

# *Migration, Remittances, and Household Economic Well-Being in Palungtar Municipality*

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the connection of migration, remittances, and household economic well-being. This study, a cross-sectional survey of households was used and primary data were collected by conducting a survey of Ward No. 5 of Palungtar Municipality in 2025. Systematic random sampling was used to sample 185 households out of 1,415 households. The household was the unit of analysis, and the information was obtained among the adult respondents. The economic well-being was gauged on a compound index that used income, consumption, and asset indicators. The robust standard errors were used to apply multivariate regression analyses. The findings indicate that there is prevailing social-economic heterogeneity in households. Migrant families that did not receive remittances had less economic wellbeing compared to those who received remittances, although the latter showed much better well-being. An increased dependency ratio decreased the welfare of the households. The acceptance of remittances was higher where there was higher education of the household head and decreased with size of landholdings. In general, the benefits of migration to welfare depended on the remittance flows. Migration does not necessarily imply the improvement of the household welfare whereas remittances are vital in increasing the economic welfare. The policies must enhance financial inclusion, productive use of remittances and social protection of migrant families.

**Keywords:** Economic well-being, Migration, Remittances, Rural Nepal

## **Introduction**

In most low and middle-income nations, migration, and remittances have taken a center stage in the household livelihood strategy, which has influenced the consumption patterns, risk management, and economic security. Remittance flows have been unusually resilient all over the world and now exceed foreign direct investment and official development assistance in many developing countries, indicating their significance regarding household welfare and development finance (World Bank, 2024a, 2024b; International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2024). The empirical evidence shows that remittances reduce poverty, smooth consumption, make health and education investments, but their effects are diverse depending on the situation and family makeup (Adams, 2011; de Haas, 2010). Labor migration in Nepal, especially international migration, has become a characteristic of rural livelihood, where remittances are instrumental in sustaining the household income and macroeconomic performance (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2022; Nepal Rastra Bank [NRB], 2025). The positive relationships between remittances and household consumption and welfare are always reported on the national level studies and policy reports, but the presence of risks associated with dependency, inequality, and exposure to external shocks are also observed (World Bank, 2017; UNDP, 2025). Although this shows that has increased, there are still a number of gaps. A lot of existing evidence on Nepal is based on national surveys or macro-level analyses, which are likely to cover the heterogeneity of the migration experience and welfare results at the local level (Salike et al., 2022; Thapa-Parajuli et al., 2025).

In addition, there is a lack of works that measures migration status, remittance receipt, and household vulnerability: dependency burden, food insecurity, and shock exposure in a combined analytical framework, limiting knowledge of the reason behind some migrant households to be more vulnerable to the economy (Nasrin et al., 2024; Adams, & Cuecuecha, 2013). This opening is especially significant when it comes to the framework of federal governance in Nepal, which means that municipalities are becoming more in need of localized evidence to drive planning and social protection targeting (IOM, 2024). Adding specific reference to Palungtar Municipality, this study deals with these limitations by relying on primary household survey data, to provide an analysis of the relationship between migration, remittances and household economic wellbeing at the ward level. The study is unique in its micro-level, municipality-focused nature, creating policy-influencing evidence that may shape local policies on financial inclusion, shock-receptive social protection, and productive deployment of remittances and, thus, a more inclusive and strong local development.

## Literature Review

The migration and the remittances have been commonly associated as the major rural forms of livelihood strategies in the third world countries particularly where the households are subjected to imperfect credit and insurance markets. New Economics of Labor Migration contains the concept of the migration as the risk diversification policy on the household level, and as remittances as a major means of stabilizing consumption and increasing welfare (Stark & Bloom, 1985; Adams, 2011). Migration does not have such positive consequences across the board. Migration can bring both opportunities but also inequalities depending on the capacity of the household; on the situation locally and on the productive use of the income sent back (Taylor, 2011). Other cases also have migration costs that are temporary because of the loss of labour and family separation especially in poor or absent remittance flows (Yang, 2011; Dustmann & Gorglach, 2016). By contrast, the standard remittances can boost household welfare too, by sustaining household income and accumulating resources (Giulietti et al., 2023).

Labor migration in Nepal has taken in a large rural livelihood factor and remittances are also important in helping overcome poverty to sustain consumption and household investments (CBS, 2022; Salike et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the majority of the available evidence is based on country level data, what is more likely to obscure widespread local variation in both migration experience and welfare. Consequently, there is limited information on the micro level of the interplay between migration and the remittances and household economic welfare in specific rural settings. It is especially important in case of the application to decentralized governance system which is applied to Nepal because cities require local evidence to formulate plans and social protection. The context-specific welfare effects of migration and remittances within the rural Nepal setting is thus in need to be performed at a communal level.

## Research Methods

**Study design and collection:** The study is a cross-sectional household survey, which was conducted on the basis of primary data gathered in the rural Nepal; Palungtar Municipality. The survey also included comprehensive data on household demographics, migration history, receipt of remittances, being affected by economic surprises, and household signs of economic welfare. The model used in the study is the household, and the interviews were done with the household head or a second adult who is well informed. With the primary household level data, the able to take a context-specific investigation on migration and welfare relationship in a rural environment.

**Sample size and sampling:** Ward No. 5 has a population of 1,415 households based on the National Population and Housing Census of 2021. Yamane formula to calculate the minimum required sample based on finite population with a margin of error of 7 percent was used to determine the sample size which is 178 households. To accommodate any possible non-response and field effects, the sample was further overestimated to 185 households which is equivalent to 13.1 percent of the total number of households in the ward.

**Variables and measurement:** Three domains of results were studied, which included migration status (at least one household member migrated), remittance results (annual amount received and log-transformed), and economic wellbeing, based on a composite index that was developed based on standardized indicators of income, consumption, and asset ownership. Migration factors (type, destination and intensity), household socio-demographic (sex, age, education of household head, household size, dependency ratio), and economic and institutional variables (shocks, food insecurity, landholding, assets, access to banking and insurance) were important explanatory variables.

**Statistical analysis:** Multivariate regressions were used. The dichotomous results were analyzed using binary logistic regression, and continuous results were analyzed using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression. The

estimation of models was in a sequence of the starting ones based on demographic, economic and asset controls with the addition of the migration variables to the fully adjusted models. The monetary variables were transformed using the logarithmic transformation to bring about skewness to zero and the robust standard errors were applied to alleviate heteroscedasticity.

**Ethical considerations:** The respondents were required to participate absolutely on a voluntary basis, and informed consent was sought and the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were ensured.

## Results and Findings

The socio-economic status of the heads of the household was relatively homogenous in terms of age with the highest proportions of 60 years and older (21.1%), 30–39 years (21.6%). The educational attainment of the household heads reveals that majority of the household heads had either primary (1–5 years, 41.1%) or lower secondary education (38.9%) and 11.4 percent had no formal school education. The household size was also moderate, with 64.3 percent having 4–8 members, which implies the extended family traditions characteristic of rural Nepal. The landholding in the form of ownership was very heterogeneous since almost half of the households (49.2%) owned a land of over 50 ropani. There was no polarization of income between low, middle and high categories but monthly household income and consumption was equally distributed among the three categories with each covering about one-third of the total households. The asset ownership was mostly moderate (65.4%), with high asset ownership (21.6%) recorded by the households. None of the households were very high on asset category. The distribution brings out the socio-economic disparity, which has moderate material well-being among the surveyed households (Table 1).

**Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of Households**

Variable	Number	Percent
<b>Age group (years)</b>		
<30	37	20.00
30–39	40	21.62
40–49	34	18.38
50–59	35	18.92
60+	39	21.08
<b>Education (years)</b>		
No schooling	21	11.35
1–5	76	41.08
6–10	72	38.92
11+	16	8.65
<b>Household size</b>		
≤3	42	22.70
4–5	56	30.27
6–8	63	34.05
9+	24	12.97
<b>Landholding (Ropani)</b>		
≤10	16	8.65
11–30	34	18.38
31–50	44	23.78
>50	91	49.19
<b>Monthly Income (NPR)</b>		
Low (≤ 40,000)	62	33.51
Middle (40,000 – 60,000)	61	32.97
High (> 60,000)	62	33.51
<b>Monthly Consumption (NPR)</b>		
Low(≤ 30,000)	62	33.51
Middle (30,000 – 50000)	61	32.97
High (> 50,000)	62	33.51

Assets		
Low	24	12.97
Moderate	121	65.41
High	40	21.62
Very high	0	0.00
Total	185	100.00

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

\* Asset ownership is based on the number of durable assets owned by the household.

The general background characters of households surveyed (N= 185) is provided in Table 2. The average age of the household heads was 44.5 years (SD 14.8) which showed that there were a wide range of working-age and elderly household heads. The years of schooling among household's heads were 5.3 (SD= 3.6) which is a relatively low to moderate education level in the study region. The mean household size stood at 5.5 individuals (SD = 2.2) which was in line with the extended family set up witnessed in rural Nepal. The average size of landholding was 51 ropani (SD = 2.9) which implies moderate differences in access to productive land amongst households. Monthly household income per household was NPR 43,942 (SD =13,508) and mean monthly consumption expenditure was NPR 36, 500 (SD=12, 157), which means that consumption was widely responsive to income capacity. The average number of assets was 2.7 (SD = 1.1), which represents a small amount of accumulation of long-lasting household assets. The composite household well-being index, which was created as a z-score mean, had a standardized mean of nearly zero (0.03) and a standard deviation of 0.86, which indicated high heterogeneity of the economic well-being of the study.

**Table 2: General background characteristics (N=185)**

Characteristics	Mean	Standard deviation
Age of household head (years)	44.47	14.80
Education of household head (years)	5.34	3.56
Household size	5.45	2.24
Landholding size (ropani)	50.07	2.93
Monthly household income (NPR)	43941.89	13507.88
Monthly household consumption expenditure (NPR)	36500.16	12156.95
Asset count	2.69	1.08
Wellbeing index (mean of z-scores)	0.03	0.86

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows the multivariate regression analysis on the determinants of the household economic well-being. Among the most important explanatory factors, there are migration status and remittance receipt, which are statistically significant predictors. After adjusting socio-demographic and economic attributes, the economic well-beings of households having at least one migrant were lower than those of ones without migrants ( $\beta = -0.576$ ,  $p = 0.038$ ). Conversely, those families which got remittances showed much better well-being ( $\beta = 0.614$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), which was compensatory to the economic costs of migration. Dependency ratio in the household was also related to the economic well-being in a negative way ( $\beta = -0.062$ ,  $p = 0.033$ ). The other types of characteristics in the household such as sex, age, and education of the household head, household size, landholding and the asset count did not significantly predict in the fully adjusted model. There was no statistical correlation found between indicators of short-term vulnerability, including food insecurity and recent economic shocks and the well-being index and so, the longer-term structural factors and migration-related financial flows might have a greater role in determining household economic results in the context of the study. This finding help to highlight the utility of remittances as an essential tool of connecting migration with household welfare, as well as, they show the vulnerability of migrant families that may be experienced in the case of the absence of the remittance inflows.

**Table 3: Determinants of Household Economic Well-Being**

Characteristics	Coef	se	T	P	CI of 95%		Sig.
					lower	Upper	
Intercept	-0.039	0.243	-0.159	0.874	-0.515	0.438	
Male household head [T.Male]	-0.024	0.106	-0.223	0.824	-0.231	0.184	
Household has a migrant T.1]	-0.576	0.278	-2.070	0.038	-1.121	-0.031	**

Household received remittances[T.1]	0.614	0.204	3.001	0.003	0.213	1.014	***
Food insecure in last 4 weeks [T.1]	-0.199	0.277	-0.718	0.473	-0.742	0.344	
Experienced shock in last 12 months [T.1]	0.111	0.096	1.151	0.250	-0.078	0.299	
Age of household head (years)	0.006	0.004	1.451	0.147	-0.002	0.013	
Education of household head (years)	0.004	0.016	0.230	0.818	-0.028	0.036	
Household size (number)	-0.012	0.037	-0.328	0.743	-0.086	0.061	
Dependency ratio	-0.062	0.029	-2.133	0.033	-0.118	-0.005	**
Landholding (ropani)	-0.021	0.026	-0.819	0.413	-0.073	0.030	
Asset count (number)	0.053	0.071	0.751	0.453	-0.085	0.192	

0.01, \* $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.10$ .

Table 4 shows that the findings of the logistic regression analysis that is used to examine variables that relate to the receipt of remittances by migrant households. The educational attainment of the head of the household was significantly and positively related to the probability of remittances (OR = 1.21,  $p = 0.003$ ), which meant that the higher the educational level, the more likely the remittances would be received. Conversely, the size of landholding was also found to have a negative relation with remittance receipt (OR = 0.75,  $p = 0.001$ ) indicating that landholding with higher size would not have depended on the receipt of remittances. Family size and economic well-being were found to have negative and statistically significant relationships with remittance receipt but exposure to recent shocks and sex of the household head did not show any significant relationship. This results indicate that the human capital attributes as well as structural economic variables have a greater impact on the remittance receipt than brief household vulnerability in the study setting.

**Table 4: Factors Associated with Remittance Receipt among Migrant Households**

Characteristics	coef_logit	se	Z	P	OR	CI of 95%		Sig.
						Lower	Upper	
Intercept	-0.920	0.768	-1.198	0.231	0.399	0.089	1.795	
Household has a migrant[T.1]	0.707	0.737	0.960	0.337	2.029	0.479	8.597	*
Household received remittances [T.1]	-0.734	0.446	-1.646	0.100	0.480	0.200	1.151	
Experienced shock in last 12 months [T.1]	0.019	0.629	0.031	0.975	1.020	0.297	3.495	
Male household head [T.Male]	-0.082	0.333	-0.247	0.805	0.921	0.479	1.769	
Household economic well-being index	-0.221	0.405	-0.544	0.586	0.802	0.362	1.776	***
Education of household head (years)	0.191	0.064	2.980	0.003	1.210	1.067	1.372	
Household size	-0.156	0.105	-1.487	0.137	0.856	0.697	1.051	***
Landholding size (ropani)	-0.295	0.088	-3.364	0.001	0.745	0.627	0.884	

0.01, \* $p < 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.10$ .

Table 5 shows that model fit statistics of the OLS and logistic regression. The predictive household well-being index using OLS model forecasts about 6.9 percent ( $R^2 = 0.069$ ) of the total variation in the dependent variable and the adjusted  $R^2$  (0.009) is low which indicates the immense heterogeneity in household well-being that is not reflected by the observed covariates. This is the amount of explanatory power found in the cross-sectional household welfare models to the extent they incorporate a variety of socio-economic and behavioral factors.

**Table 5: Model Fit Statistics for OLS and Logistic Regression Analyses**

Model	N	R <sup>2</sup>	AdjustedR <sup>2</sup>	Pseudo_R <sup>2</sup>
Wellbeing OLS	185	0.068527	0.0093	
Food insecurity logit	185			0.134936

The logistic regression model, the pseudo R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.135 is a moderate value that shows an improvement of the null model in providing a chance to explain the probability of food insecurity. Though the pseudo R<sup>2</sup>s cannot be directly compared to the OLS R<sup>2</sup>, the value is indicative of the fact that the predictors included are adding value in order to discriminate between the food-secure and food-insecure households. All in all, the model fit statistics reveals that there is a reasonable degree of explanatory performance to be applied with the use of this model to explain household level analysis at the rural level.

## Discussion

The study has explored the connection between migration and remittances and household economic wellbeing using primary household survey data in Palungtar Municipality. The descriptive results indicate that the rural population is socio-economically heterogeneous characterized by moderate household sizes, moderate to medium level of educational attainment, unequal landholdings distribution and mainly median level of assets ownership. Although the distribution of income and consumption was the same in low, middle and high income groups, the index of wellbeing revealed a high level of dispersion meaning household wellbeing cannot only be well related to material resources. These findings underscore the complexity of rural livelihoods in Nepal, as a household employs a mix of land, labor migration and non-farm income to deal with the risks of the economy.

Regression results indicate that home having migrant individuals had much lower economic well-being and remittance-receiving home had more well-being, other things remaining constant. This seemingly absurd contradiction shows the dualism of migration. Migration in itself can have short-term welfare expenses because of separation, the cost of migration as well as loss of local labor which has been identified in study highlighting the risks and the cost of adjustment related to migration (Clemens & McKenzie, 2018; Dustmann & Gorlach, 2016). Meanwhile, remittances are a compensatory measure, and they enhance household welfare by stabilising the income and facilitating consumption, as seen in Asia and other developing countries (Azizi, 2021; Giulietti et al., 2023; UNESCAP, 2023). The results indicate that migration as such does not ensure enhanced welfare, instead, the achievement of welfare benefits is jeopardized upon the continuity of remittance flows.

The adverse relationship between the dependency ratio and the household economic well-being also supports the significance of household demographic organization. The higher the dependency ratio in households, the more pressure they have on the available resources, which may weaken the benefits of remittances and other sources of income. The same demographic bottlenecks were found in rural livelihood study in South Asia, with dependency burdens hindering the conversion of income into long-term welfare benefits by households (Démurger et al., 2021; Klasen et al., 2022). Surprisingly, the short-term indicators of vulnerability, including food insecurity and recent shocks were not statistically significant predictors of overall well-being, which implies that more persistent structural features, but temporary shocks, are more decisive determinants of household welfare in this scenario.

The receiver of remittance in migrant households is analyzed in such a way that the higher the education of the household head, the higher the probability of receiving the remittances, and the greater the landholding, the lower the dependence on the remittances. These findings coincide with study that indicated more educated families are in a better position to keep their migration networks and financial remittances, though land-based households can rely on local production and less on the income of their migrants (Hagen-Zanker & Siegel, 2007; Nguyen & Winters, 2011; Ratha, et al., 2016). Policy-wise, it is an indication that remittances can solidify current disparities in human capital benefiting better educated households and acting as a safety-net to land-poor households.

Altogether, this study can add to the body of literature on migration and development as it offers micro-level evidence based on rural Nepal in terms of municipality. In contrast to the bulk of study conducted on the national level, this study reveals the reason why some migrant families still find themselves in an economically vulnerable position and the conditional quality of remittances in enhancing welfare. The policy implications of the results are significant to the local governments, especially in the modelling of financial inclusion programs, remittance-based savings and investment programs and shock-sensitive social protection. This study is actionable in the country and especially in the Municipalities of the area, in which it can contribute to a decentralized planning approach through emphasizing a more inclusive rural development approach by highlighting the Palungtar Municipality.

The strengths of this study are that primary household-level data was used, analytical approach of the study was mechanism-centered on a municipality, and the concept of migration status, receipt of remittance, and demographic vulnerability was unified into one structure. These characteristics make the findings more relevant to the local policy making. Nonetheless, the study has shortcomings as well. It has a cross-sectional design that limits causal inference, and the estimations can be biased due to unobserved potential variables like migrant selectivity and informal transfers. The sample size is relatively small and thus does not allow generalization beyond the study area and self-reported income and remittance information can be subject to the bias of recall. Longitudinal data and mixed-method studies would be important in future studies on the long-term welfare effects of migration and remittances.

## Conclusion

This study shows that evidence on the micro level on how migration, remittances and household economic wellbeing. The results demonstrate that migration is a common livelihood practice, but it does not necessarily lead to better household welfare. The economically disadvantaged households that included migrants were found to be more economically disadvantaged when the migrants were not receiving remittance inflows, which demonstrate the economic cost and susceptibility of migration. Conversely, the households receiving remittances had much greater well-being levels, which highlight the importance of remittances as a compensatory and stabilizing source of income. This is further supported by the negative dependency ratio- household well-being association which indicates the relevance of household demographic structure in defining welfare results.

The analysis further has shown that structural factors affect the remittance receipt especially the education level of the household head and the size of landholding, which implies that not all households are equal in terms of access to remittance benefits. Generally, the findings underscore the circumstantial character of migration-induced welfare increase and continuation of socio-economic heterogeneity amid rural households. This study suggestions context-sensitive data by examining a single municipality and the primary data provided in surveys, thus filling in missing data on a national scale and can be used specifically in planning, i.e., in decentralized planning. The evidence highlights the necessity to consider migration as not a single-development fix, but rather one that is a component of a larger livelihood through which it interacts with household resources, demographic pressures, and local economic conditions.

To include the poor in financial institutions, local governments need to encourage savings based on remittances, social protection systems based on shocks that are responsive to migrant families, skills and education programs to augment the optimal utilization of remittances to families and minimize the weakness of the families.

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