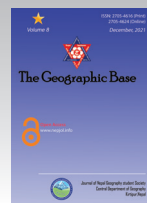




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Labor Migration Trend in Nepal

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Abstract

Migration is one of the major factors affecting population distribution of Nepal. Job opportunity, education facility, medical facility and topographic situation are the key causes of migration. Human movement from mountain to hill; hill to Tarai; and rural to urban area migration are the major trend observed in Nepal. Migration has direct impact on various sectors including financial, social, demographic, and biological. All kind of services including educational, medical, transformational, and safety services should make equally accessible over the various parts of the country. This research helps to understand the trend of internal and international labor migration in Nepal. The study has used secondary data from Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Ministry of Finance (MoF). Remittance is playing a crucial role in the Nepalese economy. The highest foreign labor migration was found in the year 2013/14. The trend was continuously increased until 2013/14 and it has stated decreasing thereafter. International labor migration has mostly taken place to Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia,

UAE and other Southeast Asian countries and it is growing over the time that has shifted the agricultural based economy towards remittance-based economy.

Introduction

Movement of people to a new area for better work and living is known as migration (Oxford, 2000). Migration affects demographic components including population size and growth of origin and destination. Nepal is a country where industrial growth is very limited, making fewer job opportunities. Migration, unlike fertility and mortality, is the least researched and understood component of demographic dynamics in Nepal even though many of Nepal's social and political problems are interwoven with the process of both internal and international migration (KC, 1998). In terms of political boundary, migration is categorized as internal and international migration (Kansakar, 2012). Internal migration does not change the population of the country, but it does change the population of the specific place. Migration has a high impact on the growth and distribution of population and resources. Migration from Hill to Terai has immensely increased, generating pressure on the resource base of the Terai region. This has created imbalances in the distribution of land resources, which has long been the primary source of Nepal livelihood (Subedi, 2003). Internal migration has been common in Nepal and people generally migrate from Mountain, Hill to Terai region.

The large number of people from Nepal have migrated abroad in search of employment. The latest data suggests that a significant section of the total working population (around 7.3 per cent) work abroad (MoLE, 2016; CBS, 2011), and the remittance covers around 30 per cent of Nepal's GDP (World Bank 2016; Sijapati et al. 2012). The number of migrants and volume of remittance rising highly after the early 2000s (MoLE, 2016). Labor migration is one of the major sources of livelihood income besides agriculture in Nepal, where more than eighty percent work on agriculture. Besides all, poverty and lack of income opportunity in local are major causes of migration, which result in increasing migration for their livelihood (Kollmair, 2006).

Many people are migrating from developing countries to developed countries for a better employment opportunities and income (ILO, 2003). The formal and temporary migration began 'after people started to work in the British army following the Sugauli treaty that was signed on December 2, 1815. This Treaty permitted Britain to recruit Gurkhas for military service' (Pant, 2006). Foreign employment is indeed the most significant motivation for international migration from Nepal in the twenty-first century. Migration for foreign employment has become a major source of income for many Nepali households (Mishra & Kunwar, 2020; MoLE, 2016). Department of foreign employment (DoFE) shows that the

number of migrants leaving Nepal for work is increasing every year. During the last fiscal year 2009/10 to 2018/19 more than 4564443 labor permits were issued to Nepalis to work abroad.

Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait are major destinations for Nepali migrants. The same report concluded that overseas employment is heavily male dominated: roughly 96% of all labor permits were given to men. At present labor migration diversity ranges from military recruitment, domestic work to semi-skilled works in different countries of Asia, Europe, and North America. Despite a long history of international labor migration in Nepal, the available information is very vague and incomplete (Bhandari, 2003). Foreign labor migration is now an intrinsic part of everyday life for a majority of Nepalese society, with its impact visible in every sphere of society – social, economic, cultural and even political (Seddon et al., 2001). Foreign employment has provided alternative livelihood opportunities, and remittances have helped to augment household incomes. The outflow of migrants in the past decade has been momentous in transforming the country's economic, social and cultural fabric. Nepal has emerged as a remittance economy, shaped by migrants' cash flows, so much so that it was the 23rd largest recipient of remittances as a share of GDP in the world (Sah, 2019).

Methods and Materials

The main objective of the study is to find determinants and causes of migration, recent trend, and the impact of migration. To achieve the objectives, this study is based on secondary data. It is available with Ministry of labor and Transport Management (MoLTM), Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), the Foreign Employment Promotion Board (FEPB), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Nepal Institute of Development Studies (NIDS), and Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). The article comprises the trends in foreign employment for the past ten years, 2009/10 to 2018/19. The information from this report typically mentions the Nepali fiscal year (FY). It shows recent trends based on the past ten years.

The Microsoft excel is used for the analysis and preparation of graph and charts All the mapping work was done using ArcGIS software. We obtained spatial data from Department of Survey (DOS), Nepal. Only legal migrants migrated via international flights are considered as international migrants because it is impossible to keep records of the illegal migrants. Furthermore, the citizens of India and Nepal, both countries can travel and work freely across the border because of a bilateral friendship treaty signed between both the countries in 1950.

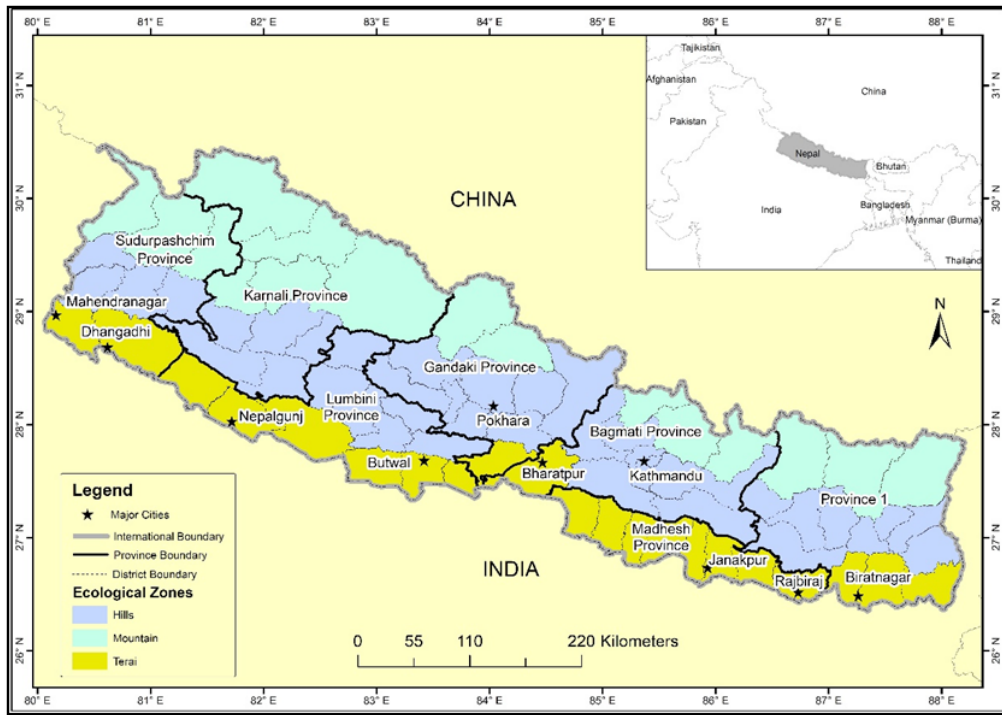


Figure 1. Location map of study area

The peoples do not need any documents and approval, and travel anytime due open, porous border and strong familial links. So, it is also hard to keep records of the peoples migrating to India. Since there is no exact and reliable record available regarding the migrants to India for any reason and government of Nepal does not formally keep record of those, the migrants to India are ignored in this study.

Results and Discussion

Determinants of migration

Migration is a complex phenomenon marked by socio-economic, political, cultural, demographic, environmental,

and psychological causes in which push and pull factors work in the place of origin and the place of destination respectively. The pull factors are characterized by eradication of malaria, availability of fertile land, development of infrastructures, opportunities for employment, development of new technologies, better education, health, housing, entertainment, transportation and communication facilities, high demand for skilled manpower and physical labor, modern society, agglomeration of government and semi-government offices, developments of industries, business, trade, probity of constrictive works, high security of urban areas are

the major factors to attract. The push factors are those which force to change from the place of origin to the destination place due to the existing hindrances. Push factors generally prevail because of insufficient fertile land in the Himalayas and mountains areas, and poverty, unemployment, semi-unemployment, religious, and social insecurity. Similarly, lack of transportation and communication, and infrastructure are other pull factors. Moreover, calamities like flood, landslides, droughts, famine, and epidemic diseases are also marked as natural causes.

Causes of migration

Migration is a complex process and has been a feature of human societies for many centuries. There are many reasons why people choose to migrate. Some of the reasons are discussed below.

Physical conditions

The bodily conditions of a place such as climate, soils may also be responsible for the migration of people, especially when such conditions are unfavorable. In the mountain region, the climate, condition of soil, topography is not good, so people from the mountain region choose to migrate to Terai and Hill regions.

Differences in economic opportunities

People tend to migrate where there are more economic opportunities like jobs enterprise transitions. In Nepal every year people migrate from mountains region and remote hilly region to Terai

and cities. In search of education, job, and health and service many people migrate from different remote places of the country to urban areas. People generally migrate from the Hill to the Terai region due to food deficit, lack of employment opportunities, hard lifestyles, poverty, unfavorable conditions of relief and climate.

Insecurity

Fear of insecurity arise from war and political instability force people to migrate. During a decade long conflict in Nepal many people migrated to cities and Terai region. Similarly, political instability has also been a major reason for migration. This problem is further compounded by the hidden nature of displacement in Nepal, where people are forced from their homes either to merge into social networks of friends and families or to migrate with urban migrate route for district headquarters or the capital. Since the conflict started in the mid-1990s, hundreds of thousands of people uprooted across the country. Landowners' teachers, and other government employees have been specially targeted by the rebels and have fled their homes. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) suggested that between 300,000 to 400,000 rural families, or between 1.8 to 2.3 million people were displaced by the conflict since 1996 in Nepal (ADB, 2006).

Differences in group amenities

Owing to dissimilarity in the availability of water, roads, and electricity, people tend to move where these amenities are available. In mountain region, people do not have facility of electricity and the same in the case with the people in

the remote rural areas of hilly region. Similarly, people have to walk hours to fetch water and there are not good roads connecting the people. So, people tend to move to areas where these faculties are available.

Table 1. Reason for migration in Nepal

Regions for migration	Percentage distributed by migration types	
	In- migrants	Immigrants
A. Reasons related to the places of origin		
Lack of Job	18.6	24.2
Landless	14.7	10.8
Sale of land	12.3	5.8
Lack of educational facilities	7.7	6.7
Lack of business opportunities	5.3	10.0
Migration of families	4.4	0.8
Social and family's conflict	1.4	3.3
Absence of relative at origin	0.5	1.7
Sub- total	64.9	63.3
Number of cases	1137	76
B. Reasons related to the place of migration		
Better opportunities	11.9	14.2
Service job transfer	6.4	9.8
Owned land already	2.7	0.8
Sub-total	21.0	20.8
Number of cases	367	25
C. Others		
No specific reason	11.3	10.9
Don't know/ missing	2.8	5.0
Sub-total	14.1	15.9
Number of cases	248	19
Total	100	100
Number of cases	1752	120

Source: Migration survey, 1996

The (table 1.) shows that the change of the place of the origin is mostly (18.6 percent) caused by the lack of employment opportunities, where 14.7 percent of people were landless followed by the sale of land (12.3). The survey record of 1996 has shown that among the

destined migrants the highest was 11.9 percent for good employment facilities followed by 6.4 percent of people for reasons for service transfer. In total, in-migrants (64.9) and immigrations (63.3) were almost equal to change their place of origin characterized by push factors.

Trends of migration

Internal migration has been very common in Nepal. Though it does not change the population of the country it changes the population and resource distribution of the specific areas. The shift of population from the Hill to Terai started first in the eastern parts of the country and the movement in the far western part only took place in the 1980s (Subedi, 1991). Several studies have been conducted in this field by different research institutions and scholars but most of these are concerned with the internal Hill to Terai and rural to urban types of migration (Gautam, 2006). It seems that the Terai can absorb the populations of hills for some time. There is still a relatively low agricultural density of the population. Therefore, the trend of population movement from the Hills to the Terai is not undesirable. More than 90 percent of all emigrants are from the hills and mountains of Nepal (Subedi, 1991). Another system of population migration is from ridges to the river valleys and structural basins in the Hills. The eastern hills have experienced the highest number of out-migrants in the country (Shrestha, 1981). However, now the migration of people from eastern hills to Terai has decreased to a great extent. The adsorption of the eastern Terai has recently declined considerably. In the last decade, the migration of people from the hills of the far western region to Terai has been very common. Similarly, populations of city areas like Kathmandu, Pokhara, Bharatpur, Butwal, Lalitpur, Nepaljung, Dhangadhi, and Mahendranagar have been steadily rising in recent years. Moreover, the population of district headquarters of every district has been rising every year.

Table 2. Population Change in Nepal by Ecological Regions

Region	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Mountain	9.9	8.7	7.8	7.3	6.7
Hill	52.5	47.7	45.5	44.3	43
Terai	37.6	43.6	46.7	48.4	50.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: CBS, Nepal (2011)

The population of mountains and hills have been decreasing while the population of Terai has been increasing. In 40 years, the population has decreased by 3.2 percent in the mountain region. The population of hilly region decreased by 9.5 percent, while the population of Terai regions increased by 12.7 percent.

(Table 3.) Shows that about 30 percent out-migration was from the mountains and 61.3 percent from the hills. The share of the eastern mountain alone was 22.7 percent. The hill out-migrants from the eastern, central, and western hills contributed 51.4 percent of the total out-migrants. The eastern and the central Terai regions constituted 65.3 percent of the net-migration. In the 1991 census, inter-regional migration increased from 1038862 to 1418206. Mostly, the Terai region shared 14.2 percentage in 1991. The out-migration remarkably increased in the hills. Out- migrants in the 2001 census from the hills accounted for 66.9 percent which was lower than that of the 1991 census figure. Major streams of internal migration were rural to rural (62.2 percent) and rural to urban (25.5 percent) in 2001. Urban to urban and urban to rural migration streams were far less significant.

Table 3. Trend of internal migration in Nepal

Ecological region	Census Year	In- migration		Out-migration		Net- migration
Mountain	1971	9733	1.9%	490092	9.8%	-399959
	1981	53628	5.2%	315095	30.3%	-261467
	1991	39751	2.8%	201406	14.2%	-161655
	2001	42727	2.1%	297830	14.5%	-255103
	2011	45169	2.2%	394,301	18.9%	-349,132
Hill	1971	72753	16.2%	438719	86.6%	-359966
	1981	21197	20.4%	636638	61.3%	-424711
	1991	267116	18.8%	1021039	72.0%	-753923
	2001	540413	26.4%	1371172	66.9%	-830759
	2011	588815	28.2%	1311271	62.8%	-722,456
Terai	1971	418435	82.5%	18510	3.7%	399925
	1981	77307	74.4%	87129	8.4%	686178
	1991	1111339	78.4%	195761	13.8%	915578
	2001	1464210	71.5%	378348	18.5%	1085862
	2011	1454186	69.6%	382598	18.3%	1071588

Source: CBS, Population monograph of Nepal, (2014),

Table 4. Internal migration situation in the Kathmandu valley vis-à-vis the country's situation

Census year	Total population of Kathmandu valley	Average annual growth rate of Kathmandu valley	Average annual growth rate of the country	Total population share of Kathmandu valley	Population density of the country	Population density of the Kathmandu valley
1971	6,07, 561	2.1	2.1	5.3%	79	676
1981	7, 66, 820	2.1	2.6	5.1%	102	852
1991	10, 85, 379	2.9	2.1	5.9%	126	1207
2001	16, 45, 091	3.4	2.2	7.1%	157	1830
2011	25, 17, 023	3.5	1.4	9.5%	180	2800

Source: CBS, population census of Nepal (1971 to 2011).

The Kathmandu valley has the highest number of migrants of any other city in the country. In 1971, the population of Kathmandu valley was 6,07,561 and its average annual growth rate was 2.1 percent, which was equal to the growth rate of the country. The valley here shared 5.3 percent of the total population of the country. The density of its population was 676, while the country was only 79. After forty years, in 2011 the population of the valley increased to 25,17,023 and the annual growth rate increased to 3.5. Similarly, the Kathmandu valley shared

9.5 percent of the total population of the country. In 2011, the population density of the country come to 180 while that of Kathmandu valley grew to 2800.

Yearly volume and trend of international labor migrants:

The trend of international labor migration by fiscal year is presented based on the available government data from 2009/10 to 2018/19. The trend analysis of labor migration is to observe the concentration of migrant workers by fiscal years.

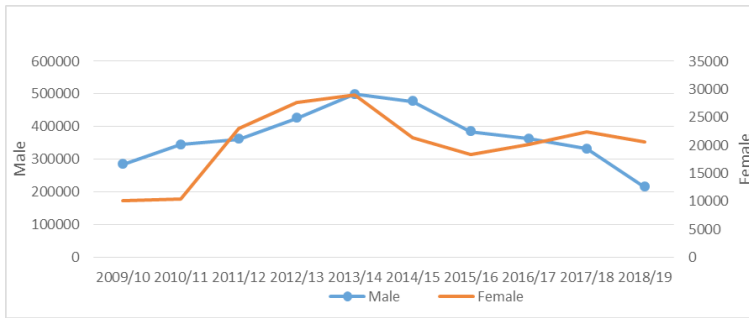


Figure 2. Volume and trend of international labor migrations
Source: DoFE

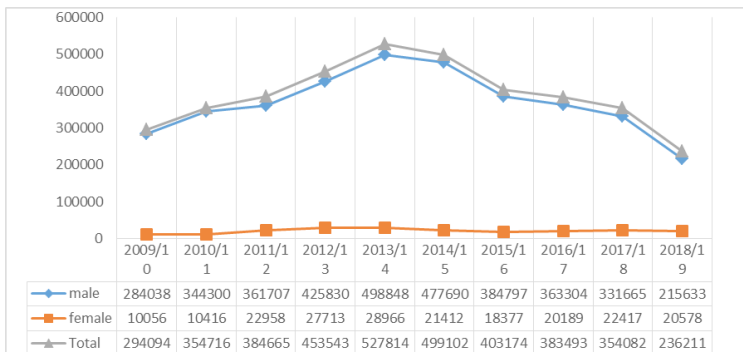


Figure 3. Volume and trend of international labor migrations
Source: DoFE

Analyzing the data from 2009/10 to 2018/19, it is found that a total of 4564443 people went to foreign labor migrants from Nepal. The above data specifies the increasing trend of foreign labor migration, which is peaked at over 500000. The rapid growth of international labor migrants can be observed in each year and the volume has also increased at the similar pattern. Similarly, the volume of labor migrations has declined since FY 2014/15.

Destination of international labor migration

The volume and trend of international labor migration by countries are also presented from 2009/10 to 2018/19. The volume analysis of labor migration is to observe the focus of migrant workers by country.

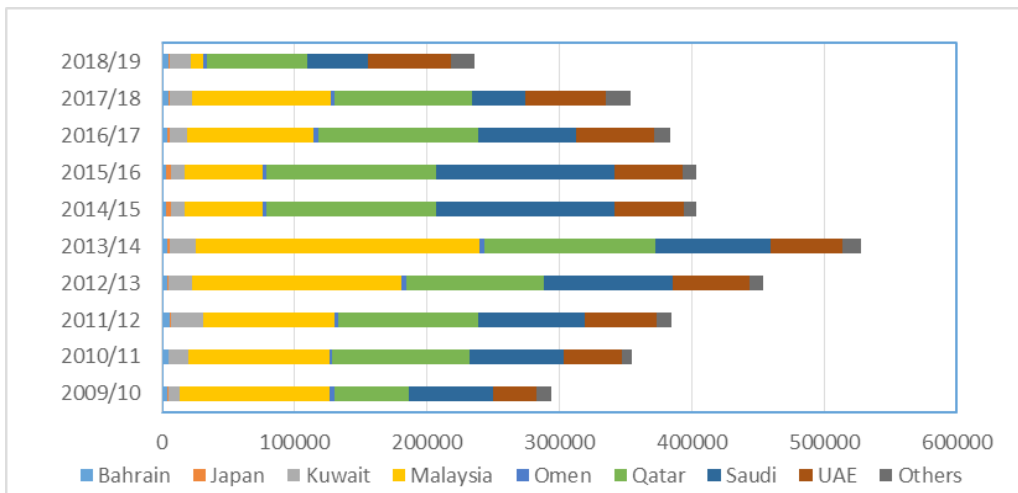


Figure 4. Volume and trend of international labor migration

Source: DoFE

According to Foreign Employment Information Management System (FEIMS) record (Figure 3.), labor approvals were obtained for a total of 128 countries in the FY 2018/19. The majority of Nepalese migrant workers went to Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and UAE every year. Labor migration to Malaysia has also

been fluctuating in the last decade, peaking at over 200000 in 2013/14. The decline in the volume of workers to Malaysia in 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2018/19. Nepalese migrant workers have always highly concentrated in Qatar and second highly concentrated in Saudi and the third in UAE.

Provincial profiles of Nepal migrant workers

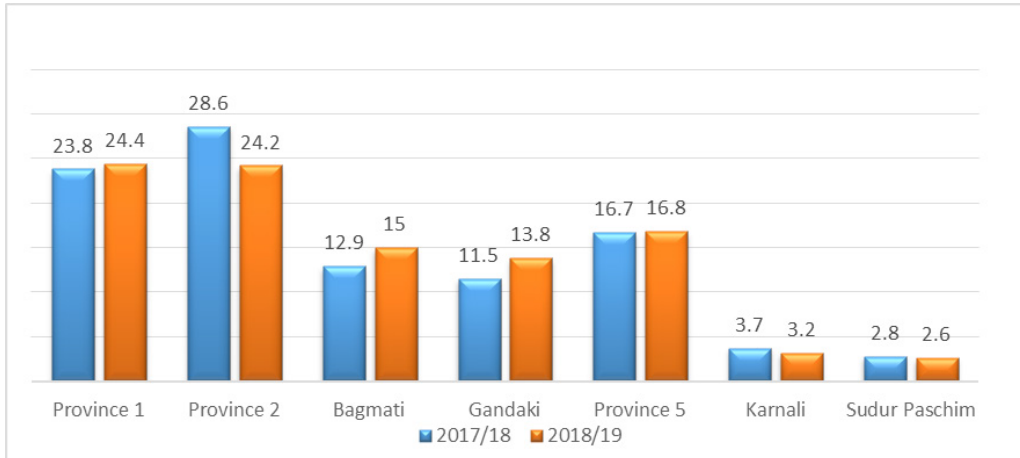


Figure 5. Province wise labor migration

Source: MoLESS, 2020

According to origin provinces, province 1 and Madhesh province observed the highest share of labor migration, comprising over 24 percent of the migrant’s works each in 2018/19. Similarly, 28.6 percent of migrant’s

workers originated from Province 2 while 23.8 Percent originated from province 1 in 2017/18. Karnali and Sudur Paschim almost 3 percent of total volume of migrant’s workers in both years.

International labor migration: skill wise

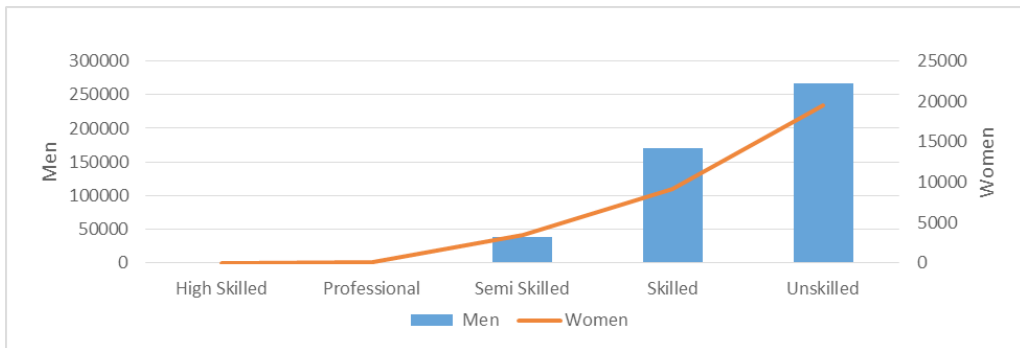


Figure 5. Skill wise international labor migration

Source: DoFE

Skill development is a vital policy given its positive effect on labor output, poverty decrease, and economic growth. The work-related profile of labor migrants in 2018/19 shows that 56% of total men and 61% of total women workers took up unskilled jobs. Similarly, skilled and semi-skilled male were 36% and 8 %, while the percentage of female were 28% and 11%. But very less percent of labor migration was high skilled and professional skilled.

Conclusion

The lack of employment opportunity, education facility, health facility, and harsh topography are the main regions for migration. People usually migrate from mountains to hills and from hills to Terai. Migration has affected different sectors like economic, social, demographic, and biological. It is important to decentralize development to discourage migration. Moreover, development in all sectors is equally important to discourage internal migration. Education, health, transportation, and security services should be available in all parts of the country to lessen migration.

In terms of international labor migration, the majority of people go to Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE and other Southeast Asian countries for last 40 years, which has shifted the agricultural based economy of Nepal towards a remittance-based economy. The number of people going abroad for work have been decreased for the last few years.

Major concentration of Nepali migrant workers was in Gulf States from the very beginning, but the dynamics have been changed and people are migrating towards Malaysia till 2013/14 even though the number of people going to the Gulf States is still significant. Labor migration to Malaysia has peaking at over 200000 in 2013/14. The decline in the volume of workers to Malaysia in 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2018/19. Nepalese migrant workers are always highly concentrated in Qatar and second highly concentrated in Saudi and the third in UAE. Province 1 and Madhesh province observed the highest share of labor migration and province karnali and suderpachhim has observed lowest share of labor migrations. Most of the labor migrants are formal unskilled.

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