

Migration, Poverty and Development in Nepal

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A high fertility rate of 4.1 children per woman and a huge population of women in the reproductive ages will exasperate poverty and increase migration pressures in Nepal. Those with resources are likely to emigrate for foreign employment while those without will engage in internal migration, which could add to the present level of poverty in the destination areas. A correlational analysis of migration and development indicators found a high incidence of poverty in the regions associated with net out-migration. The articles concludes that a consideration of migration dynamics needs to be integrated in poverty reduction strategies in Nepal.

In 2001, Nepal had a total population of 23.15 million with a density of 157 persons per square kilometer. The population of Nepal grew at an annual rate of 2.25 percent between 1991 and 2001 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002). A huge population of women in the reproductive ages (49.2 percent) with a high fertility rate (4.1 children per woman) suggest that population growth will be considerable for some time, which may severely limit the scope of reducing poverty in Nepal. Thus far, the country's economic base is somehow fragile. The agricultural sector contributes about 40 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supports 80 percent of the Nepalese population. Trade, tourism and service sectors contribute a larger proportion to the GDP while the manufacturing sector contributes only 10 percent. The per capita Gross National Income (GNI) is reported at US\$250 (The World Bank, 2003: 235). Every two in five persons in Nepal live below the absolute poverty line and every other person in the rural area is poor. Very high unemployment and underemployment rates of 17.4 and 32.3 percent, respectively (NPC, 2003:58, 99) have compelled people to remain either in the vicious circle of poverty or migrate to other places within and outside the country for better opportunities. In the 1990s, Nepal experienced increasing volume of internal and international migrations. These

migrations occurred at a time of increasing number of urban centers and rising level of urbanization. Although Nepal's population is still predominantly rural (86.1 percent resided in the rural areas as of 2001), the number of urban centers has increased from 16 in 1971 to 58 in 2001.

Status of Research on Migration in Nepal

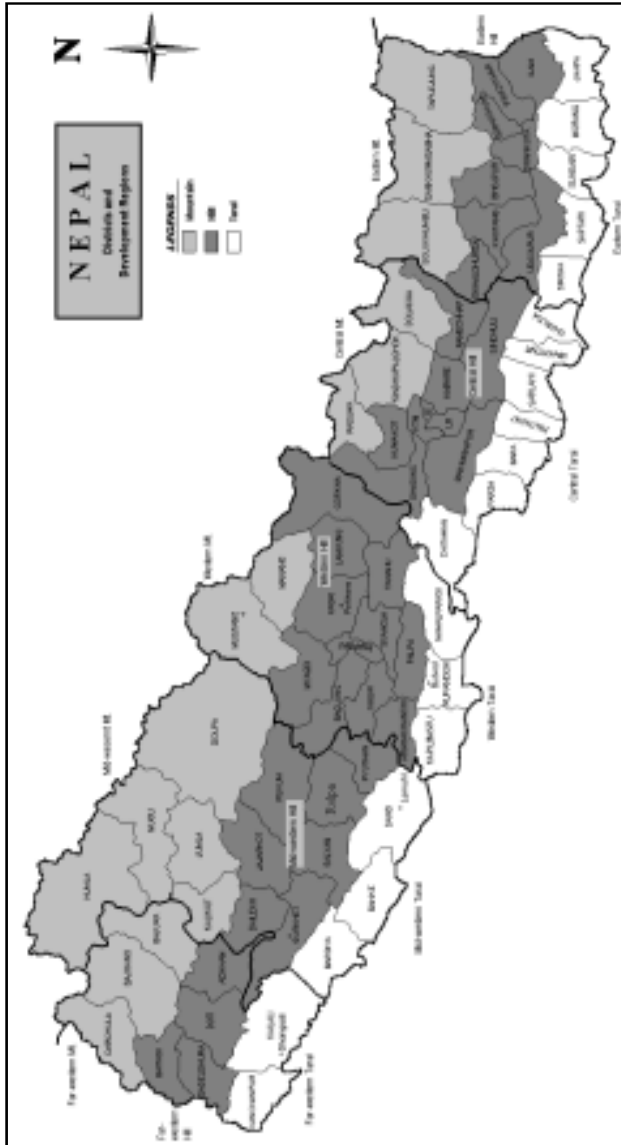
Migration is the least researched area in Nepal compared to other demographic dynamics despite the fact that many socio-economic, demographic and political problems are closely associated with the process of both internal and international migrations. Analyzing migration data from various censuses is hampered by frequent changes in geographical boundaries and changes in the definitions of rural and urban areas. Temporal comparisons and longitudinal analysis are also severely limited due to changes in the content of the migration questionnaires in various censuses. The analysis of primary data on migration was confined either within the resettlement areas of the Tarai¹ (Conway et al., 1981) or in the Tarai districts and three towns of the Kathmandu Valley (Gurung et al., 1983).

Some migration data collected in the past - based on a multi-stage probability sample of 129 clusters (81 rural and 48 urban) from 35 districts (14 from the Tarai, 18 from the hills, and 3 from the mountain) with a total sample size of 8,640 households (6,126 rural and 2,514 urban) - were not adequately analyzed (*see* Central Bureau of Statistics, 1987; KC, 1998). In 1996, a comprehensive study on both internal and international migrations was carried out based on a nationally representative probability sample of 19,800 households in 600 clusters (450 rural and 150 urban) with a total sample population of 115,101 (KC et al., 1997).

All previous studies interpreted migration data according to the three ecological zones, five development planning regions, and 15 eco-development regions (Figure1). District-level migration data calculated across Nepal's 75 districts were not available in previous censuses. The 2001 census provided internal migration data for 75 districts and 58 urban centers, but data deficiency did not allow for a detailed analysis of migration from the perspective of poverty, gender and development at various levels of spatial aggregation. The present exercise is a preliminary exploration to initiate such an analysis (while mindful of data limitations). The article is organized into four sections. First, it reviews the literature on the relationship between migration and poverty. Second, it presents data on the volume and pattern of internal and international migrations. Third, it

¹ Nepal has three ecological zones. The Tarai zone is a lowland and subtropical belt of flat, alluvial land spanning the Nepal-India border and paralleling the hill region. The hill zone is mostly between 1,000 and 4,000 meters in altitude. It includes the Kathmandu Valley, the country's most fertile and urbanized area. The mountain zone is situated at 4,000 meters or more above sea level to the north of the hill zone.

FIGURE 1
THREE ZONES, FIVE DEVELOPMENT REGIONS, 15 SUB-REGIONS AND 75 DISTRICTS, NEPAL



addresses the issue of migration and HIV/AIDS, one of the issues linked with population mobility. Finally, it explores the extent of relationship between migration and development in Nepal.

Migration and Poverty

Experts on migration and poverty work independently and do not consider the effect of demographic factors on poverty and vice versa (Oucho, 2002). As in other countries, poverty in Nepal has been largely interpreted on the basis of macro-economic indicators (DANIDA, 1995). Poverty analysis is focused on defining various types of poverty and estimating its incidence based on crude data (Asian Development Bank, 2003).

There are several problems affecting the analysis of migration and poverty. One problem is to identify what type of poverty will be examined in relation to migration.² [The analysis also has to specify what kind of migration is analyzed - whether internal or international and what specific type within each of these major classifications. In Nepal, the various types of internal migration are analyzed mainly based on lifetime migration data collected by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal every ten years. Migrants' motivation, other types of time-bound migrations (e.g., seasonal migration, temporary, semi-permanent and permanent), and the distance covered are some of the additional factors that must be considered.

The real challenge is to address which type of migration gets empirically related with what level of poverty (see Skeldon, 2002:67-82). Bernstein (2002: 31-48) attempted to relate migration with various components of population in general. Some Nepalese scholars have also attempted to investigate the interrelationship between population in general and poverty in particular (Acharya, 2001:57-66; Chhetry, 1999:43-48; 2002:71-83). Theoretical and disciplinary perspectives on migration and development concerned with the relationship between migration and development in general have been covered in detail elsewhere (Cohen, 1996). However, there is no empirical evidence presented in relating different types of migration with various levels of poverty.

Skeldon (2002:67-82) generated a series of hypotheses based on empirical data elsewhere on the relationship between migration and poverty. Among his main theses are that migration broadens the horizon of people's access to resources and that while remittances help reduce poverty they also increase inequality. He further argued that migration would involve both brain gain and brain drain and those who are the poorest do not migrate. He

² The United Nations Development Programme (1998:16) defines six different types of poverty: human poverty, income poverty, extreme poverty, overall poverty, relative poverty, and absolute poverty. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 1996 defined urban poverty based on income, basic needs and the participant's perspective (http://www.unfpa.org/swp/1996/box_def.htm, accessed July 2003).

acknowledged that a clear relationship between volume and patterns of migration and poverty from existing data does not allow a complete analysis (Skeldon, 2002:70). The present empirical base needs to be improved to allow for rigorous testing of the causal relationship between migration and poverty. While migration may be the root cause of poverty; it could also be the result of poverty. In general, the positive roles of migration in poverty alleviation program have yet to be appreciated (Skeldon, 2002:80).

In Nepal, some extreme viewpoints have been advanced in explaining why almost 50 percent of the total population is below the poverty line. According to (DANIDA, 1995), it is difficult to target a poverty alleviating strategy in Nepal since everyone in Nepal is poor. Unemployment and underemployment rates are exceedingly high, particularly in the rural mountain and hill regions and among females. The low levels of land holdings, unproductive land, low yield, forest degradation, unequal distribution of income, insufficient calorie requirements, negative food balance, low levels of literacy (especially among women), barriers to reduce population growth rate, low human development index, very poor access to basic services and needs are some of the factors hindering Nepal's development. Nepal's poverty situation has been described as embodying a "culture of poverty" (DANIDA, 1995:12).

The foregoing discussion heavily emphasizes the need for economic growth to alleviate poverty in Nepal. Discussions thus far have not touched on the relationship between poverty and the mobility of the Nepalese people as one of the important reasons for (or indicators of) Nepal's underdevelopment. Migration from the hills and mountains to the Tarai and from rural-to- urban areas seems to be a coping strategy of Nepalese migrants to lessen the burden of poverty (*see* Prennushi, 1999: 55). Migration may be both a cause and a consequence of poverty (Kothari, 2002:7) and this realization has been totally missing from major policy documents in Nepal (National Planning Commission, 2001, 2002b, 2003).

Reducing Poverty in Nepal

The reduction of the existing poverty level has been the major challenge facing the government. During the Ninth Plan period (1997-2002), the Nepalese government claimed to have reduced the poverty level to 38 percent from 42 percent (Table 1). Poverty alleviation is the major objective of the Tenth Plan (2003-2007) with an aim of reducing the existing level of poverty from 38 to 30 percent by the end of the plan period and to 10 percent by 2017. Because of high population growth rate, the reduction of the poverty level from 42 percent (8.6 million) to 38 percent (9 million) would not reduce but somewhat increase the absolute number of poor people in Nepal. Even if the level of poverty would be reduced to 30 percent by 2007, the number of people below the poverty line would still be close to 8 million.

TABLE 1
INCIDENCE OF POVERTY (1995/96) AND NET-MIGRATION IN NEPAL BY REGION, 2001

Ecological Zone/Region	Incidence of Poverty	Poverty-gap Index	Net-migration
Mountain	56	0.185	-14.8
Hills	41	0.136	-48.0
Tarai	42	0.099	62.8
Urban Kathmandu Valley	4	0.004	NA
Other Urban	23	0.070	75.6
Rural Only	44	0.125	-75.6
Eastern Mountain and Hill	28	0.068	-21.9 *
Central Mountain and Hill	67	0.108	5.7 *
Western Mountain and Hill	40	0.128	-2.0.3 *
Midwestern and Farwestern			
Mountain and Hill	72	.0.281	-16.4 *
Eastern Tarai	42	0.095	14.4 *
Central Tarai	38	0.082	7.2 *
Western Tarai	40	0.092	12.6 *
Midwestern and Farwestern Tarai	53	0.132	18.8 *
Nepal	42	0.121	

SOURCE: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1996-1997

NOTE: * Includes urban areas as of 2001. The net-migration rate was calculated from data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002.

In order to reduce the numbers, a comprehensive and long-term poverty alleviation package has been developed to meet the millennium development goals.

Analyzing migration rates by region, Table 1 indicates that net-migration is negative for regions with high incidence of poverty and positive for those with low incidence of poverty.³ However, the incidence of poverty is essentially the same in the hills and the Tarai - the hills have a high level of out-migration while the Tarai has a high level of in-migration. Clearly, there are other factors influencing the relationship between poverty and migration in these two regions. Since estimates of various poverty levels in Nepal are available only at the regional level while migration is largely measured at the district level and aggregated at the regional level, it is difficult to directly compare poverty levels and net-migration rates at the district or at the village levels. Net-migration has always been positive in the Tarai since the very first scientific census of Nepal in 1952-54. The Tarai zone is a rich agricultural area and is traditionally a food supplier to the food deficit areas in the mountain and hill zones. The malaria control programs and the government policy of resettlement have largely triggered migration from the mountain and hill zones to in the late fifties and early sixties. Later, more and more people migrated to the Tarai from the adjoining hill and mountain

³ Nepal does not have statistics to map the spatial distribution of poverty.

zones to find cheap agricultural land. However, the poverty level of both the hill and the Tarai people, who both depend on agriculture, did not improve much. The shift of occupation from agriculture to non-agriculture is a recent phenomenon; it would take some time to show its impact on reducing poverty at the local and the national levels. However, the net positive migration from rural to urban areas is showing the impact of non-agricultural income for the urban-bound population (KC, 1998:61).

Internal Migration

The migration data used in this article refers to lifetime migration, determined simply by place of birth and place of enumeration. In the Nepalese census, a migrant has been defined as the one whose place of enumeration at the time of the census was different from his or her place of birth.

Migration has been an important component of population redistribution in Nepal. People have been migrating from rural-to-rural and rural-to-urban areas in search of employment and educational opportunities. Occasional natural calamities like floods and landslides have also forced people to flee from their birth place to other potential areas for their livelihood. Internally displaced persons have remained in vulnerable situations expecting urgent rescue and help. Important causes of internal migration in Nepal have been poverty, inequitable distribution of income, unemployment, difficult livelihood, and food insecurity.

Nepal has been experiencing increasing volume of internal migration after the control of endemic malaria in the Tarai (Plain) and Inner Tarai Valleys since the early 1950s. The census data of 1961 showed 170,137 as inter-zonal migrants (KC, 1998), which increased to 445,128 in 1971, 929,585 in 1981 and 1,228,356 in 1991 (Table 2). In 2001 the total volume of inter-zonal migration in the three ecological zones increased to 1,727,350 persons (Table 3). Females constituted 51 percent of the total inter-zonal migrants between 1991 and 2001 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003). In 2001, the mountain (-14.8 net-migration) and hill (-48 net-migration) regions lost 1,085,862 persons, which were absorbed by the Tarai (+62.8 net migration). The volume of inter-regional migration in the 15 sub-regions reached 2,047,350. The difference between in-and-out migrations is presented in Figure 2.

The volume of inter-district life-time migration in the 75 districts increased to 2,929,062 persons. This constituted 13.2 percent of the total native born population in Nepal (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 7) as against 22 percent (Inter-Village Development Committee or VDC)⁴ reported in the national migration survey of 1996 (KC et al., 1997:86). A wider discrepancy existed between the percentage of internal migration by sex reported in the 1996 survey and the 2001 census. For example, the percentage of lifetime migrants among females as the percent of the total native born population in 1996 was 32.7 as against only 14.6 in 2001. The large difference in levels of female migration from the two sources implies

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF INTER-REGIONAL MIGRATION BY SEX, 1981-2001
(REGION OF BIRTH BY REGION OF ENUMERATION)

Migration region	1981	1991	2001
From mountain			
to hill	134,254	76,503	125,597
% Female	50.1	58.9	54.5
to Tarai	162,832	121,826	169,825
% Female	46.8	49.5	50.1
Total No.	297,086	198,329	295,422
% Female	48.3	53.2	51.9
From hill			
to mountain	33,423	32,003	33,895
% Female	58.7	68.9	68.0
to Tarai	561,211	895,888	1,157,035
% Female	47.4	50.5	50.9
Total No.	594,634	927,891	1,190,930
% Female	48.0	51.1	51.4
From Tarai			
to mountain	2,196	4,671	6,424
% Female	49.0	38.1	45.1
to hill	35,669	97,465	234,574
% Female	51.3	49.2	48.3
Total No.	37,865	102,136	240,998
% Female	51.2	48.7	48.3
Inter-regional migration			
Total No.	929,585	1,228,356	1,727,350
% Female	48.2	51.2	51.1

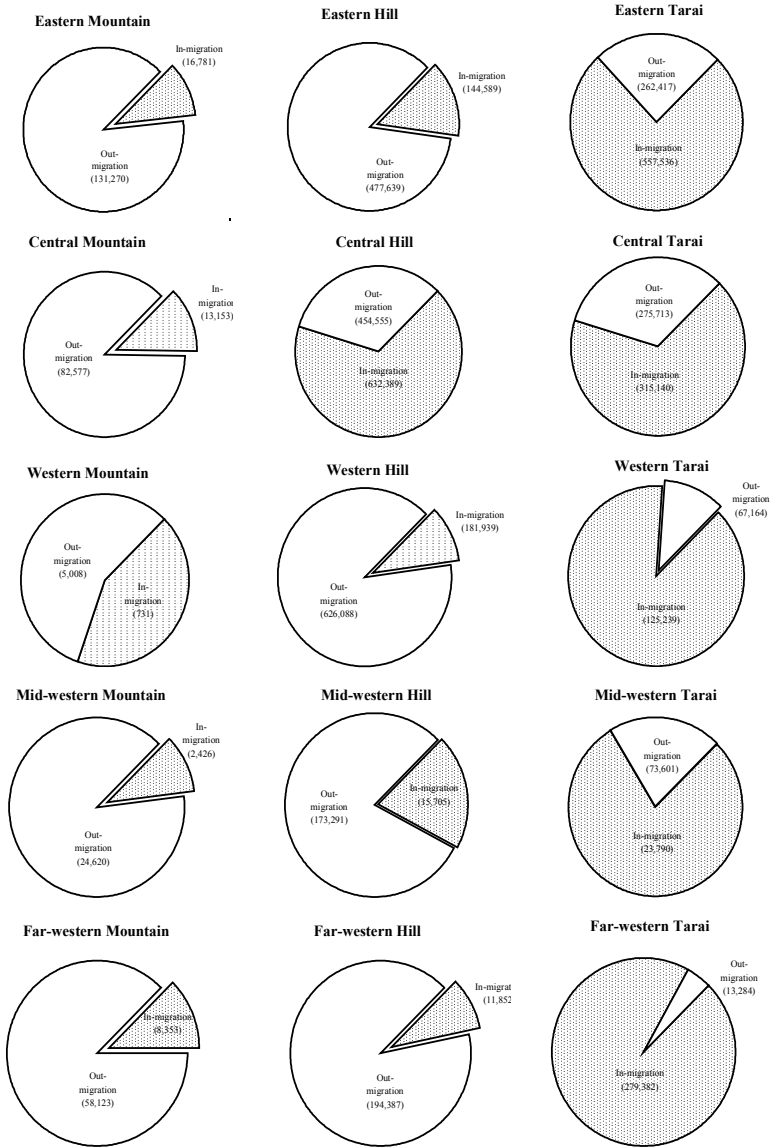
SOURCE: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003

TABLE 3
LIFE-TIME MIGRANTS BY ORIGIN AND DESTINATION BY ECOLOGICAL ZONE
AND GENDER, NEPAL, 2001

Origin	Mountain	Destination		Total	Percent	Net-migration
		Hill	Tarai			
Both sexes						
Mountain	-	125,597	169,825	295,422	17.1	-255,103
Hill	33,895	-	1,157,035	1,190,930	68.9	-830,759
Tarai	6,424	234,574	-	240,998	14.0	1,085,862
Total	40,319	360,171	1,326,860	1,727,350	100.0	
Percent	2.3	20.9	76.8	100.0		
Male						
Mountain	-	57,170	84,783	141,953	16.8	-127,610
Hill	10,822	-	567,513	578,335	68.4	-400,001
Tarai	3,521	121,164	-	124,685	14.8	527,611
Total	14,343	178,334	652,296	844,973	100.0	
Percent	1.7	21.1	77.2	100.0		

SOURCE: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002

FIGURE 2
 VOLUME OF LIFETIME IN AND OUT-MIGRATION IN THE 15 ECO-DEVELOPMENT
 REGIONS, NEPAL, CENSUS 2001



SOURCE: KC, 2004:140

that most female migration is within districts, while the very small difference in male levels implies that most male migration is between districts.

Most of the mid-western and far-western regions and districts have more out-migrants than in-migrants with net loss of population. These areas are largely rural and the most vulnerable with rampant poverty. Also these areas were hard hit by the Maoist insurgency during the last eight years. Regions and districts of net gain of migration are the districts with large urban areas like the Kathmandu Valley and the urban Tarai zone of Nepal. The patterns imply that migration and poverty are associated with rural-to-urban migration.

Migration Streams

The 2001 census of Nepal has provided enough information to calculate the four streams of migration within the country (Table 4). In Nepal, the major streams of internal migration are rural-to-rural (68.2 percent) and rural-to-urban (25.5 percent in 2001 and 31.2 percent in 1996). Urban-to-urban (2.8 percent) and urban-to-rural (3.5 percent) are of lesser importance.

The magnitude of these streams can not be compared with data provided in the previous censuses as the number of urban centers has drastically increased; many of the newly designated urban centers are rural in character. Therefore, Nepal still has an overwhelming rural-to-rural migration. Rural-to-urban migration is gaining more visibility in districts with large urban areas such as Kathmandu (71.8 percent), Kaski (82.7 percent), Lalitpur (56.6 percent), and Bhaktapur (44.6 percent). Internal migrants to urban areas have increased over time - 13.4 percent in 1971, 16.3 percent in 1981, 17.2 percent in 1991 (KC, 1998:20) and 28.3 percent (746,285 VDCs + 81,425 municipalities) in 2001 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 21).

Reasons for Migration

The 2001 census included five main reasons for migration: trading, agriculture, employment, study/training and marriage (Table 5). The category "other reasons" comprised 31.3 percent. The rest migrated because of marriage (27 percent), agriculture (15.8 percent), employment (10.6 percent), study and training (9.3 percent) and trading (6 percent). The census data of Nepal in 2001 indicated that among internal female migrants, 42.13 percent migrated from one district to another due to marriage. Similarly and more prominently, among the foreign-born female migrants, almost 66 percent came to Nepal because of marriage. Among the total foreign-born population, about 81 percent have already taken Nepalese citizenship (KC, 2004:132).⁵

⁴ A VDC is a small geographical area that is smaller than a district. A district may have several VDCs.

TABLE 4
NEPAL: LIFETIME MIGRANTS BY MIGRATION STREAM FOR THE ECO-DEVELOPMENT REGIONS, 2001

Eco-development region	Rural-urban		Urban-urban		Rural-rural		Urban-rural		Total migration
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
	Migration streams		Migration streams		Migration streams		Migration streams		
Mountain	2,150	4.5	188	0.4	42,364	89.0	2,884	6.1	47,586
Eastern	1,523	9.1	81	0.5	14,522	86.5	656	3.9	16,782
Central	627	4.7	107	0.8	11,483	85.6	1,204	9.0	13,421
Western	-	-	-	-	3,516	93.7	237	6.3	3,753
Mid-western	-	-	-	-	3,999	95.2	200	4.8	4,199
Far-western	-	-	-	-	8,844	93.8	587	6.2	9,431
Hill	424,801	38.8	60,031	5.5	565,527	51.6	44,851	4.1	1,095,210
Eastern	16,500	11.4	1,529	1.1	118,905	82.2	7,659	5.3	144,593
Central	334,951	52.3	53,097	8.3	225,908	35.3	26,246	4.1	640,202
Western	61,673	29.4	4,495	2.1	136,518	65.1	6,860	3.3	209,546
Mid-western	9,107	12.8	580	0.8	58,657	82.6	2,677	3.8	71,021
Far-western	2,570	8.6	330	1.1	25,539	85.6	1,409	4.7	29,848
Tarai	319,334	17.9	21,206	1.2	1,389,956	77.8	55,770	3.1	1,786,266
Eastern	114,262	20.5	7,927	1.4	420,504	75.4	14,841	2.7	557,534
Central	74,202	17.5	6,232	1.5	328,274	77.5	14,846	3.5	423,554
Western	44,475	13.8	2,930	0.9	265,278	82.0	10,714	3.3	323,397
Mid-western	27,480	14.2	1,876	1.0	157,394	81.2	7,022	3.6	193,772
Far-western	58,915	20.5	2,241	0.8	218,506	75.9	8,347	2.9	288,009
Total	746,285	25.5	81,425	2.8	1,997,847	68.2	103,505	3.5	2,929,062

SOURCE: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002

TABLE 5
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LIFETIME INTER-DISTRICT MIGRANTS
 AND FOREIGN MIGRANTS BY REASONS FOR MIGRATION, NEPAL, 2001

	Inter-district migrants	Foreign-born
Reasons		
Trading	5.53	8.43
Agriculture	18.08	4.77
Employment	11.50	6.13
Study/Training	10.34	4.47
Marriage	22.99	45.99
Others	31.55	30.21
Total Number	2,929,064	608,092
Males		
Trading	8.61	22.24
Agriculture	22.84	9.66
Employment	21.13	17.12
Study/Training	14.69	8.06
Others	32.72	42.91
Females		
Trading	2.97	2.49
Agriculture	14.12	2.66
Employment	3.49	1.40
Study/Training	6.72	2.92
Marriage	42.13	65.79
Others	30.58	24.74

SOURCE: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002:Table 4

Internal migration in Nepal is very much a permanent phenomenon as 44.1 percent of the total inter-district migrants have been residing in the destination for more than 10 years (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 3). Those residing in the destination for 1-5 and 6-10 years comprised 28.3 per cent and 22.7 per cent, respectively (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 3). Some 4.9 percent of migrants had resided in the destination for less than one year; two-thirds of migrants, more than six years; and 56 percent, in the last ten years.

Internal migration has positive and negative social and economic implications for the places of origin and destination. Initially, low density and economic potentials in the mountain and hill zones prompted migration to the Tarai. Presently, the Tarai has low capacity to absorb additional population. Urban areas had also become overcrowded because of immigration. The Tenth Plan aims for a balanced spatial distribution of the population by promoting socio-economic development in the sending and

⁵ This was calculated by subtracting the total number of foreign citizens in the country (608,092-116,571) from the total foreign-born. The difference is the total foreign-born (491,521), which when added to the total native-born (22,128,842), constitutes the total number of Nepali citizens (22,620,363) in the country.

receiving areas. The plan does not take into account the interrelationships between migration and poverty in the country. The government cannot regulate internal migration either due to the constitutional right of the people to free movement within the country as well as due to people being displaced by the Maoist insurgency.

International Migration

Emigration

Nepalese workers have been emigrating temporarily or permanently since the first quarter of the 19th century leaving behind women, children and old people to take care of agriculture in the rural areas of Nepal. Reasons cited for this kind of emigration have been forced labor within the country, forced recruitment in the British Army and British-India, indebtedness at home and extreme poverty. Later, the wave of migration to foreign countries expanded from a few neighboring countries like India, Burma, Bhutan and Sikkim to other labor importing countries in Southeast and East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America. Nepalese who had been absent for more than six months from their place of origin in Nepal and were living in foreign countries increased substantially since the people's revolution for democracy in 1951. The 1952/54 census enumerated 198,130 persons or 2.3 percent of the total population absent from the country for more than six months and living abroad. Of this absentee population, 97.3 percent had their original home in the mountain and hill zones of Nepal. This flow of emigration increased over the years: 328,470 (3.4 percent) in 1961, 402,977 (2.7 percent) in 1981, 656,290 (3.7 percent) in 1991 and 762,181 (3.4 percent) in 2001 (Table 6).

International migration in the last 50 years until 2001 was overwhelmingly destined to India. For example, in the 1952/54 census, the absentee population from Nepal destined to India constituted 79.4 percent of the total (157,323/198,130). The proportion of Nepalese going to India increased to 92 percent (302,162/328,470) in 1961. More than four-fifths of this absentee population remained in the four states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal. In 1981, Nepalese going to India constituted 93.1 percent (375,196/402,977). The 1991 census recorded 89.2 percent (587,243/658,290) of Nepalese emigrants residing in India. The 2001 Nepalese census recorded an even larger number of Nepalese emigrants to India (589,050), but the proportion of India-bound Nepalese decreased substantially to 77.3 percent (i.e., 589,050 out of the total international migrants of 762,181). Other international migrants went to Saudi Arabia (8.9 percent), Qatar (3.2 percent), the United Arab Emirates (1.7 percent), Hong Kong (1.6 percent), and the United States (1.3 percent).

A huge number of Nepalese used to reside in India as agricultural workers until 1971. The pattern has changed. Recent data suggest that 95

TABLE 6
POPULATION ABSENT FROM HOUSEHOLDS BY SEX, NEPAL, 1981-2001

Description	1981		1991		2001	
	Total No.	% Female	Total No.	% Female	Total No.	% Female
Total absent population	402,977	18.5	658,290	16.8	762,181	10.9
in India	375,196	17.9	587,243	16.2	589,050	11.6
in Other countries	27,781	26.2	71,047	21.3	173,131	8.2
Resident population	15,022,839	48.8	18,491,097	50.1	22,736,934	50.0
Total absentees as % of residents	2.7	1.0	3.6	1.2	3.4	0.7

SOURCE: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003

percent of India-bound migrants sought work in other sectors; less than one percent intended to work in agriculture, most likely because of low wages in this sector (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 13). Out of the total absentee population in the 2001 census, males comprised 89.1 percent and females 10.9 percent (Table 6). Almost 90 percent of all absentees were from the rural areas while 10.3 percent were from urban areas. Females from the rural areas comprised 85.3 percent compared to 14.7 percent from the urban areas. About 70 percent of these absentees were from the poverty-stricken mountain and hill districts in the mid-western and far-western regions of Nepal. Seeking work in domestic or personal services accounted for 63 percent of the reasons cited by those leaving Nepal. Out of this, 76 percent were in India (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 13).

The census data provide a much smaller volume of Nepalese emigrants to foreign countries. Recent statistics (April 2003) revealed that the number of people who have gone to various countries for employment is much higher than the number enumerated by the 2001 census (Hada, 2003:4). Within the last ten years about 337,319 Nepalese (which included 200 females) reportedly went to seek employment in various foreign countries other than India. Out of this total number, 75,885 went to Saudi Arabia, 45,825 to Qatar, 43,831 to Malaysia, 21,905 to the United Arab Emirates, 3,831 to Bahrain, 3,014 to South Korea, 2,668 to Kuwait and 1,566 to Hong Kong. The Nepalese workers in these eight countries totaled 198,525 (Department of Labor and Employment Promotion as cited in Hada, 2003:4). These figures are not comparable to the census figures because the census definition of the absentee population is based upon being absent from home for more than six months and living abroad before the census enumeration day. This does not mean that absentees permanently live in the foreign countries; many of them might have returned home. Absentees also include housewives, dependants and students who do not work. Even if we simply add 337,319 Nepalese foreign workers to the 762,181 absentee population enumerated by the 2001 census, the total number would be 1,099,500

persons living abroad. This means that the total number of Nepalese in foreign countries, including India would be more than one million during the last twelve years (Ministry of Population and Environment, 2002).

Duration of Absence

Data on the duration of absence indicate that out of the total absentee population (762,181), 53.2 percent were absent for 1-5 years (Table 7). About 72 percent of males and 75 percent of females had emigrated for less than five years before the census. Around 15 percent of both sexes had been absent for 5-10 years. The age at which Nepalese males and females emigrated concentrated heavily around the ages 15-24 and 25-34 years. An intriguing point in Table 7 is the sizable proportion of females below 15 years who had emigrated for less than five years. This pattern needs further analysis.

The Foreign-Born Population

The 1981 census recorded 234,039 foreign-born persons residing in Nepal. There has been a dramatic increase in the foreign-born population from 439,844 in 1991 to 608,092 in 2001; they constituted 2.4 percent of Nepal's population in 1991 and 2.7 percent in 2001 (Table 8). It should be noted that the total population of Nepal includes the native-born (22,128,842) and the foreign-born (608,092). Of the latter, 96 percent were India-born.

Among the total foreign-born population, about 81 percent have already taken Nepalese citizenship (KC, 2004: 132). This was calculated by subtracting the number of total foreign citizens in the country (608,092-116,571) from the total foreign born. The difference is the total foreign-born (491,521) added to the total native-born (22,128,842), yielding a total of 22,620,363 Nepali citizens in the country.

An overwhelming majority of the foreign-born population in Nepal, 84.37 percent, resides in the Tarai; the rest are in the mountain and hill zones. Among the foreign-born, females comprised almost 70 percent.

The major reasons why the foreign-born are in Nepal are marriage (46 percent), business (8.4 percent), working in services (6.1 percent), working in agriculture (4.8 percent), study (4.5 percent), and other unspecified reasons (30.2 percent). About 94 percent of those who migrated for marriage are concentrated in the Tarai (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 7). Further, 50.3 percent of the foreign-born population had been residing in Nepal for more than 10 years; 22.7 percent for 6-10 years; 24.2 percent for 1-5 years; and 2.9 percent for less than one year (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 6). The Tarai zone alone hosts 89.8 percent of the foreign-born who had been residing in Nepal for more than 10 years. Note that the census does not capture the floating population.

In 1991, 33 designated urban areas in Nepal hosted 86,465 foreign-born residents, which made up 19.7 percent (86,465/439,844) of the total foreign-

TABLE 7
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ABSENTEES BY DURATION, RURAL-URBAN RESIDENCE, GENDER AND AGE, NEPAL, 2001

	Nepal Total	Males	Females	Rural Total	Males	Females	Urban Total	Males	Females
Total absentees	762,181	679,469	82,712	683,668	613,137	70,531	78,513	66,332	12,181
Duration of absence									
<1 year	19.2	19.6	16.0	19.4	19.8	16.2	16.7	17.1	14.8
1-2 years	32.8	32.5	35.5	33.2	32.9	36.3	29.2	28.9	30.6
3-5 years	20.4	20.0	23.5	19.7	19.5	22.2	26.0	25.0	31.1
6-10 years	13.9	13.8	14.5	13.7	13.7	14.5	14.9	15.0	14.4
11-15 years	4.8	4.9	4.5	4.8	4.9	4.6	4.9	5.1	3.9
16-20 years	4.3	4.4	3.0	4.3	4.4	3.1	4.1	4.3	2.5
20+ years	4.7	4.9	3.1	4.7	4.9	3.1	4.2	4.5	2.7
Age at departure									
<15 years	10.4	9.4	19.2	10.9	9.7	20.5	6.9	6.0	11.6
15-24 years	53.4	53.5	52.5	53.7	53.8	52.5	50.9	50.6	52.6
25-34 years	23.9	24.4	20.4	23.5	24.0	19.4	27.7	27.9	26.6
35-44 years	8.3	8.7	5.0	8.1	8.5	4.8	10.3	11.1	6.2
44+ years	3.9	4.0	2.8	3.9	4.0	2.8	4.2	4.4	3.1

SOURCE: Calculated data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, 2002: Table 14

TABLE 8
FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION BY SEX AND AGE GROUP, NEPAL, 1981-2001

Age group	1981		1991		2001	
	Total No.	% Female	Total No.	% Female	Total No.	% Female
Total foreign born						
0-14	20,749	50.5	51,883	50.5	64,633	49.0
15-59	193,143	71.8	348,356	75.2	489,500	72.5
60+	20,147	66.5	39,249	70.4	53,959	71.8
All ages	234,039	69.4	439,488	71.9	608,092	69.9
Born in India						
0-14	18,364	50.9	46,431	50.6	59,623	49.0
15-59	184,439	73.0	334,900	76.2	472,217	73.2
60+	19,475	67.1	37,651	71.4	51,760	72.7
All ages	222,278	70.6	418,982	72.9	583,600	70.7

SOURCE: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003

born population in 1991. The percentage residing in urban areas went up to 23.5 percent of the total foreign-born population in Nepal (142,775/608,092) in 2001. The foreign born population in the urban areas constituted 4.4 percent of the total urban population in Nepal (142,775/3,227,879). This group also constitutes 17.2 percent (142,775/746,285) of all urban migrants in Nepal.

Foreign Citizens

The 1961 census reported 110,061 foreign citizens in Nepal, of whom Indian citizens constituted 69.3 percent. In 1971, Indian citizens constituted 94.4 percent of the 136,477 foreign citizens in Nepal. In 1991, the number of foreign citizens went down to 90,427 persons, of whom 75.7 percent were Indian citizens. In urban areas, there were 32,435 foreign citizens and 81.7 percent were Indian citizens. Foreign citizens living in the urban areas in 1991 constituted 35.9 percent of the total foreign citizens in the country. In 2001, the number of foreign citizens was 116,571 of which 90 percent were Indian citizens.

Majority of international migrants in Nepal are engaged in skilled and semi-skilled work in trade and services, thereby displacing native workers. Immigrants have a strong hold in the commercial and industrial sector due to their better networking and investment strategy. A large number of immigrants also work as vendors, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, tailors and barbers in the urban areas. On the contrary, the Nepalese in India do not have the same advantage. While Indians easily acculturated in the Nepalese cultural environment while the majority of hill emigrants to India are different in their culture and language.

The 3,000 km- open border between Nepal and India was defined after the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16 and the Treaty of Sugauli. The Indo-Nepal

Treaty of Peace and friendship was signed in 1950, which provides equal treatment in its territory of the nationals of the other participating in industrial and economic development (KC, 1998:65). This Treaty legally provides reciprocal treatment to the citizens of the two countries in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce and free movement. Any change in the Treaty needs a bilateral agreement. The government of Nepal since time immemorial has maintained to regulate internal migration and restrict or systematize immigration. It can not unilaterally regulate immigration, especially from India, due to the Treaty of Peace and Friendship and the expanding Indian economy.

The Nepalese government is encouraging foreign employment as a means to absorb unemployed Nepalese (National Planning Commission, 2003: Chapter 13). The government even pledges to provide loans to those unable to leave for foreign employment due to the lack of cash. According to the Tenth Plan (2003-2007), the government claimed that 230,720 left for foreign countries other than India as of the beginning of 2003 and it targets to increase the number to 550,000 by the end of 2007. The labor migration policy is aimed at capturing remittances in the wake of a waning national economy due to growing internal political conflict.

Migration and HIV/AIDS

As of 30 April 2004, there were 3,619 HIV-positive cases in Nepal, of whom 741 were AIDS cases (National Public Health Laboratory, 2004).⁶ In April 2004, 90 HIV-positive cases were added, of whom 20 were new cases of AIDS. Males comprised 72.9 percent and females, 27.1 percent, of the HIV-positive cases in Nepal. For males, the most common mode of transmission was unprotected sex with sex workers (78.6 percent); about a fifth (19.7 percent) injected drugs. For females, 52.8 percent were sex workers; more than a third, 37.7 percent, were homemakers.

Four-fifths of the males and three-fourths of the females who are HIV-positive are in the age group 15-39 years. The rising cases of HIV/AIDS among males after age 30 and the growing number of children and wives who are HIV-positive have led to speculations about the role of migration in the spread of the disease in Nepal. A common perception is that men may

⁶ At the end of 1999, some 34,000 cases of HIV-positive have been estimated in Nepal with a prevalence rate of 0.29 percent in adults 15-49 years (UNAIDS, 2000 cited in Brown, 2002:2). At the end of 2001, UNAIDS/WHO estimated the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Nepal at 58,000 adults and children with a prevalence rate of 0.5 percent. Of the total number, women in the ages 15-49 years constituted 14,000 and children below 15 years constituted 1,500 (UNAIDS/WHO, 2002 update). As of the end of 2001, some 13,000 children under 15 years lost their mother or father or both parents to AIDS.

have gotten the disease in foreign countries and they then infect their spouses upon their return to Nepal. The relationship between migration and HIV/AIDS needs to be examined further. Data on the migration status and ethnicity of HIV/AIDS victims are not available. These kinds of information are difficult to collect data in surveillance and voluntary confidential testing.

High levels of mobility and migration, internal as well as international, and poverty have been advanced as the major causes for the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Nepal and elsewhere (*see* the United Nations Development Programme, 1999) in report on HIV/AIDS in South Asia cited that "HIV/AIDS is a major development challenge beyond the health sector." Gender relations and inequality, poverty and livelihood issues have been cited as the main reasons for high levels of population mobility and labor migration, including the trafficking of women and children.

The Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN) HIV/AIDS strategy for 2002-2006 (*see* FPAN, 2002) has listed a number of factors affecting HIV/AIDS and migration. FPAN (2002) mapped out a range of people on the move in and from Nepal. It reported that about 800,000 people go to India as seasonal laborers and about 350,000 seasonal laborers migrate within the country in search of wage work. There are about 80,000 street children in the urban areas of Nepal who find work mostly in garages, restaurants, hotels, brick factories, saw mills and stone quarries. They may also end up as street vendors, porters, carpet factory workers, rag pickers, domestic workers and commercial sex workers. About 4,500 children under the age of 18 years are rag pickers (KC et al., 2001b). There are also about 100,000 students from the rural areas who come to urban schools, some of whom may not have adequate support and may be forced to work part time for a living. FPAN (2002) further estimated about 135,000 transport workers (130,000 males and 5,000 females) working as drivers and conductors and are likely to breed HIV infection in a contagious manner. About 20,000 female sex workers in Nepal's major urban areas work in restaurants, massage parlors and dance halls/clubs.⁷

The government of Nepal in its Tenth Plan (2002-2007) envisions to attack HIV/AIDS through the decentralization of health activities at village level, enhancement of management capabilities of sectoral agencies at all levels; involving the private sector, non-government organizations and international government organizations; and bilateral and multilateral

⁷ The perceived role of migration in the spread of HIV/AIDS is implied in the proportion of migrants among the intravenous drug users and those who work in construction projects and industrial establishments. In addition to Nepalese on the move, Nepal hosts some 100,000 refugees from Bhutan. In general, the difficult working and living conditions of migrants may predispose them to health risks, including the risk of HIV/AIDS infection.

support in the implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention control programs (National Planning Commission, 2003). Awareness and education programs have been heavily concentrated in urban areas, leaving adolescents and young people, especially females, in the rural areas, little access to information that could save their lives.

Migration and Development

A correlation analysis was performed as an exploratory tool to examine the interrelationship between migration and development in Nepal. District level data related to poverty and deprivation, socio-economic development and women's empowerment were examined in relation to migration variables (Table 9). The independent variables were measured at various levels (as overall or composite indices, sectoral indices and individual indices).⁸

Internal Migration and Development

The results presented in Table 9 show that gross mobility is positively associated with development. Districts that have higher levels of socio-economic development, women's empowerment, and other development variables have higher inter-district migration. Among the composite indices, HDI, GDI, OCI, and SEIDI are the ones which have correlation coefficients of .50 or higher. At the individual level, all the development variables are positively correlated with migration variables. Deprivation variables such as child illiteracy rate ($r=-.4185$), child labor rate ($r=-.3421$), landless and marginal farm households ($r=-.2788$), infant mortality rate ($r=-.3778$), and share of girl-dropouts in primary schools ($r=-.2471$) are negatively correlated with gross mobility. Among the variables used, gender imbalance ratio in literacy, mean years of schooling, and per capita income are significantly correlated with migration variables. Except for three deprivation variables, all other variables are positively correlated with in-migration. Negative correlation coefficients indicated that non-migration in a district is associated with a lower level of development.

International Migration and Development

International migration in a district is also associated with development indicators. Districts with a larger absentee population abroad are positively correlated with many development variables, which may suggest the role of remittances. Child labor and child illiteracy rates are negatively corre-

⁸ For details about the variables considered in the analysis, see Appendix 1.

lated with international out-migration in these districts. Likewise, districts with a large number of foreign-born residents are positively correlated with development variables and negatively correlated with infant mortality rates.

The development variables used in this exercise were constructed very crudely, which are inadequate for performing a causal analysis. The significance tests performed here only indicate the relative importance of individual variables. Also, most of the development indicators were constructed more than 10 years ago. The analysis could be improved with the use of updated development indicators.⁹

Conclusions

A consideration of migration dynamics needs to be included in poverty reduction strategies in Nepal. The number of lifetime inter-district migrants in Nepal has reached 2.9 million in 2001, with the majority out-migrating from the mountain and hill areas of Nepal to the plains and urban areas. Population movement in the past decade has also been triggered by internal political conflict. Those with some resources are likely to seek foreign employment; those without are likely to migrate within the country and subsequently add to the present level of poverty in their destinations. Migrant populations, both inside and outside the country, could also be highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

The present study demonstrated significant relationships between development indices and migration variables. In-migration and net-positive migration are associated with development. The analysis also suggests that emigration tends to be good for the country by reducing unemployment and increasing remittances. Thus, poverty reduction programs are bound to be more successful with the integration of a migration policy.

An effective migration and development policy needs to be supported by research. A possible research agenda should include an analysis of foreign employment and its impact on increasing the household income of migrant families. The link between migration and the spread of HIV/AIDS needs to be examined more rigorously by gender and age. A viable strategy for the government is to analyze the interrelationship between pockets of migration and poverty in order to devise a policy for reducing poverty levels in Nepal.

⁹ These development variables were only partially updated in 2003 (see CBS and ICIMOD/MENRIS, 2003).

TABLE 9
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL, 2001

SN	Variables	Description of Variables	In- migration	Out- migration	Net- migration	Gross mobility	Non- migrants	Absentees	Foreign born
Composite Index									
1	HDI	Human Development Index, 1996 (N)	.5685 **	.4821 **	.3324 **	.6561 **	-.5169 **	.2690 *	.3612 **
2	GDI	Gender Sensitive Development Index, 1996(N)	.4292 **	.4625 **		.5352 **	-.3706 **		.3742 **
3	OCI	Overall Composite Index, 1997 (I)	.4471 **	.3290 **	.2866 *	.4958 **	-.5626 **	.2461 *	.2610 *
4	POVDEPI	Poverty and Deprivation Index, 1997(I)	.2777 *	.3227 **		.3557 **	-.4170 **		
5	SEIDI	Socioeconomic and Infrastructural Development, 1997(I)	.6234 **	.3130 **	.4730 **	.6324 **	-.5945 **		.3437 **
6	WEI	Women's Empowerment Index, 1997(I)	.3234 **	.4282 **		.4354 **	-.4700 **		.3638 **
Poverty and Deprivation									
1	C_ILLIT	Child Illiteracy Rate(I)	-.2626 *	-.5083 **		-.4185 **	.2910 *	-.3346 **	
2	C_LAB	Child Labor Rate(I)		-.4129 **		-.3421 **	.2772 *	-.3119 **	
3	G_IMB	Gender Imbalance Ratio in Literacy(I)	.4488 **	.3967 **	.2543 *	.5245 **	-.5006 **	.2506 *	.3369 **
Socioeconomic Development									
4	MYS	Mean Years of Schooling 1996(N)	.5701 **	.4253 **	.3626 **	.6345 **	-.5655 **	.3222 **	.2473 *
5	H_INST	Number of Health Institutions(I)	.2812 *	.5225 **		.4393 **		.2592 *	.4063 **
6	L_EXP	Life Expectancy 1996(N)	.3599 **	.4690 **		.4815 **	-.2795 *		.3696 **
7	IMR	Infant Mortality Rate(I)	-.2743 *	-.3842 **		-.3778 **	.2403 *		-.3328 **
8	CPR	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate(I)	.5004 **	0.2097	.4007 **	.4908 **	-.4688 **		.3257 **
9	L_PC	Per capita income (NRS), 1996(N)	.6107 **	.3573 **	.4379 **	.6400 **	-.3929 **	.2575 *	.3109 **

TABLE 9 (continued)
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL, 2001

SN	Variables	Description of Variables	In- migration	Out- migration	Net- migration	Gross mobility	Non- migrants	Absentees	Foreign born
Women's Empowerment									
10	F_LIT	% share of females in literacy(I)	.3503 **	.5029 **		.4875 **	-.3798 **	.4194 **	
11	F_PARL	Female's Share in Parliament (% seats), 1991(N)	.3351 **	.4777 **		.4650 **	-.3776 **	.2849 *	
12	F_ADM	Female's Share in Admin Work, 1991(N)	.3986 **	.3654 **		.4710 **		.2799 *	
13	TEACH	% share of female teachers at primary(N)	.3510 **	0.1341	.2876 *	.3390 **	-.3930 **		
14	G_ENR	% share of girls enrolled in primary(I)	.4278 **			.3391 **	-.2561 *	.2571 *	

NOTES: ¹*p<.05; **p<.01 (two-tailed)

²Correlation coefficients which did not have a significant relationship with migration are not reported in the table.

³Variables denoted as N were indicators used in the Nepal South Asia Centre's (NESAC)'s *Human Development Report, 1988*. Variables denoted as I were indicators used in the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development's (ICIMOD) *Districts of Nepal, Indicators of Development*.

APPENDIX 1
VARIABLES IN THE ANALYSIS OF MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL, DISTRICT LEVEL, 2001

SN	Variables	Description of Variables
		Composite Index
1	HDI	Human Development Index, 1996: HDI is a composite index obtained from life expectancy, education and income.
2	GDI	Gender Sensitive Development Index, 1996: GDI is a composite index obtained from equally distributed index of life expectancy, educational attainment and income.
3	OCI	Overall Composite Index, 1997: Poverty and deprivation; socioeconomic and infrastructural development; women's empowerment; and natural resource index.
4	POVDEPI	Poverty and Deprivation Index, 1997: Child deprivation; gender discrimination; educationally disadvantaged ethnic group population landless and marginal farm household, food production
5	SEIDI	Socioeconomic and Infrastructural Development, 1997: Education; health and health related; primary sector (agriculture); secondary sector (non-agriculture); and infrastructure
6	WEI	Women's Empowerment Index, 1997: Participation in white-collar job; participation in literacy participation in the District Development Committee (DDC), Village Development Committee (VDC), and Town Development Committee (TDC) elections; participation in primary school; enrollment at primary school level; and girl drop outs at primary level.
		Poverty and Deprivation
1	C_ILJIT	Child (10-14) Illiteracy Rate: Illiterate children 10-14 years old as a percent of the total children in the same age group.
2	C_LAB	Child (10-14) Labor Rate: Working children 10-14 years old as percent of the total children in the same age group.
3	G_IMB	Gender Imbalance Ratio in Literacy: Ratio of females to males among the literate population of 15+ years multiplied by the sex ratio of the same age group.
		Socioeconomic and Infrastructural Development
4	MYS	Mean Years of Schooling 1996:
5	H_INST	Number of Health Institutions: Number of health institutions (government, non-government, and private) in the district.
6	L_EXP	Life Expectancy 1996

APPENDIX 1 (continued)
 VARIABLES IN THE ANALYSIS OF MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL, DISTRICT LEVEL, 2001

SN	Variables	Description of Variables
7	IMR	Infant Mortality Rate: Average number of deaths under one year of age per 1,000 live births.
8	CPR	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate: The number of fertile couples using a contraceptive per 100 married women of reproductive age.
9	L_PC	Per capita income (NRS), 1996
10	F_LIT	Women's Empowerment Percentage Share of Females in Literacy: Literate female population 10+ years old as a percent of the total literate population in the same age group.
11	F_PARL	Female's Share in Parliament (% seats), 1991
12	F_ADM	Female's Percentage Share in Administrative Work, 1991
13	TEACH	Percentage Share of Female Teachers at Primary: Number of female teachers in primary schools as a percent of total primary teachers.
14	G_ENR	Percentage Share of Girls Enrolled in Primary: Number of girls enrolled as a percent of total enrollment at primary teachers.
Migration Variables		
1	IN	Number of lifetime in-migrants whose place of birth is different from the place of enumeration.
2	OUT	Number of out-migrants who were absent from the household at the time enumeration for 6 or more months but the destination is within the country.
3	NET	Number of migrants obtained from the balance of IN and OUT migrants.
4	GROSS	Sum of IN and OUT migrants (gross or total internal mobility)
5	NON	Number of non-migrants (whose district of birth is same as the district of enumeration) per 100 native born population.
6	ABSENT	Number of absentee population per 100 total population.
7	F_BORN	Percentage distribution of foreign born population by district.

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