

Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and STI among the spouses of the Migrant Workers at Sainik Basti, Nepal

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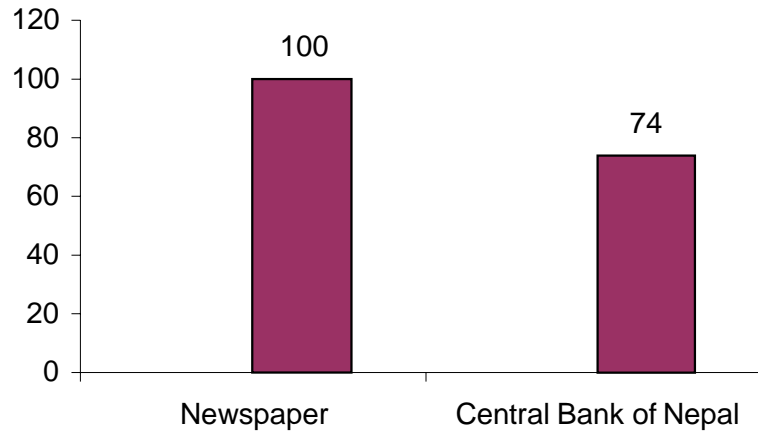
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Introduction

- **Migration phenomenon started 200 years ago.**
- **Started first when Nepali men traveled to Lahore in the early 19th century to join the Sikh ruler (Ranjit Singh) earning themselves and all those subsequently employed in foreign armies abroad, nickname “Lahure”.**
- **The census of 2001 shows 760,000 Nepalese living and working abroad. Today the estimated figure is 1,100,000.**
- **Only in 2004, 110,220 Males and 504 Females migrated to different Destinations**

Remittance

This amount is 14.13% of the country's GDP



Issue

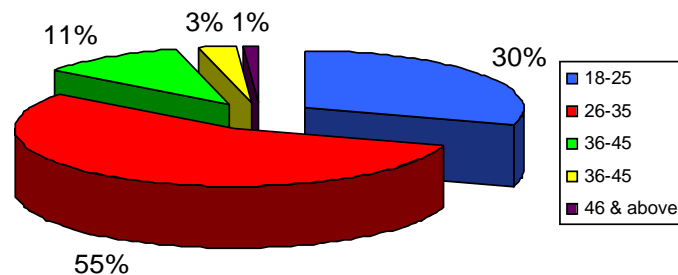
- **The process of Migration puts the migrant workers at the greater risk of HIV infection.**
- **70% of the people living in Sainik Basti are migrant workers.**
- **The spouses are often under looked as HIV vulnerability is concerned. The cumulative data of house-wives being infected with HIV/AIDS is 646 (May 31st 2005)**
- **Hence to look into the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS and STI among the spouses of the migrant workers is important as it is a serious issue.**

Results (Preliminary Findings)

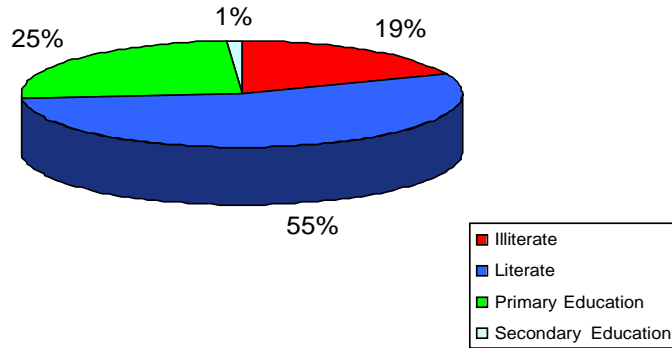
Results are based on

- In-depth Interviews (7)
- Observation (throughout)
- Focus Group Discussions (6)
- Questionnaire (178)

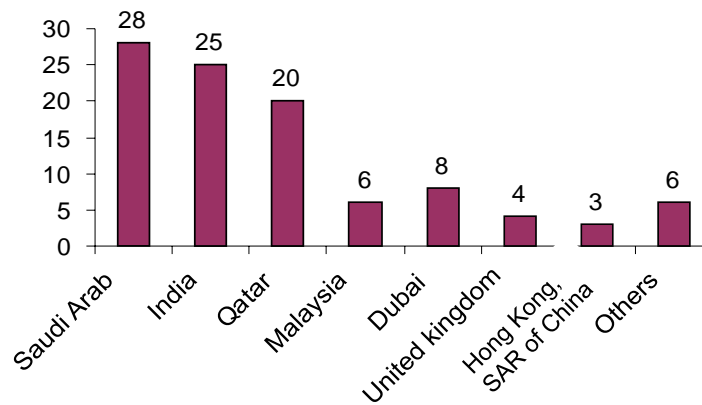
Age Group of the Respondents



Education Level of the Respondents



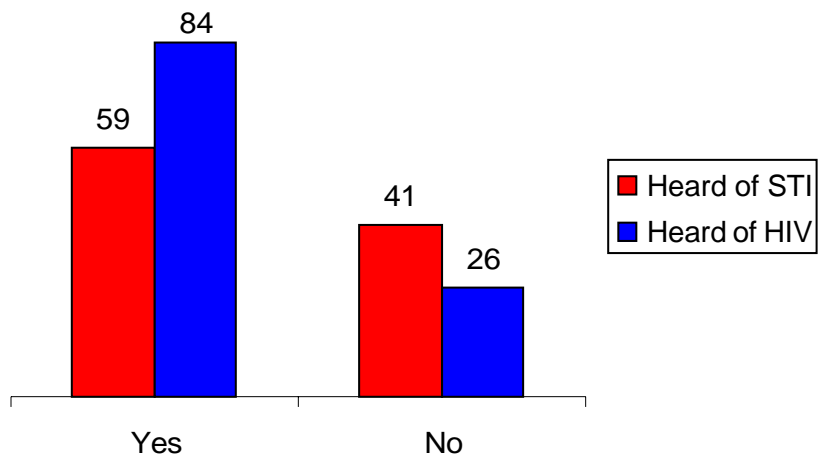
Country of Destination



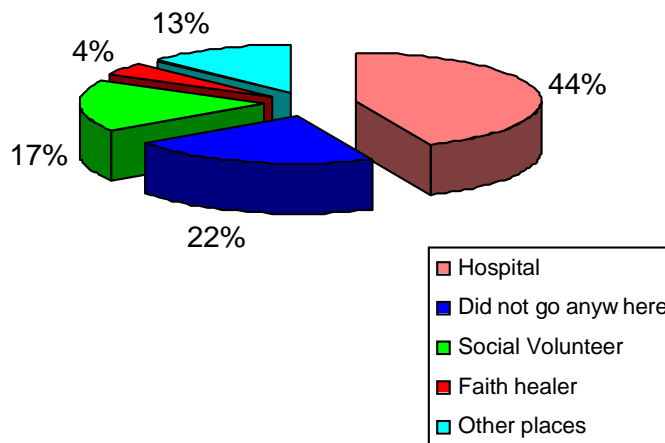
HIV Vulnerability

- HIV vulnerability of spouses is highly aggravated by various factors such as availability of treatment and support programs, capacity to access to health care services, cultural norms, social practices, health and health care beliefs.
- Gender Inequality in education, health information and Social Norm always put women at risk of HIV Vulnerability.

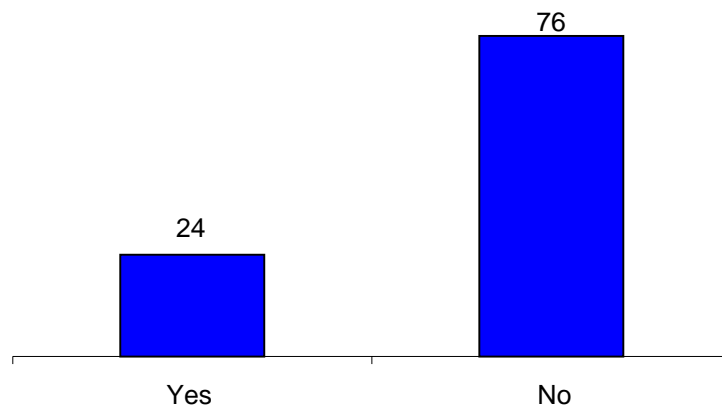
Lack of Information on Health & Health Care facilities



STI Infection & Treatment



Knowledge on Availability of Testing Centers on HIV



Lack of Information on Health & Health Care Facilities

- Though majority of the spouses have heard of STI and HIV, they lack in-depth knowledge on symptoms and transmission. The spouses believe that STI infections are due to food, carelessness in delivery and unsafe sex.
- Not enough awareness programs are focused in Sainik Basti areas.

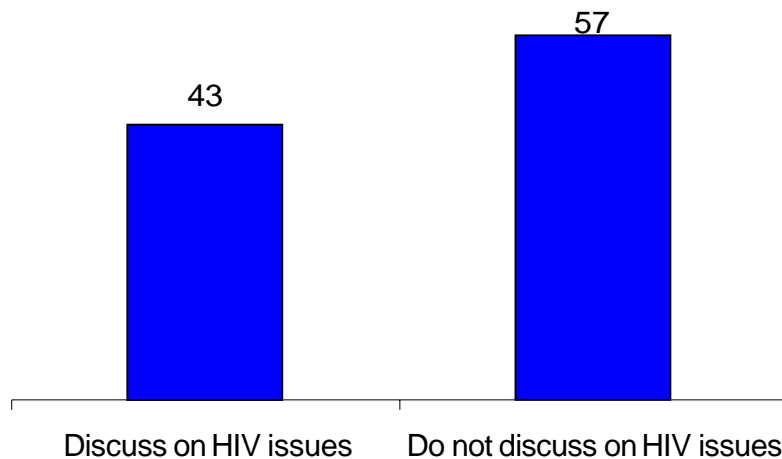
Socio-Cultural Factors

- There is a saying in Nepali that “*marda lai bhiringe and namarda lai luto*” meaning macho men gets infected by syphilis and who is not a macho men gets infected by scabies.
- Social Norm imposes a dangerous ignorance on girls and young women, who are expected to know little about sex and sexuality, which magnifies their risk of HIV infection.
- It is taboo speaking about these things, 35 out of 48 participants in the FGD said the society has a negative attitude towards those infected with STI and HIV and admitted that a lot of spouses would not reveal their status on STI.

Socio Cultural Factors

- The cultural practice does not let Nepalese girls or wife to discuss openly on issues of sex and sexuality with their husband. In the Nepalis society women expects their husband to be more knowledgeable than themselves They are not free to discuss about sex and sexuality often leading them to greater vulnerabilities of HIV infection.
- The spouses have the fear that how would their husbands interpret the discussion–
- *” what would my husband think if I start asking questions to him”*
- *“He may also think that I am going out with other persons and that is the reason I am asking questions”*

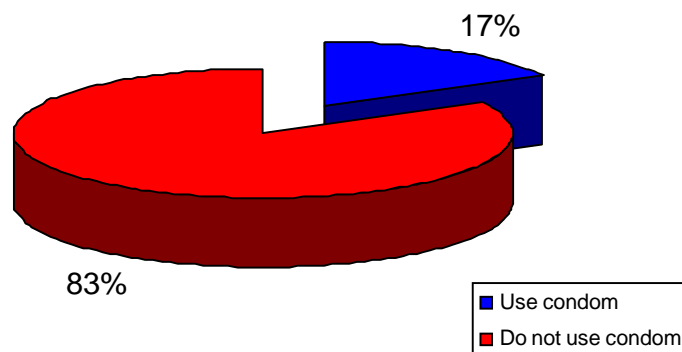
Socio Cultural Practice



Negotiation for Safe Sex

- The vulnerability of spouse is influenced by male labour migration. Many men migrate alone and research and intervention with migrants indicate that these men meet their social and sexual needs with sex workers in the destination country. These men come back and establish sexual relationships, with their wives and increases the vulnerability of HIV transmission.
- Though spouses have the fear of husband carrying the HIV virus and feel it important to use condom during sex with their husbands but they do not do so in practice.

Usage of Condom



Negotiation for Safe Sex

- The wives fear to ask their husband's behavior in the destination country, and they do not share their feeling on how do they deal with their loneliness, which makes the spouses difficult to negotiate for safe sex. Only 21% of the male spouses shared about his friend going to a sex worker in the destination country.
- One of the spouse shared that *"I can tell my husband to use condom but he may not listen to me."*
- "My husband may think that I do not trust him, if I tell him to use condom. "He may also think that I may be going around with other guys and be suspicious about my character."

Economic Dependency Increases Vulnerability

- Weaker economic condition, gender inequalities increases the possibility of spouses' vulnerability.
- A majority of the spouses in the research are economically dependent on their male spouses.
- There are no specific income generation program for the spouses, so depending on the husband for food and living results in the domination of the husband.

Lessons Learnt

- **No special programs are developed for the spouses of the migrant communities except a few NGOs are running programs for these vulnerable communities. Hence effective prevention programs needs to incorporated along with income generating activities.**
- **No intervention program can be fruitful unless there is an equal involvement of men and women in the education, orientation program. This helps to create an environment of openness.**
- **Most of the capacity building workshops are focused on empowering the spouses but the involvement of males was equally important to change the attitude and behaviour of the male members to achieve better results.**

Lessons Learnt

- **Though the spouses have heard about HIV; they are still not in a position to negotiate for safe sex. Hence the capacity building needs should be focused in building of assertive communication skill.**
- **NIDS intervention programs are focused on awareness raising, capacity building of the spouses on HIV/AIDS and Migration issues. It has been conducting programs with the involvement of the male members from the community.**

Lessons Learnt

Women face discrimination from early childhood, later economic dependence upon husband always puts women in low esteem, so it is important to integrate gender perspective in policies & programs.

Thank You