INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL

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Introduction
Migration and globalisation are gradually breaking down the age-old boundaries between the countries. It has been rapidly changing the traditional spheres of human activity. The concept of ‘global village’ has become a reality. Formerly isolated towns and villages in the countryside of Asia have become closer to New York or London than to the capital of their own country. However, the situation of poverty that forced rural inhabitants to migrate in the first place still exists in their places of origin and continues to influence their lives and prospects in their “new countries”, as well as those of the people they left behind. In the receiving societies, migration and development policies generally constitute separate policy domains. This has hampered the elaboration of effective policies that establish a more positive connection between migration and development (de Haas 2005).

Migration is one of the three components of demography and population change. The changes in scale and pattern of migration have a great consequence in both areas of origin and destination; influences in social, economic, cultural, and political configuration of a society. When we talk about migration, we encounter a number of dichotomies that such as in-/ out-, rural/urban, temporary/permanent, internal/international, voluntary/forced etc. This sometimes creates difficulties to operationalize the concept. A general definition of migration is the movement of people from one place to another either temporarily or permanently within the country and abroad (Skeldon 1997; Spaan 1999). Demographically, the basic form of migration is either in- or out-migration, which changes not only the population size but also the structure of population in both areas of origin and destination. Immigration stands for inward movement, while out-migration is the outward movement of people from a particular area. The paper aims to situate the existing trends and patterns of labour out-migration in Nepal and analyse its potential impacts in country’s local development through a socio-anthropological point of view.

Migration takes place due to so many reasons such as conflict, political and social instability, economic incentives, and the like (de Haan 2000). Even than not for all reasons mentioned, the international migration motivated by economic reasons is a phenomenon that affects increasing number of people,
households, and the communities worldwide. Many studies of Diasporas tend to focus on issues like identity and adjustment to their destination rather than the current and potential role in the development of their countries of origin (Hugo 2003). In other words, most migration studies have paid attention to the areas of destination, the migrants themselves and what causes migration (de Haas 2005; Kabkí 2007; Shrestha 1988). In the areas of origin, studies are mainly focused on the economic impacts of remittances at macro-level (Massey et al. 1993; Spaan 1999; Taylor et al. 1996a, 1996b). The complex relationship between out-migration and local development at the areas of origin is still scarce (Kothari 2003; Rodenburg 1993). Indeed, labour out-migration has diverse social, economic, and demographic consequences not only in the areas of destination but also in the areas of origin (Adger et al. 2002; Connell and Conway 2000; Skeldon 1997; Spaan 1999).

Nepal is one of the least developed countries in the world. The census carried out in 2001 by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) reported the country’s total population as 23 million (CBS 2001) but the current estimation is about 27 million with per capita GDP about US$ 470 (CBS 2008). Nepal is a mountainous country situated on the lap of Himalayan range facing south towards the Plain of Ganges River. The country is small with 147 thousands sq. km. area landlocked between two ‘giants’, China and India. Agriculture remains a major source of livelihood where about 85 percent people depend on subsistence agriculture. Commercialization of agriculture is not so common. Tourism is also important due to its massive diversity in topography, altitude, climate, vegetation, people, and culture. Poverty, unemployment, declining natural resources, and country’s experience of over a decade long political instability are some of the main causes of the high rate of out-migration. Despite the fact that many social, cultural, economic, and political problems are interwoven with the process of both internal and international migration, it is the least researched and understood component of demographic dynamics in Nepal, as compared to other demographic variables like fertility and mortality (KC 2003a).

For decades, Nepal is becoming a labour exporting country (Kaspar 2005; Seddon 2005; Seddon et al. 2002; Thieme and Wyss 2005; Yamanaka 2000). Currently, about 3 percent Nepalese live abroad for different purposes (CBS 2001); many of them are temporary labour migrants. The National Living Standard Survey conducted by CBS estimated that the proportion of households receiving remittances has increased from 23 percent in 1995-96 to 37 percent in 2003-04 (CBS 2004; Seddon et al. 2002). Since the rate of out-migration is increasing this proportion has also been in the increasing
trend. The period coincides with the Maoist insurgency prevailed in the country (1996-2006) that also impelled rural youths to leave the villages. It means, in addition to the socioeconomic motivation, Nepalese labour out-migration has been propelled by the political instability. It produced a considerable number of contract workers abroad, which changed their livelihood trajectory and out-migration became part and parcel of their life. It is also worth noting that out-migration in Nepal is mostly transnational: India 77 percent, Gulf countries 15 percent and 8 percent to the rest of the world (CBS 2001). Migration to India has a longstanding history, while migration to the Gulf countries, Europe, or USA commenced about 15 years ago (Kollmair et al. 2006). Out-migration has a significant importance in Nepalese society, which is characterized by enormous social, economic, cultural, and political changes.

In this paper, I look at the historical trend and patterns of Nepalese out-migration and its possible consequences in the local development of Nepal. Gender aspect and remittance, the integral parts of labour out-migration will also be addressed in the paper. The data presented and arguments I have made in this paper are mainly from secondary sources of information, particularly from CBS and Department of Labour and Employment Promotion (DLEP). In addition, a short newspaper survey and information gathered from a preliminary field visit for my PhD research are also incorporated to some extent. This paper tries to justify my own research on the impact of male out-migration in the areas of origin with a socio-anthropological focus, which is being conducted in Jhapa district of eastern Nepal. In my research, I am looking at the impact of labour out-migration on food security and wellbeing of the people left behind.

This paper is organized in five sections. With the background information on out-migration, conceptual issues and my justification to the paper have been described on this introductory section. In second section, I will present my theoretical positioning based on a review of theoretical development in migration research. Third section illustrates the existing situation of out-migration particularly the international migration from Nepal. Data on history and trend, pattern of migration and its relationship with gender and remittances are the primary focus of this section. Fourth section is devoted to the empirical and theoretical discussions where I have categorised my analysis in five sub-sections: remittances, poverty, and local development; urbanisation; labour reorganisation and changing gender roles; potential impacts on left-behind household members; and some theoretical discussions based on the earlier studies carried out in Nepal and abroad.
Finally, fifth section concludes the paper based on the discussion I have made in previous sections.

**Theoretical framework**

The study of migration is by no means an exclusive field of demographers, but is also taken up by economists, political scientists, geographers, sociologists and social anthropologists. The discipline specific peculiarities can be discerned based on concepts, frames of reference, assumptions and the level of measurements adopted. They have produced a vast body of empirical and theoretical literature on migration and labour circulation in the developing countries. This makes sometimes difficult to draw a coherent and linear theoretical development. The development of migration theories can be categorized into three broad groups such as individualistic approaches, structural approaches and integrative approaches. However, these approaches focus on ‘who migrates’ and ‘why migration occurs’ types of reasoning. I would like to take this as a point of departure to go further to find out the interconnectedness between migrants and their households back home. More specifically, I am interested to look into the relationship between migrants and the socio-cultural transformation in their homeland; the dynamic behaviour of the people left behind at home, in particular. Hence, what is relevant to this paper is perhaps to find out the approaches that can link migration with the places of origin and view migration as a process of interaction between two social spaces.

**Individualistic approaches:** Derived from the classical and neoclassical economic theories, the individualistic approaches assume individuals as the prime deciders of migration process and focus on why people take a decision to migrate. The classical economic theories, also called functional and behavioural economic theories are based on modernization theory, where migration is viewed as free choice intended to maximize utility out of scarce resources (Shrestha 1988).

The neoclassical theory of migration also emphasizes on the individual decision of migrants based on their rational choice in between the places of origin and destination depending upon the wage differences, labour equilibrium and income maximization (Massey et al. 1993; Spaan 1999). Moreover, Spaan (1999) calls this phenomenon as place utility, “This type of approach uses the individual as unit of analysis and basically explains migration in terms of a rational-calculating and utility maximizing individual making a decision to migrate or not on the basis of an evaluation of the areas
of origin and destination” (Spaan 1999: 21-22). Haris and Todaro model of ‘pull and push’ factors of migration is one of the influential contributions in the neoclassical theory (See for instance, Massey et al. 1993; Rodenburg 1993; Taylor 1999). The surplus labour, scarce capital, population pressure and unemployment situation in the sending area serves as push factor and scarce labour, surplus capital, high income and social amenities in the receiving area serves as pull factor where the individual makes a rational decision for maximizing income (Goss and Lindquist 1995; Massey et al. 1993; Spaan 1999).

What is common in these two approaches is the focus on individuals, rational choice in between sending and receiving areas. These classical and neoclassical economic theories of migration are criticized as the perspective that is usually a historic and pays no attention to the underlying structural forces which also affect the migration process, including the social, cultural and political aspects of migration (Goss and Lindquist 1995; Massey et al. 1993; Rodenburg 1993; Shrestha 1988; Taylor 1999; Taylor et al. 1996a). Spaan (1999) argues that volunteerism is not always the case and there is no free mobility of labour as assumed by the theory. These theories have given much emphasis on economic, objective and measurable factors, allegedly constituting the motivation of migration whereas more subjective factors such as curiosity and adventurism are overlooked (Skeldon 1997).

Structural approaches: In reaction to the former models of migration, a new perspective emerged encompassing (neo-) Marxist theories, Dependency theory and the World System perspective under the broad umbrella of ‘political-economy’ or ‘historical-structural’ perspective (Spaan 1999). The crux of this approach is that internal or international migration (or circulation) is not to be perceived as an isolated process but as a result of the process of historical socioeconomic transformation, fuelled by capitalist development and accumulation in the centre and the (incomplete) penetration and subordination of pre-capitalist modes of production in the periphery (Massey et al. 1993; Rodenburg 1993; Shrestha 1988; Spaan 1999). Rodenburg (1993) further illustrates that rather than seeing wages as positive inducements to move, Marxists consider the cash economy as an instrument to bind the migrants by deliberately creating such differentials in between two areas.

The structural perspective views the migration process as a result of exploitation of the rural areas created by the wider capital forces through the one-way flow of economic surplus. This takes a more negative view of
migration and point to inherent antagonistic forces and conflict between the developed and developing world. “Capitalist expansion will eventually result in ever increasing exploitation of the core over the periphery, contributing to its underdevelopment. Migration from the periphery to the core will serve to reinforce this unequal relationship” (Spaan 1999: 28).

**Integrative approaches:** Other approaches such as New Economics of Labour Migration, System Approach and Network Approach are considered under the category of integrative approaches. This approach tries to overcome the previously theorised biased emphasis either on individuals or on macro level socio-economic and political structures. New economics of Labour Migration views migration not motivated by income maximization but motivated by minimizing risks of the households. “Unlike individuals, households are in a position to control risks to their economic well-being by diversifying the allocation of household resources, such as family labour. While some family members can be assigned economic activities in the local economy, others may be sent to work in foreign labour markets where wages and employment conditions are negatively correlated or weakly correlated with those in the local area” (Massey et al. 1993: 436).

According to this perspective, labour migration is an economic strategy made by the household to allocate its human resource rationally to increase the flows of income and to decrease the scope of economic risks (Massey et al. 1993; McDowell and de Haan 1997). More recently livelihood perspective can also be included within this approach. As livelihood, in simplest term, is the ways and means of living (Chambers and Conway, 1992), the people strategize their livelihoods by diversifying their livelihood activities and social support capabilities not only to struggle for survival but also to improve their standards of living (Ellis 1998, 2000). In this line, labour migration is one of the livelihood diversification strategies undertaken by the households in the expectation of improved livelihoods (McDowell and de Haan, 1997; Siddiqui, 2003; Thieme and Wyss, 2005). McDowell (1997: 20) argues, “Migration is often perceived as an exception to, or rupture of normal patterns of society. Instead, we argue for an understanding of rural development that takes migration as the rule rather than the exception”. Hence, “international labour migration has been an integral part of the livelihood strategies of the majority of people for many generations” (Thieme and Wyss 2005: 66).

Theoretical review above reveals that the development of migration theories and the perspectives onto looking at migration has been changing
over time. The conventional approach of looking at migration as a product of exploitation, coercion, and deprivation and taking migration as a decision to look for more viable "new" life does not work anymore. Researches have already shown that the poorest of the poor are often left behind in villages (de Haas 2005). Furthermore, life-time migration as a form of permanent migration is also changing to more temporary type of circular (contract) migration where individual family members migrate while others remain at home. This has become an important factor of socioeconomic transformation in Nepal in the recent years.

This is particularly important in the context of international migration for work, which is quite different phenomenon as compared to in-country migration from Hill to Terai or from rural areas to urban centres. Unfortunately, labour out-migration in Nepal has always been seen as a by-product of a stagnant rural economy, to be eliminated by domestic economic development, particularly within the agricultural sector (Seddon et al. 2002). It has never received an attention by policy-makers or researchers in spite of its significant contribution to the socio-cultural and economic transformation of rural Nepal. Recently, its importance is increasingly realized and the issue has been covered widely in both academics and policy-making (Gill 2003; KC 2003b; Lokshin et al. 2007; Seddon et al. 2002). The Government of Nepal has also recognized its legislative role and involved in the process.

International migration in Nepal

History and trend: One of the big problems of research particularly in the developing countries like Nepal is the lack of availability, reliability and systematic publication of data and migration sector cannot be excluded from this situation. Hence, a detail analysis of migration phenomenon from the perspective of poverty, gender and development at various levels of spatial aggregation is difficult (KC 2003b). Even though the Government of Nepal started collecting data on migration since 1920 it was not accessible as published material. Kansakar (2003) reports that the population data published for the first time in Nepal was in the Appendix of the speech made by Prime Minister Chandra Shumsher Jung Bahadur Rana in the booklet Maharaja Chandra Shamsher Jung Bahadur Rana's Appeal to the People of Nepal for the Emancipation of Slave and Abolition of Slavery in the Country in 1925. Another classic source of migration data was the Population Census of 1952/54 (Department of Statistics 1957 in Nepali, cited in Kansakar 2003). The report contains an analysis of different characteristics of the population of Nepal. Though Nepal has a census history of almost a century, more
detailed account of migration data were made available only after the census 1991. The census of 2001 has a bit more detailed information, including a comprehensive account of the respective areas of destination, the purpose of migration (type of work the migrants engaged in), and gender specific data including the population structure and so on.

Nepalese labour out-migration is not a new phenomenon. Nepali migrant workers have been sending their earnings to their families for around 200 years (cf. Adhikari 2006; cf. Seddon et al. 2002). The first evidence of out-migration found in literature is that in early nineteenth century, the first Nepalese men migrated to Lahore (in present day’s Pakistan) to join the army of Sikh ruler Ranjit Singh. Afterwards, both they and later migrants are termed as “Lahure” (cf. Thieme and Wyss 2005). Literally, the nickname lahure is given to the people who join the armed force of India, Hong Kong, Singapore, United Kingdom, and so on; but it also designates people living abroad particularly having the working class jobs. The distinction here is essential because people living abroad for study or working in the universities and “big” organizations like UN, FAO, and ADB are not necessarily called lahures. The labourers working in the working class jobs are recently termed as ‘New Lahures’ (Seddon et al. 2001). This is an indication of socioeconomic position of migrant households in Nepal, who goes where and who does what.

Another metaphor used for Nepalese migrants working abroad is the Gurkhas; particularly known as the Nepalese who work in Gurkha Regiment for British or Indian forces. After a war in the Gorkha area with the British East India Company (1814/1816), an increasing number of Gurkhas (mostly, but not exclusively from present-day Nepal) also joined the British Army in India, starting a tradition that continues today (cf. Seddon 2005). During the World War I and II, Gurkhas were sent as courtesy from Nepalese government to support allied force where they fought courageously and established an image of “Gurkhas”. Even to date Gurkhas as Nepal Armies and Police are popularly recognized as good peace keeping force worldwide, some examples are their involvement in UN peace keeping force in Kosovo, Lebanon, Congo etc. In other words, Nepalese out-migration started from the history of Nepali soldiers who joined forces of other countries though it was not well accounted. With respect to the census 1942, Kansakar (2003: 107) reports, “The census seems to have not recorded the Nepali troops sent from Nepal in different fronts to assist the allied forces and might have been included only those who went abroad for livelihood”. 
Nepal’s international border with India and China remained almost open for the movement of people from both of her neighbours. With China, it became closed one after 1950, while it has remained open with India to date with no restriction on the movement of people of both countries. Hence, because of open border, cultural similarities, and no need of documentary evidence to show migration to and from India is pre-historic and even unaccounted. Throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th, Nepalese men served in India, often accompanied by their wives and other family members. As the Gurkha settlements increased in number and size, they also attracted Nepali workers seeking civilian employment in India. The brothels developed in these new centres may well have included women from Nepal and from the surrounding areas (Seddon 2005). He further illustrates that the development of tea estates in Assam and Darjeeling in India also increased the demand for labour, which resulted in a substantial increase in the number of both men and women workers from Nepal, ultimately increased the expatriate Nepali community in those areas.

Data show that Nepal is witnessing an increasing trend of out-migration since 1942, the first year from which we have the information. In this period of six decades, the migrated population reaches from 88 thousands in 1942 to more than a million in 2008, over 12-fold growth in an increasing rate (Figure 1).

Not all persons represented by the figure mean the labour migration rather they are the people absent at households during census period, which also include labour migrants. Because of data problem, we have to take the whole group of out-migrants into a single category but they can be disaggregated into labour migrants, trafficked people, students, emigrants (under diversity visa [DV] program in USA, skilled manpower immigration program in UK, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia), Gurkhas, and the people working in diplomatic missions and NGOs, and so on.
Figure 1: Trend of out-migration from 1942 to 2008 (in '000) (cf. Kansakar 2003; Department of Labour 2008; UNSTAT 2008).

Figure 1 shows that the growth was not so high until 1981 but it took a bigger leap between the years 1981 and 1991. This can be related to first popular movement in 1990 that restored democracy in Nepal. This actuated labour out-migration in two ways: a) democracy provided an increased access to information and opportunity, and also to freedom and autonomy in decision-making; b) the restored democracy could not solve the problem of unemployment and people’s expectation, which made them explore a better opportunity and go abroad. As a means of pull factor could be the increased labour demand from Gulf countries and other Asian countries where the economy was (and still is) booming because of their industrial development. Another leap observed in the figure is from 2001 to 2005. This corresponds with a period of political instability (the period of Maoist insurgency) and surprisingly increased development of information technology that made it easy for the people to access to information.

This trend is ever increasing. A very recent figure of DLEP shows that the size of Nepalese labour force in the year 2007/08 totalled 215,639 persons, an increase of 22.44 percent compared to the previous year (Kantipur 2008).

**Patterns of migration:** The Government of Nepal officially opened its door for citizens to go abroad for work in late 1980s. Before that people used to work only in India because of open border and people did not have access to other countries. After having labour agreements with a number of Gulf States
the number of migrant workers has increased substantially since 1996 with the increasing demand every year. According to the population census 2001, India remains to be the main recipient of Nepalese migrant workers with about 600,000 migrants living there. India is followed by the Gulf countries in aggregate (111,000) such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and so on. Other countries account for about 62,000 Nepalese migrants. Europe is still not visible in terms of Nepalese migrant population size and the proportion in other developed countries is also negligible with respect to size (Figure 2).

![Figure 2: Country wise out-migration from Nepal (CBS, 2001).](image)

A study carried out by Seddon et al. (2002) gives a good account of Nepalese workers living abroad especially in the West. They illustrate that there are few Nepalese living and working in 'the West' and they send remittances back home. Many, particularly in North America, are professionals who live with their families. These are predominantly of urban origin. According to their estimate for 1997, a total of 12,500 Nepali migrants were working in Europe and might be 2,500 in North America – making a total of around 15,000 in the West as a whole. The largest number of Nepalese in any one country is in Britain, with 3,600 (mainly Gurkhas) officially registered and 8,000 unofficial workers. Likewise, in Japan, most of the estimated 10,000-plus Nepali migrant workers are illegal (Seddon et al. 2002: 24-25).

If we take out India from the picture, Gulf becomes the prime destination of Nepalese migrant workers. According to DLEP, Malaysia
(36%) remains to be the largest recipient as per the country-wise calculation till now (2008), which is followed by Qatar (29%), Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (19%), and United Arab Emirates (12%) and so on (Figure 3). As mentioned above European and American countries are still out of access for the Nepalese migrant workers. Clearly, one should note that the data are entirely work-related migration, which does not include students, refugees, permanent emigrants, and the expatriates.

![Figure 3: Country wise out-migration from Nepal excluding India (DLEP, 2008).](image)

It is also interesting to observe that probably because of open access to information and impact of globalization the out-migration towards countries other than India is being increased. Previously, people only had access to India because of a number of reasons such as transportation, information, demands from other countries, and other policies and governing rules but gradually people are moving to other countries in the world. Figure 4 shows that in 1981 about 93 percent of out-migrants went to India while only 7 percent found their destination to other countries. The tendency of migrating to outside India kept on increasing and reached 23 percent in 2001 while going to India has been reduced to 77 percent in the same year.
On contrary to above calculation based on the cumulative country-wise calculation, the trend of migration to Malaysia has been reduced since 2005/06 while this trend of the Gulf countries has increased (Figure 5). This is because of a relatively low wage rate in Malaysia as compared to the Gulf countries. My short newspaper survey during June-July 2008 showed that the demand from Malaysia seems to be only working class labourers with the name “Production Workers” or “Production Operators” while in the Gulf countries the demand is more disaggregated. Furthermore, the demand of skilled and semi-skilled labourers like mason, mechanic, salesman/girls, security guards, and engineers is increasing from Gulf States. It is also important to note that many workers returned from Malaysia because of the work they had to engage in are found different from the work they were told they would get during the process. Another important de-motivating factor to Malaysia is the levy charged by the Government of Malaysia from workers. A foreign employment agent (broker) in Jhapa said that if levy was removed the tendency would increase again. In Malaysia, one has to pay up to 150 Ringgit per month to the government, which Nepali workers consider as a financial burden against a relatively low salary.
Gender dimension of migration: Even though, at a global level, almost half of world migrant population is female (Ramirez et al. 2005), Nepal has predominantly male out-migration, with 89 percent of the total migrant population (Figure 6). It is partly attributed by the patrilineal social structure where men have greater access to productive resources, public sphere activities, and a breadwinning role that men are supposed to take such steps and earn to make a living. Ideally, a general social expectation from men in Nepal is to manage resources and make available a livelihood while women are expected to maintain the family and households by allocating resources for the benefit of members. In terms of productive activities, Seddon et al. (2002) analyzed 77 percent women’s involvement in agriculture whereas men involved mainly (57 percent) in outside agriculture. This suggests why male out-migration is predominantly high in Nepal.

Figure 6 illustrates the country-wise gender composition of out-migrants from Nepal. Hong Kong has the largest proportion of female migrants. Hong Kong is one of the main destinations for Gurkhas, who are also accompanied by their wives and children. The Hong Kong born children of British armies received their citizenship from Hong Kong government that made them attracted to reside there and hence increased the number. Another reason
could be that there has been increasing demand of domestic help which preferably women like to do.

Figure 6: Proportion of out-migration in Nepal by destination and gender (CBS, 2001).

The data show that in the western countries the proportion of women migrants is higher as compared to that of in Moslim countries like Malaysia and the Gulf countries. On contrary to the situation in Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia and the Philippines, the female out-migration from Nepal to the Gulf countries is not so motivating because of the cultural factor and the nature of jobs available. Neither it can be of target for women to apply for as a factory labourer or farm worker nor can they accompany their spouses during migration (due to possibly low wage rate to run their family there). Higher proportion of women migration in the cluster of USA, Canada and Mexico reveals the diversity visa (DV) program in the USA, increasing target of students to US education and immigration program in Canada. These are relatively gender neutral interventions as compared to the labour migration to the Gulf countries and Malaysia.

Apart from the spouses of Indian armies and other civilian workers in India, a huge proportion of women migrants are working in the Indian brothels. Since 1989, when a number of Nepali women from the red light districts of Mumbai were deported, it showed that large numbers of Nepali women are employed in the Indian commercial sex industry (Seddon et al. 2002). Maiti Nepal, a non-governmental organization working in the field of women trafficking in Nepal, estimates that about 150,000 to 300,000 girls are exploited in different brothels in India. However, a scientific investigation is
needed to prove whether they arc exploited and trafficked. Same situation is prevailed in Hong Kong and Middle Eastern Countries (cf. Sharma 2004). As mentioned above, due to open border with India the actual number of migrants may surpass the government estimations. Similarly, people trafficked (as a form of human trafficking) through illegal channels are not counted on official figures.

**Remittance as a product of migration:** Literally, remittance is the transfer of money by foreign workers, but literature also includes other forms of transfers such as social remittances (diffusion of various types of social practices, ideas and values), knowledge or technology remittances (knowledge, skills and technology brought back by returning migrants), and political remittances as changing identities and political awareness after return (cf. Goldring 2004).

Labour migration and remittance is becoming the important mainstay of Nepalese economy (Kollmair et al. 2006). As indicated above, the official statistics does not reflect the actual situation. Seddon et al. (2002) estimate the actual remittance in Nepal is about 10 to 20 times greater than the amount shown by the official statistics, which is equivalent to almost 25 percent of national gross domestic product (GDP). This shows an importance of remittance especially to the rural households. It means rural livelihoods have never been wholly reliant on agriculture, and labour migration has long been an important feature of rural existence in Nepal.

Like pattern of migration (number of migrants) the scale of remittances differs depending upon the countries of destination but in different ways. We have observed that India is the largest recipient of Nepalese migrant workers. However, the remittances from India are not as high as the number of migrants working there. Out of total number of remittances (one remittance means the remittance sent at a time) sent back home, about 40 percent is from India and the corresponding value of remittance is about one third of total remittances entered into the country (Table 1). On contrary, a negligible number of remittances (3 percent) from outside India produce almost a quarter of the total amount of remittances. It gives a critical importance of remittances from abroad (outside India) to policy and research arena. Similarly, remittances from urban areas and rural areas of the country are also significant, though they are out of the scope of this paper.
Remittances from abroad constituted 76 percent of the total amount of remittances received in Nepal in 2004. As migration to India is decreasing the remittance thereof is also decreasing. Using the data from Nepal Living Standard Survey 2003/04 (Lokshin et al 2007) show the largest share of international remittances came from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (35 percent), followed by 30 percent from India, 17 percent from other Asian countries, and the remainder from United Kingdom, United States, and other countries.

In sum, it is revealed that the scale and pattern of migration and remittances have different consequences. One country (as the country of destination) may have relatively fewer number of migrants but would have high amount of remittances and in some cases a large number of migrants may produce a relatively smaller amount of remittances, for example, number of migrants and their remittances from India. The influence in aggregate may be different from the influence at household or individual level, so they have to be treated accordingly. I therefore would like to highlight that only macro level analysis does not help to understand the process of out-migration and its consequent impact in the areas of origin. This should be handled with more holistic and micro level studies with a sufficient attention paid to the household or individual levels in order to address the complex relationship between migration and the areas of origin.

Discussion
It is revealed that international labour migration in Nepal is not a new phenomenon. It has been triggering out the process of socioeconomic transformation in the country for decades. Migration can be seen as a process as well as a product of globalisation that provides people not only with easy access to information and technology but also make migrants in constant connection with their areas of origin. Probably the most positive impacts of
labour migration in the local development would be the remittances produced by the migrant workers because it is the most visible product of migration. Hence, I start the discussion with remittance and its consequent impact on local economy of the area of origin.

**Remittance, poverty and local development:** Remittances are claimed to make an improvement in the living conditions of millions of households in migrant-sending countries. For an increasing number of developing countries, remittances form a crucial source of foreign exchange, sustaining their balance of payments. In addition, governments of sending countries have put renewed hopes on migrants as potential investors in the national economy (de Haas 2005). Countries like Turkey, the Philippines, South Korea, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Cuba, Barbados, Mexico, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have encouraged international migration as a deliberate approach to development (Nwajiuba 2005). According to Russell (2004), a prime reason for this is that labour migration can provide relatively well-paid employment, especially attractive for governments struggling to keep pace with rapid labour force increases. This can produce large inflows of valuable hard currency remittances. Consequently, governments of sending countries have put renewed hopes on migrants as potential investors in the national economy (de Haas 2005).

Hence, the increased importance of remittances for the social and economic development of rural livelihoods in migrant-sending countries is crucial (Adger et al. 2002; Barrett et al. 2001; Kothari 2003; Mosse et al. 2002). In many countries in the world, remittance is becoming a major source of investment for development. For example, the average amount received by a household can be superior to GDP per capita in many Latin American countries (Vargas-Lundius 2004). This is significant considering that only a small percentage of rural inhabitants in those countries earn incomes equivalent to per capita GDP. Likewise, in Armenia, remittances have been considered to reduce inequality as the households that receive them would otherwise be at very low levels of income. According to a survey, remittances make up 80 percent of household incomes on average in Armenia and appear to go to some of the most vulnerable households (USAID 2004).

In Tajikistan, remittances keep many struggling families at home above the poverty line and reduce the stress caused by a lack of domestic job opportunities (cf. UNDP 2005). UNDP (2005) further reports that remittances help averting rural poverty also in Somalia, “with a majority of the population living on less than a dollar per day, the injection of hard currency
through remittances enables the country to purchase staple food imports and have a 'multiplier' effect on the local economy”. A study of Mexico suggests that each dollar of remittance generates three dollars of spending power. In Albania, remittances have played a significant role in macroeconomic stabilization of the country, the alleviation of poverty and amelioration of the living conditions of many Albanian households. In Egypt, the returning migrants in the late 1980s set up a number of enterprises, in greater Cairo, using funds brought back from abroad (UNDP 2005).

In Nepal, one-fifth of the poverty reduction occurring between 1995 and 2004 was claimed to be due to out-migration (Lokshin et al. 2007). They further reported that 44 percent of the average household expenditure was covered by remittances in 2004. They argue, “Migration and remittances improve the welfare of households in the sending communities by stimulating local economic development. Migrants channel remittances into productive investment at home. Even when some households spend most of the remittances on current consumption, the resulting demand for goods and services can be met by other working adults in the community, thus generating strong positive externalities” (Lokshin et al. 2007: 25). An analysis of the National Living Standard Survey data carried out by Seddon et al. (2002) also shows that 24 percent of rural households received remittances in 1996, which contributes to 27 percent on average to their total income. KC (2003b) found that the districts with higher number of population abroad have a positive correlation with development indicators that could probably be because of remittances.

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) reports that in 1995-1996, the income from remittances counted for about 9 percent of total rural income for the average income rural households, which increased to 17 percent in the year 2003-2004 (CBS 2004). This income from remittances is equivalent to about 40 percent of total income contributed from agriculture in the Nepalese rural economy (THT 2005). It is also important to note that the largest proportion (57 percent) of individual remittances sent to rural households was from household members working elsewhere in 2001 (Seddon et al. 2002).

Depending upon the situation, migration can be a coping strategy for poorer households (Gill 2003), while it can also aim at improving living standards (Niehof 2004). Economically, remittance benefits migrant households by increased income in the short term. However, they may sometimes cause negative social effects, particularly through disruption in family relations and also by creating a sense of relative deprivation in non-migrant communities (Kageyama 2008).
Urbanisation: One of the prime motives of rural youths to migrate for work is to accumulate wealth through remittances, which can be used to buy land in the cities. In the context of a poor infrastructure facilities in rural areas, migrants may decide to stay in city areas with modern amenities. This would require a detail investigation but an indication is the increased number of urban places and the corresponding urban population growth, which was 6.65 percent in between census 1991 and 2001 (Gurung et al. 2006). Moreover, “Expansion of infrastructures in urban areas, improvement in educational attainment, mass communication and thereby increased aspiration of rural young adults means that urban areas will continue to receive more and more people” (Gurung et al. 2006: 104).

However, urbanisation caused by rural-urban migration should be discussed under internal migration, the international migration can induce the process. Sharma (1989) has already illustrated that internal and international migrations are the largest contributors to urban growth. Whether rapid increase in urbanisation is good or bad for the country’s overall development is out of scope of this paper but labour migration can be asserted to the process of urbanisation.

Labour reorganisation and changing gender roles: This kind of predominantly male dominated out-migration results in a number of changes in gender roles and relationships. In general, women are over-worked due to additional duties and responsibilities to be carried out in the absence of their male counterparts (Chondoka 1996; Myers et al. 1996; Palmer 1985; Song 1998). Kaspar (2005) conducted a study in Nepal looking at the impact of male out-migration on women’s life at home. During migration, female’s fields of activity hardly undergo any changes, whereas a man’s lines of action change considerably with migration. A man gives up agriculture and occasional employment in the village and exchanges it for permanent employment in a foreign country. A woman in contrast, looks after the children, the household and the fields before, during and after migration (Kaspar 2005). Nandini (1999) argues women who previously worked in the labour market may find it optimal to stop working and devote all their time to home production (cited in Lokshin et al. 2007).

In her work in China, Song (1998) concludes that male out-migration virtually causes the feminization of agriculture. It connotes that women have to bear an additional burden of household work as well as farm work in the absence of men. She further argues, “It is the women who are playing key roles in sustaining the small-scale subsistence farming and food security at
both farmers' household level and national level" (Song 1998: 169). Moreover, one of the important gender related impacts is the possible adverse effect on girls' education because of extra burden of workload to their mothers and support needed from daughters. In a study carried out in Sudan, Myers et al (1996: 17) noted that because of male out-migration "children, particularly girls, are missing out on schooling because they are required to help shoulder their mothers' extra work burdens in the farm and household".

**Impacts on left-behind household members:** When a young, able, and productive male household member leaves home, multiple adjustments need to be made among those left behind. Migration changes the relative productivity of the remaining household members; affects household preferences in terms of risk aversion and uncertainty; and provides new information—for example, on new technology, type of crops, and so on (Lokshin et al. 2007). Palmer (1985) articulates that there is 'pure gain' for migrants and their families or a 'private gain' coupled with a social loss. The pure gain supporters believe that there is a net benefit for both migrant and his family as he steadily sends remittances from his work, and the family gains by having one member less to feed. In contrast, supporters of the private gain and social loss proposition argue that the migrant gets a net benefit from his earnings whereas the community as a whole loses productive manpower. The impacts of male out-migration can be discussed under three aspects: a) increase in female headed households, b) impacts on elderly people and children, and c) changes in livelihood portfolios.

It is obvious that male labour out-migration increases the female population in the community, which also leads to the increase of female-headed households. However, in the context of Nepalese social structure the female household heads would have a de facto position with a limited decision-making power. A majority of women interviewed by Kaspar (2005) did not refer to themselves as household-heads, although they took all operational decisions. Their husbands have a major role in decision-making for strategic decisions, even if they are far away from home. However, they use this position in an ambiguous way, "Wives have a gatekeeper function, not only in deciding for which decisions they need their husbands' consultation but also in selecting and pre-interpreting information about events at home and passing information on to their husbands" (Kaspar 2006: 293). This may challenge the power relation in household decision-making process.
The labour out-migration has both positive and negative consequences for their elderly parents and children. On one hand, parents can be benefited from remittances or derive pride from their child’s occupational or social success in the new setting. On the other hand, departure of a young and able bodied child could reduce availability to provide routine personal care or household help (Knodel and SaengtiENCHAI 2007). Similarly, the increased household income may increase an opportunity to invest in child education (for better schooling) but the absence of father as a discipline maker the children may slip away from the right track. My field visit also showed that though the children are sent to private schools which are functioning better than the government schools in Nepal; mothers have complains about their hardship to handle children in the absence of fathers. Children are psychologically motivated to go abroad for work while their orientation to the schools is not good. However, this needs further clarification.

Third aspect I would like to discuss is the potential change in livelihood portfolios of the people left-behind. Livelihood portfolio is the bundle of activities households engage in to generate livelihood and achieve a certain level of livelihood security (Ellis 1998; Niehof 2004). Livelihood security is defined as the stability and resilience of livelihood in the long run (Kaag 2004). It is argued that labour migration is one of the livelihood diversification strategies undertaken by the households in the expectation of more secured livelihoods (McDowell and de Haan 1997; Siddiqui 2003; Thieme and Wyss 2005). However, remittances may also increase income inequalities and form new social hierarchies (Bracking 2003; Gundel 2002). There is a high possibility of younger generation people (including return migrants) to move out of agriculture and form new ways of life in the context of increasing share of off-farm income to the farming households and a discouraging incentive from agricultural sector. This would have a greater implication for the future of an agrarian community where the agriculture sector could go to the hands of less productive older parents.

**Discussions:** With time the perception of looking at migration has been changing because of its both negative as well as positive consequences in the areas of origin and destination. Previously, migration was seen as a product of ill-economy of the areas of origin (Massey et al. 1993; Shrestha 1988) but now it is seen more as the livelihood strategy (Adams and Page 2005; McDowell and de Haan 1997). However, the linkages between out-migration and its local consequences have been remained to be the most overlooked dimension of migration research. Rigg (2007: 176) accentuates, “the
articulation of mobility with rural livelihoods is not well understood, and nor is the complexity of the individual, household and community context within which migration occurs”. Recently, scholars have pointed out a shift towards the linkages between migration and livelihoods in the areas of origin (Bracking 2003; Kaspar 2005; Mazzucato 2004; McDowell and de Haan 1997; Mosse et al. 2002; Smith 2007). Similarly, international organizations like IFAD, DFID, IDS and UNDP are also looking at the linkages between migration and development.

New economics of labour migration suggests that migration decisions are made jointly by the migrant and other household members who are left behind in order to minimize risks and maximize the household welfare (Ellis 1998; Massey et al., 1993; Stark and Bloom 1985). Hence, it is argued that migration is an integral part of people’s livelihood (McDowell and de Haan 1997; Siddiqui 2003). So it is worthwhile to understand migration within livelihood perspective to better describe the linkages between out-migration and local development, which cannot be dealt with the classical economic approach of looking at migration as a response to economic disequilibria between the areas of origin and destination.

Even though the scholars try to get away from more economistic evaluation of migration, its assertion as one of the major propelling factors does not allow. Rigg (2007) argues that it is neither easy nor desirable to separate cultural from economic analysis in migration because changing cultural preferences propel migration, and migration reinforces such changing cultures of consumption. He clearly indicates that even when cultural factors matter, economic issues are closely implicated. He gives a new perspective to look at migration more culturally: “economic factors are embedded within livelihood perspective where culture and society are not artificially separated from economy” (Rigg 2007: 169). In other words, labour migration is becoming more cultural affair than economic, as part and parcel of people’s life to sustain/improve their livelihoods; more specifically to improve their wellbeing.

Conclusions
Labour out-migration has a tremendous importance in the countries like Nepal where many people depend on remittance income for their livelihood. Moreover, it also has social, cultural and political consequences as I have already mentioned that remittances are not only in the form of money but also they have a wider meaning. Particularly, in the context of Nepal, male out-migration has a consequent impact on rural economy, and social and cultural
practices. For example, it may change the gender roles and feminization of community, which is particularly important in the context of a male dominated and hierarchical caste based Hindu society. Similarly, it may change the family relation in a situation of the commonly prevailed extended family in Nepal; particularly, the changing status of migrants' wives in terms of social relationships and ambiguous power position within and outside the household.

Moreover, scholars pointed out that there is an urgent need to explore the social, economic, and political impact of foreign labour migration in the Nepalese rural livelihoods (Seddon et al. 2002) and the importance of understanding its dynamic dimensions for policy recommendations (Gill, 2003). Hence, through this paper I would emphasize for more researches in this field to understand the complexities of livelihoods in the context of rapidly growing labour out-migration in rural Nepal.

Note
1. This particularly attributes to the increased number of Nepalese students going abroad for study and migration of skilled manpower to USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

References
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