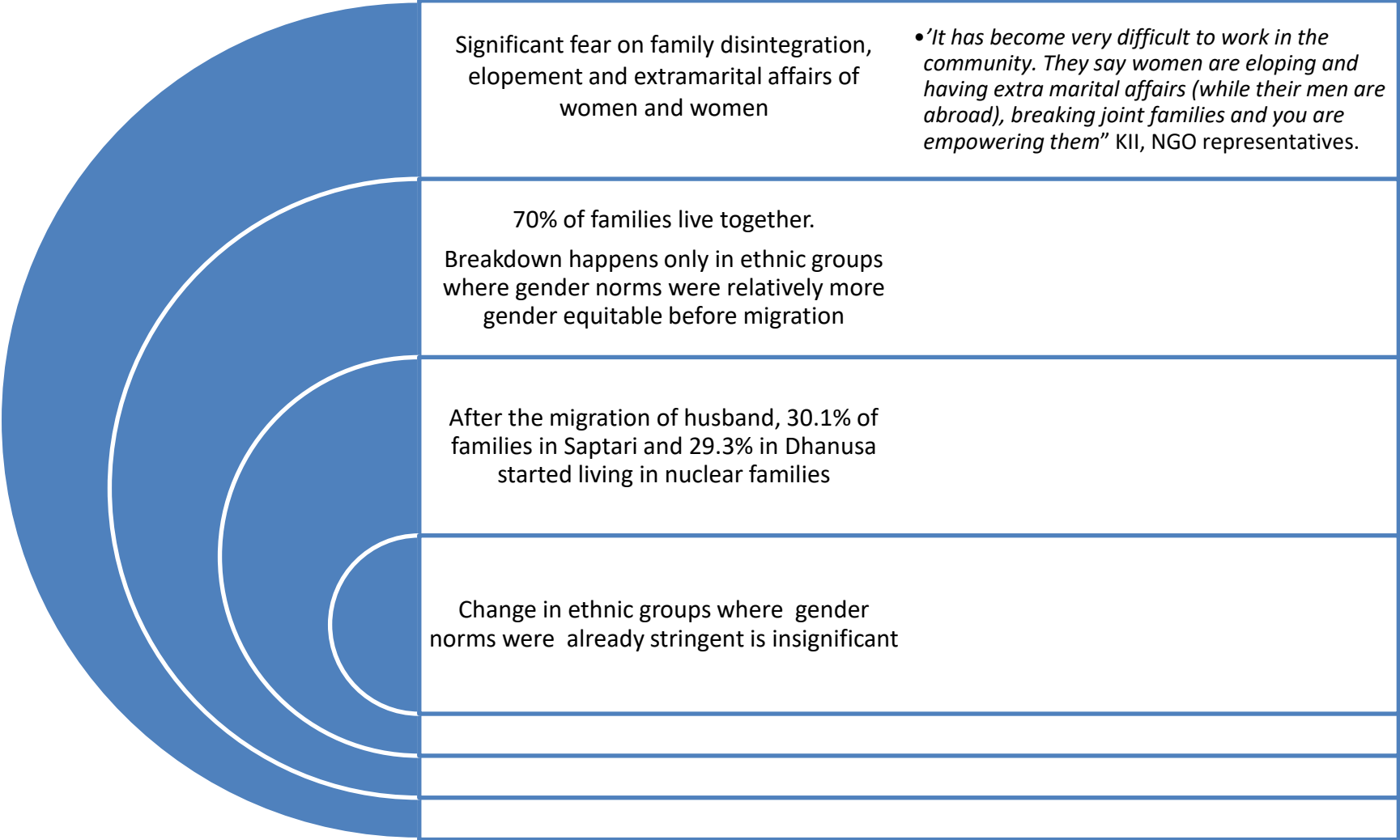
Norms around mobility

- “Should not go out of house except for household work “

- “Should not go to market and shops for no reason”

Related

- “Should not talk/ interact with male outsiders”
- “Should do fashion that is acceptable in society, e.g. wear traditional clothes



Significant fear on family disintegration, elopement and extramarital affairs of women and women

• *'It has become very difficult to work in the community. They say women are eloping and having extra marital affairs (while their men are abroad), breaking joint families and you are empowering them'* KII, NGO representatives.

70% of families live together.

Breakdown happens only in ethnic groups where gender norms were relatively more gender equitable before migration

After the migration of husband, 30.1% of families in Saptari and 29.3% in Dhanusa started living in nuclear families

Change in ethnic groups where gender norms were already stringent is insignificant

Norms around mobility

Activities	Before migration	After migration
My neighbors get suspicious when I go to the market frequently.	14.41	36.54
My neighbors watch my activities closely.	14.91	40.54
My neighbors watch me closely when I talk to outsider men such as shopkeeper, hired male labor	7.71	30.03
My neighbors watch closely how I spend my money.	5.91	25.43

Norms around mobility for women have not changed in communities even when women need to do works previously done by men

This has resulted in violence from family members and neighbours

Communicate with husband 2-3 times a day but do not share about violence with husbands.

Norms around women's autonomy

No significant change in decision-making:

Ideals around guardianships is still for men: In absence of husbands, decisions for women used to be taken by – in-laws or the lead male member present in the hh

Now, husbands have ultimate say in strategic decisions related to the household or women's own lives.

Due to women's frequent communication with spouse: eg 69.77% speak with their husband more than once a day

Norms around unpaid work

In joint families, norms around unpaid work does not change.

• *" No I don't have to do work of my husband. Father-in-law does the work. If I was alone and there were no parents, then that was another thing. So after my husband went abroad father-in-law does his son's work." IDI_wife of migrant_Belwa*

• In a joint family, it is other men in the households who do the work of the absent migrants.

For women who lived in nuclear families, unpaid workload increases

- addition of works previously done by men: agricultural work, livestock care, construction work and attending social functions including school meetings for children and village marriages and death functions
- Once they have remittance women from hilly communities hire labour and so less participation in agricultural work.
- Once back, men might take up these work

Norms around intra-hh work and care duties does not change

- Since women did all the household works by themselves, there is no change in hh works due to migration.
- We did not find evidence that men on returning would do hh works such as helping in the kitchen or care duties.

Norms around paid work

No change in paid work

In Dalit households gender norms were always flexible- as they were poor, women were always contributing to hh earning by taking up paid work and this does not change even when they start receiving remittances.

In high caste households of Hilly origin, women taking up jobs was dependent on land management they had to do and availability of employment locally. We did not find women starting works (eg small entrepreneurs from remittance money and engaging in paid work)

In Madheshi and Muslim communities, since taking up paid work essentially requires going out in public space which makes it likely that women interact with outsider men, paid job is not allowed

Here any hh costs are borne jointly by brothers to make sure women from hh do not take paid works outside the house

" Yes, my elder brothers do not allow their wives to go out to the market or to take up work. Sister in laws cannot say I want to take up this work. They will say no." FGD_ with male relatives of migrant_ Gulariya

When she is a single women 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.

Norms around political participation

- No significant improvement in social and political participation.

e.g. 42.48% need to ask husbands to join any groups and in 6.31% cases husbands do not allow to join any groups.

Whom do you ask if you have to make political decision such as casting vote, supporting political party?	Total
Husband	62.36
Self	16.12
In laws	19.32
Children	1.20
Friends	0.10
Maternal relatives	0.30
Neighbours	0.60
Total	100

What does this mean for migration and development policies

Existing social, political and economic spheres are yet to be transformative enough to give space to wives of migrant workers who are now a significant portion of remaining population in local areas.

Leveraging migration for development should target to make gender norms equitable as a part of migration-development agenda

Harnessing the increased self confidence and awareness of women of migrant workers for local transformation might be meaningful for leveraging migration for development.

Rising in reported cases of sexual and GBV on migrants wives have led people to rethink and question patriarchy and violence. This has potential to make positive impacts not only on wives and their migrant husbands but also for women whose husband do not migrate.

Development in communication technology has opened up space for an equitable husband-wife relationships. This can be used as points for engaging men in changing discriminatory gender norms for women.