

## **Socio-Economic Implication of Migratory Trends and Growing Age: Demographic Bonus or Challenge**

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*This paper discusses socio-economic impacts of migratory trends of working population leaving behind the aged population in later group countries like Nepal. Ageing is a natural phenomenon and an inevitable process. The Senior Citizens Act 2063, Nepal defines senior citizens as “people who are 60 years of age and above.” Migration alters the population pattern; the migratory trend can be seen as an interaction of increasing/decreasing ‘demands’ and/or ‘opportunity’ rates. It has been the integral part of poor people’s alternative livelihood strategies and rich people’s strategy to get inclined to better facilities. The treatment of migratory trends as bonus or challenges depends upon the ability of country in expanding its social and economic opportunities. Rising political instability, insecurity and unemployment intensified the trend of flying abroad for job opportunities among Nepalese youth. The first part of paper is engaged with the socio-economic and demographic issues related to migration with particular reference to Nepal. Demographic changes trigger socio-economic change within the country or place. The loss of working age deprives countries of their engines which we call muscle drain/brain drain. In the second part the paper analyzes demographic transition and their socio-economic implications. The extensive out-migration of young people from rural areas, to foreign and internal urban centers, coincides with a rise in the problem of older couples. The migrants’ financial and material contributions are a nominal support. The aged lonely couples are facing many psychosocial problems. Ageism, which involves stereotyping and discrimination against the elderly, leads to misconceptions about their abilities. This paper is the outcome of descriptive research carried in Thosy VDC (Village Development Committee). Thus, I believe the problem might arise in future since migration from Nepal is of temporary nature. The question is regarding the adjustment of this migrated population after they return and what they will do after exploiting their whole energy in foreign land.*

*Key words: migratory trends, demographic transition, social opportunities, bonus, ageing, challenges.*

### **1 Background**

The literal definition of migration can be "movement of people from one place to another within or outside a country to find work or better living conditions". Nepal, in this context has experienced drastic change in population dynamics through continuous migration. With the pace of globalization, industrialization and modernization, population movement has occurred in high number within the country to urban cities and to foreign land seeking employment opportunities, economic growth, better facilities, good future, and easy lifestyle and so on. Migration has become one of the alternative means to escape from the existing unstable socio-economic and fragile political conditions of a country. It is observed that young people have a tendency to migrate to support their family to overcome economic burden and get rid of unemployment problems. Emigration of large numbers of productive age groups has adverse impact on sustainable development of the country. It is likely to impact the socio-economic development of the country in long run causing the shortage of useful human capital.

The migratory trends of Nepalese youth may be seen as the immediate boon but it is engraved with many social and economic problems as well. One problem in rural areas of Nepal is out of the young population leaving behind the geriatric people for all social and economic burdens. Migratory trends have left behind the jumble of elderly population, which is already in marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Rapid social changes resulting in the breakdown of traditional joint family system and ever increasing financial burden has intensified socio-economic difficulties in the life of elderly people. Thosy VDC is facing similar kind of problem in current scenario.

This paper tries to explain the socio-economic and demographic impact of migratory trends and growing age at the local level. Demographic change can be viewed as an important catalyst of change. Migration is a very old tradition in Nepal but now it is becoming a common practice and very important component of Nepalese economy.

Previously poverty stricken family members followed migration to support their livelihood and improvement of living condition but now it has become a mandatory practice for economically stable family as well. The number of out migrants is higher in Thosey VDC, which has resulted in shortage of working age people, skilled and active group population, and change in demographic structures.

Migratory trends in Thosey VDC have both positive and negative social and economic impact. The gradual increase in the number of migrants has resulted in large inflows of remittance, which are used for investment in education, health as well as other household's consumption. But it is also likely to raise number of challenges, including brain and muscle drain, family separation, hopelessness to start from zero level after migrant return to the country of origin. Agricultural productivity has decreased in the village due to lack of active working groups. Temporary migration both within the country and abroad is making old aged couples alone in Thosey VDC. Elderly people have now developed financial dependency on their children's income sent from the foreign land and also face social difficulties, as the youth of their families are not with them. Despite some improvement, negative aspect has overcome those positive things.

According to the study published on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 in the Lancet, a renowned global Journal, which analyzed data from 188 countries and regions published by a consortium of global health experts, life expectancy in Nepal reached 72 years for women and 69 years for man in 2013. This is an increase of 12 years over the last two decades. A rate doubles the global average. Nepal was ranked among the top best performers. In one hand, Nepal is experiencing increment in life expectancy which poses several profound problems in every aspects of life in other.

Due to the increasing life expectancy of the people, increasing financial difficulties, expensive market and modernization it incubates problem to sustain large family under the same roof and result in the outflow of working age people. The consistent seasonal and continuous migration of young generation has been causing social insecurity among the elderly people. If we see the rural context, joint family system still exists in Nepal but, limitation in family support for the geriatric people has been rising due to change in trend of life styles and economic activities of young generations. As well growing individualized concept to think from 'I' perspective rather than 'We' perspective has resulted in the social breakdown, impoverished family relationship, exclusion, adjustment problem etc. The aged populations are traditionally dependent on the family but this trend cannot be expected to continue presently since a large proportion of young age people are now migrating for better earnings and economic prosperity.

Major source of income has now been shifted from agricultural sector to foreign employment and small scale business sectors which also enhances the rate of working female members of the family to meet their needs and demands. Migrant remittance has been found to stabilize economic downturn but it does not seem to exist on a long-term sustainable basis. The remittance that the villagers receive each year is not used in productive investments. Major chunks of incomes are being spent to pay back loan taken by the migrant, constructing new houses, payments of children school bills and other household expenditure.

In the absence of able-bodied manpower the progressive improvement in rural areas may also be thwarted. The migratory trends may be set up as a culture because of which people will be compelled to follow the trend to better fit with the society and ruin their productive period of life for unsustainable way of earnings. Unknowingly, unproductive use of remittances will create materialistic society, misuse of hardly earned money that also effect in traditional sphere of human activities.

Hence, the migratory trends may be seen as a common source of earnings at present context which does not have long term sustainable economic profit and benefit to the society and Country. It is waste of time, energy and brain of active youth population who when return back in old ages have to face many social challenges to stabilize their life, career and society.

## 2 Setting

Migration is the key component of population change in Thosey VDC. The ageing trend is expected to be more profound in this village as youth out migration continues from this area. In Thosey VDC, the older population accounts for 60 percent of the total population and the majority of them are in their sixties. The issues of ageing have become more challenging because the consequences have not been properly understood and realized. Thosey VDC was selected for the research study which is representative of most of the rural village development committees of Nepal. Research study geared up with the household survey with standard questionnaire. Total 622 households were selected as a sample at first phase of study out of the total residing population of 3221 (1619 female and 1602 male). Among the total sample households, 260 households were listed as a migrant's households. The total number of migrants from 260 households was 293 people.

The old are getting older on the one hand and younger have the challenges of survival on the other. Lack of appropriate job opportunities, poverty, family responsibility, inability to earn enough or produce enough for oneself and family members, political conflict, set culture of migration youths are compelled to migrate to search leaving their parents and family in village. Besides, the lack of Government policies and specific geriatric care program elderly people has been facing huge social problems in Thosey VDC.

The joint family structures with 2-3 generation leaving under the same roof are now rarely seen in Thosey VDC. The westernized and nuclear family model is creating adverse effect in the life of people residing at village. The younger generation has ambition of modernization and older generation wants to continue traditional norms and values. This kind of generation gap has been creating problem in adjustment of social dynamics in communities of Thosey VDC.

Seasonal migration have also been a common practice of people after the old mine industry of Thosey have been closed. While walking along different villages of Thosey VDC in Nepal we get to see the old age people alone at their home, some staying with their daughter, daughter in law or with close family members. At the beginning we assume that these aged people have no offspring but later we encountered that the ground reality of the village is different. They were not alone before and explained that still they are not alone because they have children who have migrated for various purposes. They are living in the hope of meeting each other sooner in future. When the migrant return back to their village they feel problem in adjustment, consumption, become more conscious about their children, their expectation increases and focuses in their spouse and children rather than old age parents. Thus the migrated population concentrates on modern facilities boycotting their aged parents to face the added difficulties of rural life, which leads the old aged people face physical and mental problems. It is true that migration has well supported to the rural economy of family in Thosey but it has just provided the cash/in kind benefits for the family members but cannot provide physical and emotional support to the family members especially the old couples. Weak health and reduction in immunity power are the normal symptoms of the old age but nearly half of the respondents were healthy, fit and fine. They do not have any health problems except occasional common cold and fever. Some of them claim with delight that they have never taken medicine of any kind. It is good news. Those who are suffering from health problems include chronic diseases like blood pressure, blood sugar, asthma, uric acid, gastric etc; all these are common to most of the old people.

Most importantly, migration has double burden on older people's lives in Thosey village, firstly leaving them with isolation as the youths migrate to cities and other countries for their employment and economic opportunities. They have to be equally active in household activities for income security. Secondly, their migration from rural to urban areas with their families demands the ability to adjust new social environment, living conditions and socialization. The lives of older persons are affected by migration and intergenerational issues at large. Loneliness, low level of care and support system from families and increasing trend of nuclear family structures are some of the key issues, which have negatively impacted on the lives of elderly in this village. There are still barriers to access older people allowance from the local authorities. As this requires citizenship certificate, not all elderly have this and those who have not yet are deprived from this opportunity. Moreover, the proper implementation of social security programs for elderly needs critical review and effective implementation level as there are still social, economic, cultural and institutional barriers to provide the services at community levels at Thosey.

### **3 Methodology and methods**

#### **Life Cases**

##### **Case I**

Krishna Bahadur Rasaile an aged of 60+ years is now residing with his spouse alone at ward no 6 of Thosey village. Economically they are somehow sound but socially they are engraved with loads of responsibilities which are beyond their reach. They were not alone before but after the marriage of daughter and migration of son they are compelled to live alone longing for love and support of their children. Their own desire of not living the village where they spent so many years of their life and on the other hand the increasing needs and desire of their children to get equipped with modern facilities which they find more better than the life of village, this gap has been creating problem in life of both the generation. Migrants are having problem to take care of elderly and aged population have dissatisfaction because they are not able to adjust in the environment of today's generation. Both of them are in the state where it is very difficult to make decision, migration is compulsion because people are unemployed, the living in present context have been expensive and competition to fit in with the surroundings have resulted in extensive urban and foreign migration leaving behind aged group alone.

##### **Case II**

Man bahadur Kayastha have a traditional joint family living under the same roof, the younger generation has been migrated to foreign land and aged, women and children are taking care of the house. Remittance is the essential source of income to fulfill their basic needs, educate children, pay back loans and other expenditure like health, medicine and transportation. Another source is agriculture but because of reduce number of active group population agricultural production has been very little and now the whole family is dependent on the income of single people. So remittance could not be the means of sustainable economy because migration is of temporary type and when the migrant return back to the village they are likely to face challenges in their daily living with no savings and low agricultural production.

##### **Case III**

Rudra Maya Ale is living in a joint family, but joint family is only for the sake of saying. Most of the family members are migrated leaving behind the aged one. The main source of income is Government pension and remittance. Agriculture is now been not the cup of tea for this family because active group are absence and aged are unable to work in the field. The social pension is not sufficient and remittance received is spent at education of the grandchildren. Though the social status in the society has been raised but the inner reality faced by lonely aged couple is different. They are now alone and alienated, with the hope of meeting their children. They wait a year to see their children and grandchildren in occasion but slowly this wait is also extending because the children are so busy in such materialistic world that their parents do not come under their priority.

Following impression have been drawn from above cases

- Migratory trend has been a factor of motivation for younger generation but remain non-existence among the older generation. The trend of migration has become famous among the young generation and it becomes status symbol in current years.
- The trend of youth migration to foreign land has negative impact on agriculture and the family cohesion which causes unsustainable economic growth through the remittances. Agricultural and cattle dominant joint family structured society has been converted into the migrant nuclear family system. People have more engaged in employment abroad for earning rather improving their traditional practices of agro farming and cattle farming.

- Remittance provides a base for better consumption and investment for short term basis with high charge of socio-emotional loss in the life of aged people. The geriatric generation are isolated and ignored by the younger generation due to which rate of traditional way of living and emotional attachment among the generation has been depleted.

## **4 Results**

### **Socio-economic implication of migratory trends**

Migratory trends have just been one of the fast earning strategies of people of Thosey. It is often analyzed in terms of the "Push-pull model". This looks out the negative (push factor) which drive people to leave their countries and the positive (pull factor) which attract them to their new destinations (Massey et al. 1993; Rodenburg 1993; Taylor 1999).

However migration creates both demographic challenge and bonus for the sending countries. There is also the social dimension i.e. international migration can have negative social externality on sending countries. The socio-cultural structure of a source country could be polluted with norms, values, culture, perception and custom acquired by return migrants from abroad. Their departure can lead to family disorganization, reduced labor forces and loss of skilled decision makers in the society.

Population structure has changed in Thosey due to drastically increased trends of migration. It has various demographic impacts at village level and changes sex ratio and the dependency of labor force. Most of the migrated population is male, which reduces masculinity ratio of the total population. The loss of such population often has disastrous consequences for sustainable development who in their productive years, work to leave abroad. In one hand, underdevelopment is major cause for migration and migration hinders the development of country in other. The effect of migration too is seen at the life of elderly people in the village area of Thosey who are already in the disadvantaged group. It affects their psychosocialfunctioning, which creates anxiety, depression and loneliness in them, affects their health, personal hygiene and mobility. The aged couples are compelled to withhold the increase burden of household responsibilities and remain active to carry out all the activities despite their caliber.

### **5 Demographic Bonus**

Having large flow of remittance in the village is a bonus if it can result in the economic growth and prosperity with proper management. Migration exists due to the increasing demands and decreasing opportunity rates. For instance, the large old mine industry of Thosey has been closed due to which people became jobless and arouses problem in their livelihood. Thus migratory trends became one of the survival strategies of people in this village. Remittance inflows of migrant's contribute in the good consumption of food, health facilities, and so-called social prestige of people residing there with the increased level of social status. At the same time, percentage of unemployment rate is decreasing while the percentage of employed population is increasing. In addition good livelihood, advanced facilities, technological penetration, urbanization and new life style of people etc. have contributed in the pace of development and globalization as well as new sector of economy is developing.

### **6 Demographic Challenges**

Remittance from migrants' has now become one of the essential and unavoidable sources of income for people as the agricultural production have degraded because of the loss of active male population of Thosey. The money received by migrant family has not been used for capital formation because of which it has no effect on the life of migrant's and their family on long run basis. It is just invested for paying loans and for consumption. The energy invested by young people in foreign land has only been used as social insurance to help family fulfill their basic necessities. Similarly migratory trends have possible challenges on the trade sector, as the main source for generating income is agriculture in Thosey, which may result in low or no domestic production because of the shortage of labor forces. Thus, migration is not long term stable way to overcome economic recession and dream for prosperous and happy living. Also the money that Nepalese youth sends does not get much into saving and won't be able to generate further wealth because of which frustration and depression might occur among youth

when they return back to their village. They will also face the challenge of social pressure as society begin to expect more and see them from the different lens of income generating sources. At such a situation, when they fail to address self and family need, they face the challenge of restarting their life from zero level as they had already spent the very productive age of their life in foreign land. Migrants may hesitate to do work which they feel might lessen the social prestige they had earned in the society and on the other hand they may not be able to do the work they wish because of economic problems. The chances of conflict occurrence gets maximum, crime rate increases and depression rate may rise which poses serious threat to community and its development.

## **8 Demographic situation of growing age**

The population of Nepal is moving steadily from a young population to an old population. Advancement in medical field along with decreasing mortality and increasing fertility has resulted in significant change in the population structure, indicating the probable age structure transition. Growing age result the people become frail with multiple physical, social, economic and psychological difficulties. In such instance these group need more support, love and care to facilitate their everyday life. The ageing population is more likely to grow in future. This demographic transition will have a profound impact on the individuals, families and communities. Many of the elderly in Nepal are living in rural area rather than urban cities. Poor socio-economic and inadequate resources of Thousey village have created difficulties in coping with the problems of later group population espoused with unemployment among young adults. The need of older persons is often considered as low priority. The changing social structure of family system and migration of working age population has left behind the aged vulnerable in terms of social and financial and social insecurity. In context of Nepal, it is traditionally assumed that younger family member will take care of growing age population. But due to extensive urbanization and migration, there are problems and challenges to meet the support and care needs of later group person. This has increased the vulnerability of older persons to protect and secure their rights in families and communities. Growing age depletes the physical strength and capacity, which ultimately make people dependent on others for even small things. It also leads to position change in the society i.e. from active group to shrinking work force, which places them in a disadvantaged and weak group with increased social responsibilities for the sandwich generation (those people providing support and care both to their children and parents). It also brings added hardship for already troubled economic status of people.

## **9 Growing age and the household size: Social Implication**

Gradual change in the household size due to demographic shift has resulted in the added burden in the life of aged people. Due to rapidity in urban and foreign migration the traditional route of joint and extended family is slowly being replaced by small and nuclear family system. Thus, it deprives many old age populations from getting extremely needed care and support. The care giving generation in the face of economic hardship and competition, are faced with the difficult choice of providing basic needs and services for themselves, their children and spouses if married and their aged parents because of which the expected emotional support and care may not be rendered to growing age people by their offspring. This also increase the trend of living far away from their parental home with own nuclear family which create difficulties in the life of old couples. The old couples staying at home are now compelled to participate in all activities from kitchen to public meeting and birth to death rituals. They could find no one to help even if they are sick. After interviewing at Thousey we encountered that although their economic condition has improved because of the remittances send by some of their children they are more prone to loneliness and depression. The aged population has difficulties in getting access to good medical services because of their dependency on their son or daughter and daughter in law, most of who are migrated or else separated. Added to these problems, the elderly are also facing the brunt of changing sociological conditions either due to absence of children or due to individualistic attitudes of their offspring once they marry and start family in new social environment.

## **10 Economic implication of growing age**

The growing numbers of older people faces various economic implications such as increasing demand on health care system, social security and income support, labor supply and social welfare. This individual are at risk and this risk is heightened by the absence of enough younger people to take care and support them after retirements. In a subsistence economy like ours, there is hardly any scope for the majority of people in rural areas to save or invest for old age support and are totally dependent on the economy of their children. The amounts they

earn during their adulthood are spent in the education, upbringing and marriages of their children and thus savings was not possible in such economic hardship and have problem in later life. Most of the aged people in Thosey are illiterate so they are not acquainted with retirement benefits and pension and those who are acquainted the amount is not sufficient to cover the increased expenditure of aged population and their day to day living. The government social security program is also no sufficient. There are still barriers to access older people allowance from the local authorities. The government policy on social security issues is a good step in terms of recognizing their basic needs of social services and ensuring rights to health and life. However, the implementation of this policy is not effective for several reasons in Thosey. Decrease in physical strength, increase in mental tension, decrease in immunity power and getting sick to a large extent requires better treatment, long term hospitalization as well as social and clinical therapy which involves big amount of investment resulting in substantial amount of expenditure on health. It directly impacts the economy ranging from the breakdown of labor force with increased elderly care cost.

## 11 Conclusion

Seeking better living conditions and facilities in life tend youth population of rural and pro-urban areas migrate towards urban cities of Nepal and to foreign land. This is a normal cut of the social growth pie with its equal pros and cons into various socio-economic aspects. Following this, their family members specially aged parents are left behind tackling lonesome days without emotional support of their children. In other case, even if they are accompanied with the migrants in foreign land, it is difficult for the parents to acclimatize in the new society and culture. And again, they are left lonesome despite being with their family. In both the cases, as there are no young people left in the family to utilize local resources and turn into income generating activities, the aged parents become financially dependent to their children. This leaves the productivity of local resources unutilized imparting long-term negative effect in national economy as well. Even if the remittance is received, it cannot be a part of sustainable national economic growth. The money sent may be used in giving better housing condition, improved education and health or a small amount of income generation activity, but that does not really impart any significant change in the bigger picture of sustainable economic development. Remittance, in this way will always remain as the guarantee fund to all sort of social development. And once, the flow of money is ceased, there is no alternative thought to make the wheel moving on. Besides, the psychosocial issues of the family remain which lead to, broken family trees, unsatisfied relations and complaints on obligation towards bond of family.

Choosing easier income generation sources and better living conditions in faraway land should be given a wise thought at some point of time. It should not be always about seeking prosperity in place away from home and family. It rather should be the other way around when the local resources are brought into optimum use finding better options of income generation. A long-term sustainable economy is always better than a short-lived income generation. To support this, policies from the government should also come ahead and get placed to support the locals. Without much discussion on the national unstable government, more emphasize should be given on trying out novel ideas and policies at the local level. The decentralized local development act of Nepal should speak more of this. Advocacy and lobby for the same should always help the local government to initiate development, utilizing resources at local level. Mobilizing and utilizing remittance to build sustainable development can be another way to avoid draining of remittance into mere household consumptions. The family of migrants' should be part of programs in which the financial aid sent by their children is utilized in a better way prospering not only the household but also the community or the village as a whole. Such programs should be initiated and supported by government as well. This will not only lead to envisage long term sustainable economic development plans but also make the family of migrants' financially independent and boost their confidence as they will then be a part of utilizing the money in a bigger prospect.

Finally, while the race of out migration from rural areas in Nepal cannot be controlled, there can always be initiations to build processes and systems by which the family left behind can live with confidence and independent decisions and at the same time, can be a part of sustainable economic development utilizing local resources for better income generation. It is totally vivid that elderly people are not only less physically capable but their intellectual capability also gets slopped down with age. The most important aspect of concern is, who is going to take their responsibility in much needed hours when their children are in foreign lands? Their dependency in remittance is much higher as they cannot get engaged in income generating activities on their own. People are in

need of love and care in old age and they want someone with whom they can be emotionally attached and share things. But, problem has been arising as they are left out alone in the crucial time when they need someone to fully depend on. Also, country's dependency in remittance brings out adverse effect in economy because it hinders sustainable economic growth. Being populated with large number of old people implies that the country will face economic problem in terms of leadership and decision making, new and innovative ideas generation, business processes, flow of income, opportunity to grab technological advancement, use of resources and so on. The less the young, educated and energetic person the country has, the more likely it is to face economic crisis in long run.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>ii</sup>Growing age implies different meaning across context (Yadav 2012, Nepal 2010 and Gautam) but the paper defines growing age as people aged 60+.



