

“Women left-behind” coping with male outmigration in a mountain farming community: a case study in Gatlang, Nepal

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Title

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Abstract

This master thesis focuses on the potential strategies that women affected by male outmigration may develop to maintain agricultural practices in the mountain village of Gatlang, and their possibilities to develop farming activities, like medicinal herbs farming or the use of greenhouses. The research seeks also to understand the implication of remittances in the development of new agricultural practices by the women, under conditions where access to and control over this resource are shaped by social and cultural factors.

The study relies mainly on qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews of women, as well as on interviews with researchers and experts on migration and agricultural development in Nepal. The research documented some general difficulties encountered by the concerned women in a still strong patriarchal context. It confirmed that they are limited in their ability to cope with the absence of males and to undertake significant changes and strategies to adapt their traditional agricultural practices.

Key words

Male outmigration, women left-behind, feminization of agriculture, theory of access, Sustainable Livelihood Approach, remittances, coping strategies, Nepal

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² Pourakhi Nepal: <http://www.pourakhi.org.np/about-us/> (accessed on July 18, 2017)

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³ Center for Migration and International Relations: <http://www.cmir.org.npc> (accessed on July 18, 2017)

⁴ International Organization for Migration in Nepal: <http://nepal.iom.int> (accessed on July 18, 2017)

⁵ Center for the Study of Labour and Mobility: <http://ceslam.org> (accessed on July 18, 2017)

⁶ Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development: <http://www.libird.org> (accessed on July 18, 2017)

Acronyms

CESLAM	Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility
CMIR	Center for Migration and International Relations
DfID	Department for International Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOM	International Organization for Migration
Li-Bird	Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development
NISER	Nepal Institute for Social and Environment Research
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRs	Nepali Rupees
NTFPs	Non-timber forest products
PPYC	Paldor Peak Youth Club
RTEES	Rural Tourism and Environmental Education Society
SEEDS	Sustainable Enterprise & Environment Development Society
SL	Sustainable Livelihoods
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
TMI	The Mountain Institute
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VDC	Village Development Committee

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I. Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Imagine yourself in the place of a woman of 27 years old, in an isolated mountainous village connected by a road since a few years. You have 3 children. Maybe you have only 3 children because you are young and your husband is abroad most of the time. You were married at 16 years old to a man as young as you. Your life definitely changed, because since your marriage your life has been entirely dedicated to satisfy your husband, family-in-law and children. Of course, since you were 5 years old, you washed clothes, you worked in the field, you collected fodder that you carried on your back and you took care of your siblings. If you were lucky, you went to school until you got married. To improve the livelihoods of the household, your husband left the village to earn money abroad with hope of a better life in the future, but letting yourself manage the workload of his absence and confront the gossips of the neighbourhood.

This description applies to so many women in Nepal, from the Far West region to the East region, from the plain to the mountains. Nepal remains a patriarchal society, where men maintain control over the life of women. Social norms also dictate women's behaviour and limit them in their capacity to develop for example new skills. Women who are not allowed to travel to the next village cannot even consider getting further education or training in Kathmandu. Since several years, gender equality has become a key objective for action in development strategies for institutions, NGOs and governments working in developing countries in Asia, including Nepal (Norlha, 2016; Schutter, 2013). However, gender gaps persist, in particular in agriculture (Schutter, 2013). Women are still unrecognized for their contribution to farming and household maintenance, even though they play a core role in the activities of many poor households. These gendered role gaps also vary from one place to another throughout Asia from (Schutter, 2013), and even more in the multicultural and multiethnic context of Nepal.

Fortunately, the situation is changing. One of the diverse factors influencing the evolution toward more female decision-making power is the increasing trend of

international migration. In the rural areas, mostly men migrate and women stay alone to take care of the household and maintain agricultural activities. Of course, the burden of work and responsibilities increase considerably, but in some cases it provides the opportunity for wives to gain in autonomy and decision-making power (Gartaula et al., 2010).

Nepal is now largely dependent on a remittances-based economy, impacting the life of the inhabitants staying in the country, impacting the agricultural practices of the farmers. Women left-behind are definitely involved in these changes and have to play a major role in the management of these remittances and sustainability of agriculture. However, social norms, lack of financial skills, or lack of time to take part in trainings block them from adapting and have an active role in these changes.

1.2. Problematic of research

The purpose of this master's thesis is to understand the difficulties faced by “women left-behind”, that is, those women whose husbands migrate seasonally to work in another region of Nepal, or abroad during several years. These women have to take on, by themselves, the management of the household, agriculture activities, the education of the children, and other tasks. They also have to overcome inherited social constraints and economic difficulties due to low, poorly diversified incomes and uncertain remittances⁷ from their husband. This changing situation impacts the agricultural sector, because women do not have the same capability to access and control material, financial, social, or human resources to support it.

Thus, the overall goal of this research is to identify the strategies developed by women left-behind to cope with male outmigration and sustain agriculture in the village of Gatlang, Rasuwa district, in Nepal. Are they able to take full responsibilities of all the agricultural tasks? What are the constraints they have to overcome in the agricultural sector? Which strategies can they develop (or not) to maintain and even better innovate in this

⁷ IOM (2006) broadly defines remittances: “ [...] as monetary transfers that a migrant makes to the country of origin. In other words, financial flows associated with migration”. They specify that generally this money is transferred in the form of cash from one migrant to a relatives in the country of origin.

productive sector in the absence of their husband? I specifically focused on 2 projects recently implemented in Gatlang, and which I discovered during my fieldwork: the farm of vegetables in greenhouses and medicinal herbs farming. The aims were, first, to understand whether these types of projects were perceived as strategies by the women concerned to cope with male outmigration and, secondly, to identify the constraints they might encounter to access these projects. It enabled me to provide concrete examples in front of women who were rather vague in their replies. Beside this, I hypothesised that women might dispose of remittances and invest, even small amounts, in agricultural activities, for instance to buy new varieties of seeds or buy greenhouses.

1.3. Structure of the report

The report is separated into 5 main parts. In an introduction, I have already developed the general context that justifies research. The content of the four following parts is organized in the following manner. First, I review the literature related to migration in Nepal, and also concerning the outcomes of male migration on agriculture and women left-behind. I complement this literature research in presenting the theory of feminization of agriculture and theory of access, as well as the Approach and Framework of Sustainable Livelihood that structures the study. Second, I explain the methodology employed and the approach to collect data, including practical aspects of this work, for instance the way I accessed the area of research, the types of data I collected over there, or some limits I encountered during the fieldwork and which influenced the process or the results. Third, the fourth section “fieldwork analysis” is dedicated to the analysis of the information collected in Gatlang and main issues that emerged throughout the interviews: the reallocation of the remittances and others incomes in non-productive activities by the interviewed women, as well as the difficulties encountered and limited strategies developed by them to sustain agriculture. Finally, I conclude the exercise with a discussion about the research and pending issues.

II. Theoretical Framework

2. Review of the literature and theory

In this section, I review the literature linked to the themes of migration in Nepal, specifically on the discussion around remittances and the outputs of male out-migration on agriculture. In addition to this, women are definitely key elements in the migration-remittances-agriculture system and are particularly affected. Thus, after having exposed the migratory situation and trends in Nepal, as well as the implication of remittances in the rural development, I focus on the outcomes of male outmigration in agriculture. This leads me to talk about the theories of *feminization of agriculture* and *access* (Ribot & Peluso, 2003) that fit the relations and exchanges explored in this research using the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA).

2.1. Migration in Nepal

The migratory phenomenon is not new to Nepal. Already in 1815, the colonial British government in India formally allowed Nepalese people to seek work abroad (Tuladhar et al., 2014). Labour in mining and agriculture, or service in the British and Indian armies were common options at that time (Tuladhar et al., 2014). Since 1990, in parallel to the inception of a democratic system and later during the years of conflict, it became easier to get official documents that have permitted migrants to switch to other destinations than the British and Indian army, as well as India (Thieme & Wyss, 2005). Migration from the hills and mountain areas to the Terai⁸ in the plain has also regularly increased over the past decades since the eradication of malaria after 1950, and because of the higher fertility of the lands in this area (Gartaula & Niehof, 2015). The part of the population living in the most fertile and agricultural productive part of the country was 35% of the total population in 1954, and subsequently increased to 50% in 2011. The census of 2011 recorded also 43% of the population living in the Hills and 7% in the Mountains (CBS, 2011; Khanal et al., 2015). However, the Terai is also experiencing a massive phenomenon of labourers' migration abroad, and from the Terai to the urban centers of the country (Gartaula & Niehof, 2015).

⁸ Nepal is shared in three main geographic regions: Terai (plains) along the Indian border, the Hills and Mountains to the Tibetan side.

Therefore, Nepal is confronted by a changing and increasing migratory phenomenon, shifting from a national to international migratory trend (Seddon, Adhikari, & Gurung, 2002; Thieme & Wyss, 2005). If previously male Nepalese used to migrate seasonally across the country or to India, favourite destinations are now the Gulf countries and Malaysia (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2016), and in these cases the migrants are abroad sometimes for years. The figures shown by the World Bank confirm the drastic increase of international migration in the last decade: in 2001, the share of funds sent from abroad to Nepal were estimated at 2.5% of the GDP; in 2015, this reached 31.5% of the GDP⁹. In addition to this, in 2010/2011, the proportion of households receiving remittances was around 56% (CBS, 2011). Most of the migrants are under-skilled and leave predominantly, to India, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Qatar and the better-off to United Kingdom, Australia, Japan and South Korea (CBS, 2011; Dahal, 2014). The shift to international migration could be explained by the fact that incomes in Gulf countries are higher than incomes earned in Indian informal sector (Maharjan et al., 2012).

If the whole country is experiencing an increasing outmigration, some regions are more concerned than others (Sharma et al., 2014). According to the status report of the Ministry of Labour and Employment (2016) the top 10 districts in terms of labour permits¹⁰ delivered to work abroad are situated in the plain region, in the South of the country. As suggested by Anita Ghimire (NISER), who I met in Kathmandu in March 2017, the Terai region, as well as being more populated, is also more accessible for recruiting agencies to attract people than remote mountainous and hilly areas. Despite of this, inhabitants of these most distant regions have also more and more access to communication technologies, and falling transportation costs that increase the opportunities of mobility (Kollmair & Hoermann, n.d.).

Migration is also a highly gendered phenomenon since mainly men migrate (Aubriot, 2009) and leave women behind to take on the tasks which they usually accomplish, if they are allowed and have the adequate skills (Kaspar, 2005; McEvoy, 2008). Of course, women can also have the opportunity to leave their family, but in this case, societal pressures are

⁹ The World Bank, Personal remittances, received (% of GDP):

<http://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=NP> (accessed on July 3, 2017)

¹⁰ Excepted for India, potential migrants have to apply for labour permits at the Department of Foreign Employment, or are recruited by illegal or legal recruiting agencies. Department of Foreign Employment: <http://www.dofe.gov.np/new/welcome/search> (accessed on July 25, 2017).

stronger than for men, and this limits the mobility of women¹¹. The last census in Nepal showed that around 73% of the absentees were male and 27% were women.

Relating to the reasons to migrate, there are push and pull factors that cause people to leave their hometown and try the “migration strategy” to ameliorate their livelihoods and living conditions. At first, temporary migrations were due to demographic pressures, insufficient lands to cultivate, and limited capacity of and pressure on farm production (Bruslé, 2012). Therefore, migration permitted to buy complementary food, expand the fields, or maintain the family in the farm (Bruslé, 2012). But there are also economic factors that push people to migrate, such as the lack of opportunities in the industrial sector and high level of unemployment (Maharjan et al., 2013), or low salaries in rural and remote areas (Thieme & Wyss, 2005). Hence, migrants leave their family to improve their life conditions, and food insecurity, develop new skills, or find better employment (Hoermann & Kollmair, 2009). Thus, if poverty and food insecurity were key words to understand the reasons that conducted people to migrate in the past, the needs and wishes of the young generation have also changed and they do not want to perpetuate the hard farm works of their parents and are looking for new horizons (Luitel, 2008).

It is also necessary to underline that despite the strong appeal for outmigration by the young generations, migration involves many risks, in particular for foreign labour, if the migrant is not involved in a secure process and deals with an ill-intended recruiting agency and/or employer¹². Among other examples, labour migrants frequently receive a lower salary than expected, or are exposed to dangerous working conditions and exploited by their employers. This latter aspect of securing the process of migration, from recruitment in Nepal to decent working conditions in the receiving country, is currently the priority of the government of Nepal, and this authority shows less interest for the ones who are left-behind¹³.

¹¹ Discussion with Pourakhi Nepal on April 2, 2017.

¹² Information coming from the discussions with Prasuna Saakha and Jhabindra Bhandari working for IOM Nepal on March 1, 2017; with members of the CMIR on February 28, 2017; and with Ang Sanu Lama from the CESLAM on February 23, 2017.

¹³ idem

2.2. Remittances

Following the elements mentioned above, of course one of the outcomes expected by the migrants is the possibility to get a better income and to send money home (Thieme & Wyss, 2005). Remittances have become crucial to communities in several developing countries, and have involved profound changes in rural communities of Nepal (Dahal, 2014; U. Khanal et al., 2015). The economic impacts of remittances and the amount of money sent back home vary from one community to another, depending on the socio-economic background of the migrants, and patterns of migration. For instance, Sijapati et al. (2016) found that migrants from the marginalized Janajatis group from Mountain and Hill migrated to countries where remunerations were high such as South Korea, western countries, or Israel, Iraq and Japan. And on the contrary, no one of the Hill and Terai Dalit group migrated in these countries and their remittances were the lowest among sample groups. Depending on the caste, the Dalits in this case, the poorest and most excluded are less likely to hold a correctly remunerated job due to their under-qualification, absence of social networks in receiving countries and low capacity to finance the migration in highly remunerative countries (Sunam & McCarthy, 2015).

Beside the objective to get better incomes, the migration process is also costly for the households since a majority of migrants take loans, especially from informal sources, to finance their journey (Sijapati et al., 2016). These loans have to be repaid with the expected remittances. Khanal et al. (2015) found in Manapang VDC¹⁴ that the other patterns of investment were generally, by descending order of importance: food and clothing purpose, education and healthcare, repayment of loan taken for migration, followed by land and house purchase, and only 5% of the income were used for agricultural purpose. The same observation was made by Cohen (2005) who found that in rural communities of Oaxaca, in Mexico, 92% of the remittances were used only in daily expenses for the household. If Cohen's findings do not suggest any particular changes in agricultural production of migrant and nonmigrant households, Khanal et al. (2015) maintain that outmigration have negative impacts on agriculture due to the increasing proportion of abandoned lands and lack of

¹⁴ Manapang VDC is in the Tanahun district at the South-East of Pokhara, in the Hill region.

investment in productive activities. The remittance use-patterns and their effects are largely discussed in the literature and I focus particularly on agriculture in the following chapter.

2.3. Agricultural outcomes of male outmigration

Authors propose different consequences, positive and negative, affecting the agricultural sector all around the world. The impacts of remittances on agriculture depend highly on the context, and in some cases it can encourage the investment in productive activities, while on the other hand the opposite can occur (Vargas-Lundius et al., 2008).

In Nepal, manual and hard agricultural labour has been progressively abandoned, at the expense of agricultural productivity and food production (Khanal et al., 2015). According to Khanal et al. (2015), this is because the absence of the migrant, which induces in a first time an increase of workload for the left-behind, is compensated by the income gained abroad and sent back home as a remittance, allowing people to reduce the amount of work in the fields and to have more leisure time.

In Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique, labour migration reduced in a short run the production of subsistence agriculture, but led to improved crop productivity and an increase of cattle numbers (Lucas, 1987). In rural areas of Bangladesh, Mendola (2005) found that international migration had a positive impact on investments in agricultural technologies, such as new variety of rice. In rural areas of Albania, the remittances sent by the migrants to their family are generally used to shift from crop production to livestock farming (Miluka et al., 2007).

Nava-Tablada and da Cloria Marroni (2003) found that the shortage of labour, but also harsh climatic conditions and limited productive potential of the fields, led to a progressive abandonment of the farming activities in Mexico, encouraged by the incomes of the migrants. This is contradictory to the observation of Cohen (2005), but it shows the complexity to assess general trends in the impact of male outmigration on agriculture. Chapagain (2014) suggests also that the lack of support from Nepalese governmental authorities in agricultural sector lead to a disinterest of this hard and low-remunerated sector.

McEvoy's diagram (2008) (fig. 1) summarizes various agricultural outcomes that imply notably the lack of male labour supply and the increase of workload for the women left-behind.

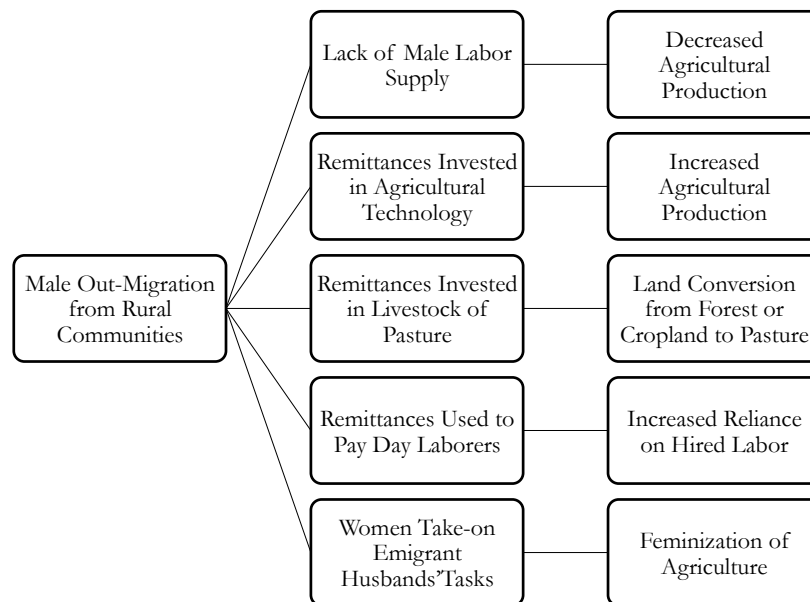


Figure 1: Potential Agricultural Outcomes of Male-Outmigration (adapted from McEvoy, 2008)

These outcomes might be combined and found or not in some places but not in others, as demonstrated by the research mentioned above. The lack of male labour supply might lead to a decrease in agricultural production, but in some cases women can take on their shoulders some or all the tasks left by the migrants, increasing considerably their burden of work. In Nepal, as the migratory phenomenon still concerned largely men, it puts mostly the women in the role of the left-behind, staying at home to take care of the household, children and elderly. As a consequence of the absences of migrants working abroad, the relations between male and female change increasingly and the women's autonomy and participation in the community increase (Sijapati et al., 2016). However, this is in theory. Indeed, there is not consensus among the researchers whether male outmigration is an opportunity or a threat for the women left-behind and their status in the community (Maharjan et al., 2012).

Ten years ago, Kaspar (2005) and McEvoy (2008) noted that there was little research on the ones who stay at home, the left-behind as women and children. However, it seems this has changed in the last decade. Indeed, several international institutions and researchers have published reports and articles focusing on the impact of male-outmigration on women left-behinds and agriculture. However, the role and contribution of women in agriculture remains under-recognized and -valuated (Schutter, 2013) and micro-level research is needed to better define the challenges and opportunities faced by the rural population concerned by international out-migration (Sherpa, 2010). In the coming chapter, I turn to the literature that exposes this phenomenon called the feminization of agriculture.

2.4. Feminization of agriculture

The literature on the phenomenon of feminization of agriculture deals with different examples, in Nepal and around the world, of the rural women' situation in a context of male outmigration. It represents the basis for a theory of feminization of agriculture, which frames this study and allows to give points of comparison with the finding of other research.

As a consequence of male outmigration, in addition to their domestic duties, women have to assume agricultural tasks which were traditionally accomplished by men (FAO, 2010; Tamang et al., 2014). This phenomenon, which has been called the “feminization of agriculture”, results in the increased participation and decision-making role of women in agriculture (Gartaula et al., 2010). Authors argue that the causes and consequences of this phenomenon have not been well explored until then (Kaspar, 2005; McEvoy, 2008; Tamang et al., 2014), and Deere (2005) argued for more quantitative data about information such as: who owns the land, who is the principal farmer of the household, or who takes the most crucial decision in the management of the agricultural production.

Furthermore, feminization of agriculture is not consistently defined. It is important to differentiate between *labour feminization* and *managerial feminization* (Gartaula et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2006). The first concept considers the increase of farm labour done by women and the second aspect analyses the level of participation in decision-making processes and

access to greater incomes (Zhang et al., 2006, p. 7). In any way, it reflects structural changes in society and transitions in norms that affect men and women (Bieri, 2014).

Studies on feminization of agriculture have been carried out across different countries in Asia, Africa and South America. In South America, as well as in Africa, the growth of large-scale agribusinesses specialized in fruits and vegetables export increased the needs in seasonal labour work force, with a large preference for the female labours considered as more flexible (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006). Furthermore, farmers find much more difficult to sustain traditional subsistence agriculture in front of these same large-scale agribusinesses, supported by neoliberal economic policies that allowed them lower the prices, and have to seek off-farm employments sometimes resulting in urban or international migration (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006; Deere, 2005). As a consequence, mainly Mexican men migrate to the USA and women remain sustaining agricultural production for the family.

In Syria, the intensification of farming and male outmigration have increased the participation of women in agriculture, but women have not gained any concomitant control over farm resources in return (Abdelali-Martini et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the situation probably completely changed in this country since the military conflict has started. In Jhapa, a Terai district situated in the eastern part of Nepal, Gartaula et al. (2010) note that the decision-making power of women increases in general after male migrate, but that feminization of agriculture is not necessarily the only reason. It is part of a more global social change and still dependent on the context and domestic arrangement.

For their part, Tamang et al. (2014) argue that due to the increase of work and labour shortage women adopt first a strategy of continuing farming as best they can, or adopt less intensive farming practices or decide to abandon their fields. Bever (2002; in McEvoy, 2008) found that women concerned by male outmigration worked less in the fields in comparison to the women from non-migratory households because they had abandoned fields. In China, Zhang et al. (2006) did not find any evidence of feminization in agriculture, despite male outmigration. They observed that the female share of farm work did not increase and women still have little decision-making power.

2.5. Gender context in Nepal

The way in which outmigration and subsequent feminization of agriculture unfold are strongly shaped by social norms, patriarchal structures, customary laws, and other cultural elements that relate to gender and lead to female dependency on males (FAO, 2010). In particular, these factors affect the access women have to land and other resources, impacting both their livelihoods and farm productivity in rural areas. For instance, Gartaula et al. (2010) identified two family arrangements that influence the degree of dependency reached by wives. They could become female head of household and access more easily control over their livelihoods and decision-making power. But in other circumstances, they could had to stay under the authority of the in-laws and did not have any decision-making role to play. In the case of Nepal, the level of participation and power varies as a function of geographical location, ethnicity or caste (FAO, 2010). For instance, in the Hindu religion, it is popularly believed that women should be dependent on men and controlled by them from their birth to death, and are only considered as domestic and maternal (FWLD, 2006). In the lowest castes of Dalits, Janjatis and Muslim of the Terai suffer from more privation (FAO, 2010) and are traditionally confined to the household tasks and have few opportunities to go out of the house¹⁵. On the contrary, in hill and mountain regions women are more involved in farm production, as their work force is needed to sustain subsistence farming under the hard climatic conditions (Levine, 1988).

In this context, it is important to be aware that Nepal has a relatively strong gender gap. The country was ranked 110 of 144 on the overall list of the Gender Gap Index in 2016 (World Economic Forum, 2016). This index is calculating by combining the variables *economic participation and opportunity*, *educational attainment*, *health and survival* and *political empowerment*. Nepal ranked 68th in political empowerment of the women, but it occupied only the rank 123 concerning educational attainment. For instance, the female literacy rate was 55%, compared to 76% for the men (World Economic Forum, 2016). The lack of education limits women's opportunities to migrate, and could be one of the reasons of the gender imbalance observed in migratory trends. Those female who did migrate were more educated; negligible numbers of illiterate women have migrated (Bhadra, 2007).

¹⁵ Discussion with Ghimire on March 1, 2017

The cause of this gender gap that prevents women from accessing resources in an equal manner is seen to be the strong and lasting patriarchal cultural traditions. Furthermore, the Constitution of Nepal still lacks absolute equal rights for women. For instance, current debate focuses on the unequal provision of citizenship rights for Nepalese women who are not allowed to pass on their nationality to their children (Rana, 2017).

These informal and formal elements bring to light the gender-based gaps faced by women in their daily life and which limit their possibilities to benefit from the same opportunities as men. This applies to the access of and control over resources, as I describe in the coming section.

2.6. Theory of access

In the development of strategies to cope with the absence of men, women encounter difficulties in access of and control over resources (Kaspar, 2005). Several types of resources allow women to sustain their livelihoods, although they are particularly discriminated with regard to access to and control over these resources on an equal basis with the men. In this study, I consider specifically the remittances, as essential financial resource of the migrants' family members, and small plots of land, as essential resources in agriculture.

In the case of my research, I refer to the notion of access as theorized by Ribot and Peluso (2003) who define it as “all possible means by which a person is able to benefit from things, including material objects, persons, institutions, and symbols” (2003, p. 156). If the notion of access is commonly associated to *property* and *right*, the authors develop the frame of analysis that concentrate on the *ability* of the individuals to access a resource (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Thus, this approach focuses on the powers inherent to social relationships that allow someone to benefit from something and the means, processes and relations that enable someone to gain, maintain and control access over a resource. They differentiate it from property that is supported by settlements, rights, customs or convention.

In the case of Nepal, it is particularly interesting to confront these notions of ability and right. Indeed, the country has considerably progressed the last two decades in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, and in improving women's rights (Rawal &

Agrawal, 2016) with increased access to decision-making roles at the political level thanks to the last Constitution (Pradhan, 2015). However, women are still confronted to strong patriarchal practices, processes and social relation that shape their ability to access and control resources in their daily life.

Considering also that the access to capital, or livelihood assets, shapes the ability of someone to benefit from resources (Ribot & Peluso, 2003), the notion of access defined above enables me to turn to the Sustainable Livelihood Approach that frames this study. The conditions of access to capital influence the development of livelihood strategies and the achievement of livelihood outcomes (fig. 2), and this is in keeping with the objectives of this research.

3. Sustainable Livelihoods: Approach and Framework

As a result of the work and strong advocacy role of researchers like Chamber and Conway (1992) in the early 1990s, many development agencies began to propose livelihood approaches as fundamental for their strategic planning (Scoones, 2009). In this dynamic, the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) was officially named and introduced in 1998 with the establishment of the Department for International Development (DfID) in the United Kingdom and the purpose to develop an integrative approach about livelihoods (Scoones, 2015), an approach dedicated to poverty elimination (Carney et al., 1999). In this way, the SLA was intended to understand as well as analyse the livelihoods of the poorest. It can also be a useful tool to measure the effectiveness of a project or program under development (DFID, 2001). As a reminder, Chambers and Conway (1992) defined a sustainable livelihood as:

“The capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base” (adapted in DFID, 2001).

The purpose of this research being to better understand the impacts of migration on women left-behind and their strategies to sustain agricultural activities, there is a need for a tool that permits to understand and analyse the livelihoods strategies of the concerned women and the consequences of migration on their life and their capacities to maintain and develop agriculture in their village. It is why I refer to the clear schematic representation of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) proposed by the DfID (fig. 2). As described by Scoones: “a framework is only a simplified heuristic model of how things might interact” (2015, p. 34). Thus, this model enables me to frame the interactions of the women that shape their possibilities to develop livelihood strategies in agriculture, in a specific context.

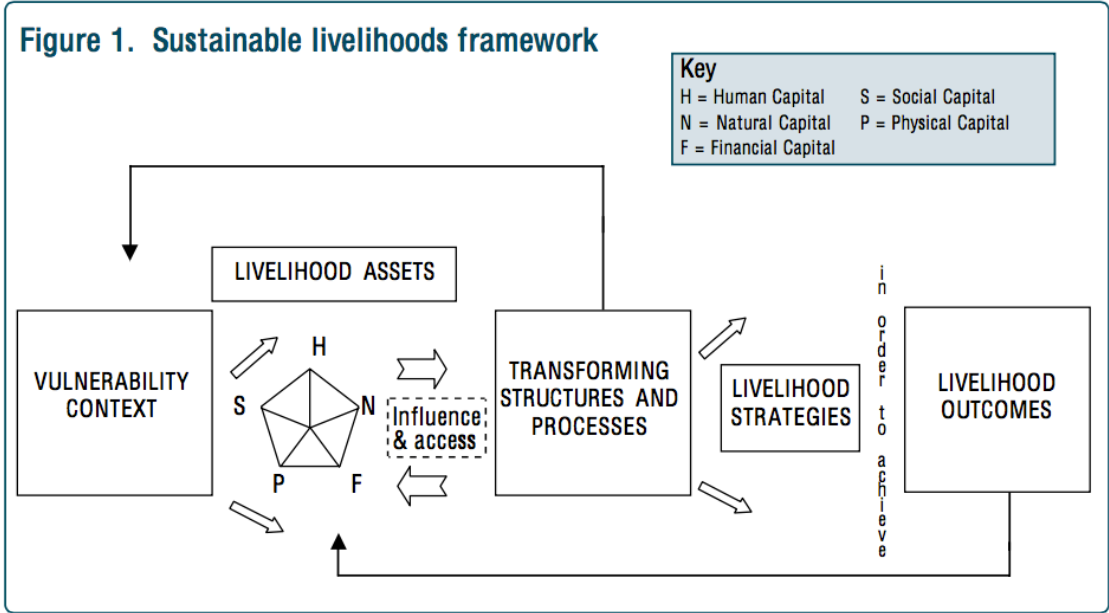


Figure 2: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (DfID, 2001) ¹⁶

3.1. Application to the case studied

International labour migration is particularly linked to the human, social and financial assets (Thieme & Wyss, 2005) in the SLF framework. But the access to these assets is embedded in their living context and state of vulnerability. In the case of the women of Gatlang, they may dispose, or not, of physical, social, human, natural, financial or other

¹⁶ H= Human Capital, N=Natural Capital, F=Financial Capital, S=Social Capital, P=Physical Capital

resources (capitals) to varied degrees to develop livelihood strategies¹⁷ which are supposed to let them achieve satisfactory outcomes, for example the ability to manage a budget and invest in sustainable farming technologies or the reduction of hours worked per day while enhancing tools for daily tasks. In the case of my research, the SLF is particularly appropriate to explore the human, natural and financial capitals of the women left-behind. In the following paragraph I detail these capitals and I go through the vulnerability context in which the women live, according to the definitions of the DFID (2001).

Human capital represents the skills and knowledge people may dispose, as well as personal capacity to work, or health status of the individuals that enable them to achieve livelihood strategies. This asset is reflected through the women's educational status and their own perception of their skills to develop coping strategies and new activities.

Natural capital represents the natural resource stocks on which people depend. In the case of Gatlang, I paid particular attention to lands women might access and what constrained them to control this resource. Directs benefits of this resource are the products they grow and harvest to feed their family, but also to sell.

Financial capitals are the financial resources used by people to accomplish their livelihood aims. It includes saving or credits, as well as incomes, pensions or money transferred from the state or from migrants working abroad. These flows have to be regular to contribute positively to financial capital and allow people to use on an efficient and planned manner this resource. Thus, I focused particularly on remittances and potential other incomes that women could mobilize to sustain agriculture, but also on the irregularity of these flows.

In the SLF, the vulnerability context “refers to the shocks, trends and seasonality that affect people's livelihoods” (DFID, 2001). It depends on the external environment that people cannot control. For instance, the earthquake of 2015 destroyed among others natural and physical¹⁸ assets of the people, and this type of unpredictable events can strike at any time. Furthermore, some of the participants of this research related that the absence of their husband during this event had been terrible, since they had to manage everything alone. The

¹⁷ Livelihood strategies are defines as the « ways of combining and using assets » (DfID, 2001)

¹⁸ Physical capital “comprises the basic infrastructure and physical goods that support livelihoods” (DFID, 2001).

increasing migratory trend exacerbates among others the workload of women, but also capacity to cope with other external shocks. And finally, subsistence and traditional farming being highly dependent on monsoon season and producing low outputs, shocks affect the food stock available for the rest of the year. These elements reveal that the women of Gatlang evolve in a vulnerable context and that various events can affect their livelihoods.

3.2. Critique of the SLF

Furthermore, the SLF is also criticized by the researchers and continuously adapted according to the phenomenon studied. For instance, Kaspar (2005) proposed a gendered adaptation of SLF, because it is “gender blind” and considers only the assets of the household unit, leaving out the disparities existing within the household. Thus, she suggests the separation of the asset endowments of the female and male members of the household in the asset pentagon. Consequently, the asset pentagon of the women and men would not have the same shape, in considering the same resource for both of them. Kaspar’s critique about the shortcut taken by the SLF in term of gender analysis applies as well to this study. Despite the fact that my research is related to the gendered migratory phenomenon, I did not examine in depth the intra-household disparities and focus on the situation of the women left-behind only. Thus, to complete the gendered approach undertaken in my research, it would be necessary to assess the situation of the men in terms of access to the different assets too.

III. Methodology

4. Data collection

In this section, I clarify my collaboration with Norlha and expose the methods chosen to collect qualitative primary and secondary data to achieve this project of research in Switzerland and Nepal. I present the approach developed in Kathmandu and focus specifically on the strategies to undertake fieldwork in Gatlang and the methods used to collect information over there, a key stage of the research process. I show the language issues that can arise in a foreign country and complete this methodological part of the thesis report by explaining how I analysed the data collected and the limits of the research.

During a three-months stay in total in Nepal, I conducted my fieldwork research for almost nine weeks between mid-February and mid-April 2017 in Kathmandu and Gatlang, and had one meeting in Pokhara at the end of April 2017. After two weeks in Kathmandu, I reached the village of Gatlang together with my interpreter on March 6 for three weeks of fieldwork, and came back later to Kathmandu for almost three more weeks.

4.1. Working with Norlha

I took the opportunity to collaborate with the NGO Norlha, based in Lausanne and Kathmandu, to complete my master thesis project. This collaboration was a way of contributing to one of their projects while acquiring experience in working with an NGO, and completing my academic background. Globally, the idea of our approach was to enrich the knowledge on a specific area, Gatlang, using academic research strategies. The main fieldwork in Gatlang had the purpose of interviewing a sample of women about the impacts on their agricultural tasks due to the absence of their husband and strategies to develop new skills that permitted them to maintain farming activities in the village of Gatlang, or to support new income generating activities.

For this purpose, I started an internship on January 2017 at Norlha's Lausanne office and have followed their activities during six months while developing my research. Through contacts with the Norlha Kathmandu team, I was able to work in the village of Gatlang

where the NGO is implementing a project through local partners called “Mahila”¹⁹, aimed at assisting women affected by male outmigration.

4.2. Qualitative data

This work is based on qualitative data collected through formal and informal discussions, interviews, personal observations and explorations of the area of research, as well as literature review. Wilmot (2005, p. 1) defines the aims of qualitative research “to provide an in-depth understanding of the world as seen through the eyes of the people being studied”. The researcher is looking “to describe, explore or explain social phenomena” (Scheyvens, 2014), here the consequences of male outmigration on women left-behind. I supplemented this qualitative data with quantitative data provided by Norlha or literature review.

A literature review was already initiated for the elaboration of the Master Thesis proposal in June 2016 and was deepened during the preparatory phase of the fieldwork in Nepal from October 2016 to February 2017. I reviewed the literature on the topics of my research to improve my comprehension of the migratory phenomenon and its repercussions in Nepal, particularly on agriculture and women left-behind. During this period I also worked in close collaboration with Danica Hanz²⁰ and my supervisor at the University of Lausanne to establish a “log-frame” (tab. 5 in annex) that permitted to structure the objectives of the research and linked sub-questions, to think on the information needed, the sources of this supposed information and to consider the difficulties I might face during the fieldwork to collect these data. It gives the opportunity to clarify for oneself the key points, to guide the process of research, and it represents also a practical support to share with supervisors and collaborators. Of course, it is subject to a dynamic development and can be modified during the process, depending on the new elements and information collected. The analysis of the data and the writing of the academic report were complemented by further researches in the literature. Formal and informal discussions, semi-structured interviews and observations were realized mostly in Kathmandu and Gatlang.

¹⁹ Mahila: Helping women deal with men’s migration. <http://norlha.org/en/our-programmes/gender/helping-women-deal-with-mens-migration/> (accessed on June 17, 2017)

²⁰ Norlha Lausanne

4.3. Working stay in Kathmandu

The first stage of two weeks in Kathmandu was intended to establish contact with Norlha Kathmandu team, to hold a first round of interviews with Nepalese researchers and organisations working on migration topics and interested in the repercussions of this phenomenon on women left-behind and agriculture, and to meet for the first time my interpreter previously contacted by email. The information of these first interviews was used as background material to enrich my knowledge, to benefit from advice from people working directly in fieldworks in Nepal, with different ethnic groups than Tamang. After returning from Gatlang, I conducted a second round of interviews to confront the finding of researchers working elsewhere in Nepal with my own data, and challenge some observations and information received in the village to other experiences.

At Norlha Kathmandu I worked in particular with Tshering Yodin Sherpa, Head of Gender and great specialist in gender issues. I also managed to meet other researchers and people from organizations working on the theme of my research. In this way, I met also members of the team of the Center for Migration and International Relations (CMIR), Dr. Anita Ghimire, director of the Nepal Institute for Social & Environmental Research (NISER), Ang Sanu Lama, researcher at the Center for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM), Kundan Gurung working for Pourakhi Nepal, Mahesh Raj Maharjan, research coordinator at Nepa School of Social Sciences and Humanities (Tribhuvan University), Prasuna Saakha and Jhabindra Bhandari working for the International Organization for Migration in Nepal (IOM), and Pashupati Chaudhary, PhD, and Bharat Bhandari, program operation director, from Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (Li-Bird) based in Kathmandu and Pokhara. I also took the opportunity to meet Phurpu Singi, involved with Paldor Peak Youth Club (PPYC) in Gatlang, but living now in Kathmandu.

The questions asked varied from one respondent to the other, depending on the knowledge of the interviewee and her or his specific subject of research or work. But, I guided the discussions with issues established before the meeting that should ensure to maintain the focus on the project's objectives. For instance, throughout these interviews I tried to seize the degree of interest of the government of Nepal for the women left-behind

and programs developed in their favour, or to have an overview of the social situation of women left-behind in different communities of Nepal, and the constraints they are facing in farming activities due to male out migration.

Hence, in Kathmandu I undertook a general research on migration and outcomes of migration on women and agricultural development. On one hand, it enabled me to complete the fieldwork preparation in Gatlang, and on the other hand it was also the time needed to arrange the last formalities and practical aspects to gain access to Gatlang, for example the transport and permits needed to enter to the Langtang region as a foreigner. The next section is dedicated to the work achieve in Gatlang.

5. Data collection in Gatlang

5.1. Gaining access to Gatlang

Despite the facilitation of Norlha, I sought to conduct my three weeks of fieldwork in Gatlang village as an independent researcher. That means that I was intentionally not associated with the local partners of Norlha, Sustainable Enterprise & Environment Development Society (SEEDS) and PPYC, who are responsible for implementing the various activities and trainings for the Mahila project. The reason that sought to maintain my independence was to try to not influence the answers of the women interviewed or interfere in the running project of Norlha in Gatlang. The local partners suggested it might possible that the women answer differently according to my connection with an NGO (Norlha in this case) or not. Indeed, it may have been possible that the interviewees thought they could derive any financial or material advantages for themselves in participating to my interviews and that these direct benefits would come from Norlha. It was necessary to avoid confusion between what Norlha is doing and my own questions of research. In order to establish this independence, I arranged with my interpreter that she presented me as a student conducting a research for her studies and that she make clear there were no immediate financial or material interests linked to my research.

Despite maintaining an independent position, I had the opportunity to reach Gatlang with a small team of the office of Norlha Kathmandu visiting the project and supporting a few days of gender training delivered to the local beneficiaries of the project Mahila. I was invited to follow this three-days training. Precisely, this training focused on gender differences and access and control over resources, and Norlha's partners ran it for a small group of beneficiaries of the village of Gatlang. It was intended for a group of about fifteen to twenty women. The training was delivered in a communal house of the village, recently built. Women were seated on the ground of a room covered by foam carpet and some of them were with their little children packed in traditional baby-basket. In two groups, women were asked to discuss for instance physical differences, or behaviour differences between men and women. The language used was Nepali, but a social mobilizer²¹, a twenty-three years-old woman of the village, was there to make sure that everybody understood and to translate in Tamang if necessary.



Figure 3: Women attending the gender training. Source: personal material.

I did not follow the entire exercise but the few hours spent in this room observing the interactions and behaviours, or listening through the work of my interpreter the exchanges between the stakeholders and reactions of the women, introduced me

²¹ In Nepal, social mobilizers are employed by local organisations, institutions or administrations to work closely with the different stakeholders of a project at the local level. For instance, they play a key role in mobilizing the beneficiaries of the project to participate and maintaining connections and harmony between the various stakeholders.

psychologically to the local context of my fieldwork. It enabled me to see the kinds of difficulties that I could encounter during my interviews in the village to communicate clearly my ideas and questions to my interviewees (see chap. 9). It was also my first contact with the target group of my research, those who fulfilled the previous criteria of the sample I had planned to design to conduct my interviews.

5.2. Definition of the sample

The elaboration of the sample is an important stage of the collection data approach. The researcher should ask questions to herself or himself to guide the definition of the sample, for instance about the research objectives, the target population, recruitment method, the size of the sample, time available for the fieldwork, or length of the interviews (Wilmot, 2005). It influences the reflexion on the whole process of the research, from practical and organizational aspects to questions of quality of the data. Indeed, the sample plays definitely a key role to validate the quality of the qualitative research (Curtis et al., 2000) since it influences for example the richness of the information collected of concern in the phenomena of interest, the representativeness of the reality, or feasibility of the research (i.e. communication skills, circumstances and conditions of the data collection, or accessibility of the people selected) (Miles et Hubermann, 1994; adapted in Curtis et al., 2000).

In the context of my research, the local partners of Norlha, SEEDS and PPHYC, helped me to pre-select women concerned by male outmigration with their own database established through a baseline survey led during the autumn 2016 in the village of Gatlang. This selection was based on criteria including availability, the perceived open nature of the women to talk, and the type of migration (international or national) that the woman's husband was undertaking. According to the time limitation of my stay in Gatlang, in the first instance I selected twenty potential women to meet. This sample comprised ten women who had husbands who had migrated internationally, and ten women whose husband were absentee seasonally, working in another region of Nepal. In selecting these two patterns of migration, I preventively considered to compare subsequently if the type of migration influences significantly the answers and the strategies of the women, for example in

abandoning more cultivated lands or not. It is important to specify that the objective was not to absolutely interview the twenty women, but it was a way to have an idea of potential contacts.

This method of sample definition is based on trust in the local partners and their knowledge of the fieldwork, and person concerned, to propose a reliable sample in a short time period. In the case of my research, the strategy to establish previously this list proved to be a positive and helpful experience for two reasons:

1. Gatlang is a large settlement²², and it would have take a lot of time to identify women concerned by male-outmigration,
2. The weather rapidly turned bad, and as we had previously inquired about the locations of the homes of the women on the list, we were able to go directly to their houses to enter in contact.

Indeed, rain and snow started to fall three days after we arrived and the weather was cold and rainy most of the time during the fieldwork. It complicated the collection of data, since it was difficult to informally meet people in the street and to observe outside daily activities and behaviours as most of the people were inside due to the bad weather, both men and women. This kind of uncontrolled factors can disturb the established methods to collect the data even though the sample has been well defined. Now, I go ahead on the methods used in Gatlang to collect the data and interview the women.

5.3. Methods to collect qualitative data

As introduced above, three methods to gather information in Gatlang were used: semi-structured interviews, conversation and observations. I differentiate semi-structured interviews from conversation in the way that interviews are prepared and supposed to bring information on a specific predefined topic, generally conducted between an interviewer and an interviewee (Harrell & Bradley, 2009), and conversation is more spontaneous and involve various interlocutors not necessarily directed connected to the topic of research. The mix of these 2 methods affords to obtain specific, complementary, but also contradictory data.

²² around 520 households according to local partners of Norlha.

Interviews can also be used to collect background material or to benefit from the knowledge of an individual (Harrell & Bradley, 2009), as I did in Kathmandu.

I start by showing the approach used to conduct in-depth interviews and then strategies of observations. I talk also about the supports I used to record the interviews and take notes of all the data collected.

5.3.1. Semi-structured interviews

To guide semi-structured interviews, I prepared an open-ended questionnaire (tab. 4 in annex), which evolved during the fieldwork depending on the new information gathered. Not all the questions were used in every interview, and digressions from the initial structure sometimes proved complementary and valuable information. The questionnaire was composed of an initial question and complementary sub-questions that my interpreter and me might use to complete the answers to obtain consistent information (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The challenge was to not influence the answer of the interlocutor but to stimulate the interviewee to talk.

The interviews lasted around one hour, depending also on the talkativeness of the interviewee, external factors interfering during the meeting or availability of the person. I conducted nineteen semi-structured interviews in Gatlang, including eighteen women listed with Norlha's partners and the husband of one of them who was absent because she was following a farm training in Kathmandu. A twentieth interviewed shifted to a dramatic life history, and my interpreter and me just stayed sitting in listening the story.

5.3.2. Open conversations

Informal conversation occurred with local partners of Norlha, women already interviewed or inhabitants crossed in the street of the village or surrounding areas. Evenings in the guesthouse permitted also to exchange a few words with the cook Dawa, and the old mother of Phurpu Singi or passing trekkers. Two of these latter belonged to an American organization involved in particular in farm training in other districts of Nepal.

5.3.3. Observations

Observation is a crucial tool for researcher that generates impressions and shapes the research (Scheyvens, 2014, p. 41). Used in qualitative data, it involves subjective analysis on the situations and human behaviours observed (Scheyvens, 2014) and it is useful anywhere and at any time. I observed the life of the inhabitants in the public area, but also inside their private house, what they do and what they have, how males and females interact or with the children. During the interviews, I made notes in the margins to remember all the side activities happening in parallel of the interview or the third persons present. It was also really interesting to walk around the village and to observe their living environment, what was growing in the fields, what people were doing in the fields and who was doing what. The observations may confirm answers or inspire new questions pushing forward the project, and it definitely permits the researcher to immerse herself or himself in the environment studied (Kawulich, 2005).

5.3.4. Equipment

It is also important to consider and think ahead about the material needed to support note taking and recording of the work. For instance, no electricity, power cuts, access or not to Internet, or cost of the translation of the records, are factors that have to be pondered before to reach the field to bring the adequate material, for instance laptop or not, notebooks, pens or recorder. In my case, I used three different kinds of notebooks with specific utility. The first one was dedicated to report as precisely as possible the interviews of the women and some observations in the margin. Since I was working with an interpreter, it was easier to take notes than if I was directly in contact with the interviewee, managing alone questions and answers. The second one was small, easy to keep in the pocket, used to note daily observations, for instance in the street or during a hike around the village. The last one was a “field diaries” I took every night to comment the events of the day, the emotions, or everything that came to my mind at these last moments of the day. I also brought large sheets of paper and pens in case I had the opportunity to propose participative activities and discussions in groups, but I did not use them.

Although I had planned and built a strategy to gather the data, I felt that I needed to gain confidence in my methods, to experiment and learn from my imprecisions. As described by Marengo (2013), fieldwork is a long process of learning through doing, which corresponds with my experience. This has not been simplified due to the linguistic and cultural context that was new for me. I introduce this issue in the following sub-chapter.

6. Language issue

To hire an interpreter was a necessary condition to work in Gatlang. Nepali is the official language of Nepal, but the country has thousands of different languages, dialects and ethnic communities and only educated people or working with tourists speaks English. The target group of my research, the women, in general do not speak English. Only a small minority understand and are able to use a few words of English to express themselves. Most of them understand and speak Nepali, which is taught at school, but the level of instruction is generally poor and the women do not feel comfortable communicating in this language, as their mother tongue is instead Tamang. The best way to interact easily with the women was to hire an interpreter skilled in Tamang, the local vernacular. My choice of the interpreter was based on 3 main criteria, established with the help of Tshering Sherpa:

1. She had to be a woman,
2. She had to speak Tamang and English,
3. She had to be available for a period of 3 weeks far from Kathmandu.

These conditions were defined to help to choose an interpreter that would facilitate the contact with women, and to ensure that women felt as much as possible comfortable to talk. Urmila Tamang was this person. She was from Kavre district located to the East of Kathmandu. Tamang language varies from village to village and it was also challenging for her to adapt and understand local dialect, considering that words and expressions could be slightly different that she was used to. She was 30 years old and had background in botanic and anthropology. She had already assisted foreign researchers in anthropology in remote areas of Nepal and she was an official French guide in Kathmandu.

However, it is necessary to consider the difficulties to collaborate with an interpreter and to be aware that it could influence the quality and reliability of the data collected (Vachon, 2012). Of course, to have an interpreter gives access to information needed for the research and facilitate to take notes during the meeting, but he/she can also act like a filter, creating also a distance between the respondents and the researcher who receives “information second-hand” (Scheyvens, 2014; Watson, 2004). He/she sometimes also omits or summarizes the information given by the interviewees, depending on what he/she considers to be relevant to answer the question (Scheyvens, 2014) or understand from the interlocutor.

For the reasons mentioned above, it is important to communicate carefully and to not hesitate to conduct brainstorming sessions every day with the collaborator in order to prevent misunderstandings. That can be considered as a limitation of this research, among other reasons I discuss at the end of this part of the report. However, before that, I turn to describe the methods of analysis I used to organize all the information collected in the field and highlight the main issues.

7. Methods of analysis

The data collected were analysed thematically in the following manner. Data from the in-depth interviews were entered in a matrix which columns represent topics of discussion and the rows the 19 interviewees. There were 15 main topics of discussion classified in this matrix and appointed as follows: husband; incomes; expenditures; lack of money/loans; saving; fluctuations of income; opportunities for new skills; agriculture; abandoned/selling lands; medicinal herbs; greenhouse; mobility; earthquake; other information. From these themes of discussion, some were evidently connected to the focus of the research, whereas some others did not have an obvious links with the subject of research, but were interesting to give potential complementary information on the current situation of the women and agriculture in the village: notably, for example the topic of mobility of the women, as well as the perceived impacts of the recent earthquake. The

purpose was to remain open to others sources of change in agriculture, and not attribute all the changes to migration.

These topics discussed with the respondents were established before the fieldwork through information transmitted by Norlha and literature review, but also introduced during the fieldwork once I was confronted with the reality in Gatlang. For instance, I decided to examine closely the perception and involvement (or not) of the women interviewed in the running projects of greenhouses and medicinal herbs farming as opportunities to support agricultural sustainability and changes. In this way, the research was structured, but with a certain degree of flexibility in the topics of research and the semi-structured interview method.

From the matrix presented above and many fieldwork notes taken during my stay in Gatlang, I tried to find trends in the responses of the women. The data gathered through the interviews conducted in Kathmandu with the experts of migration in Nepal, and researcher on migration or gender issues, were used as a background material to compare the situation in Gatlang with the experiences of these specialists.

8. Limits of the research

The validity of the results might have been influenced by various factors. On one hand, it was my first period of solo fieldwork, and it was a challenge to find the complex equilibrium between rigidity and flexibility. It is a quite difficult exercise to stay focused on the topic of research, trying not to be attracted to other interesting subjects, but to be able to modify the original plan or to seize what is interpreted as valuable opportunities (Scheyvens, 2014). Therefore, at the beginning the questionnaire was a little too open-ended with respect to the subject of research and it took time to refocus on the core of the matter.

Secondly, it took place in a cross-cultural context. Language and cultural barriers exacerbated the constant questioning about the choice of the word or sentences in the interviews and the difficulty to integrate the community (Wesche et al., 2010). It is possible that I failed to use the appropriate questions through ignorance of language and cultural

subtlety, in using my own logic and words but not those from the target women left-behind. I have mentioned earlier the 3 day training given by Norlha I attended at the beginning of my stay in Gatlang. It introduced me to the local context and showed me difficulties I might encounter in communicating with the potential women interviewed. I remember an exercise women had to do: they had to say for several suggested resources if they have access and/or control over them. The supervisors of the training spent more than one hour to explain what they meant by *accessing* and *controlling* a resource. It showed me how the choice of vocabulary, and my own perception of the concepts I was using, might be difficult to communicate or lead to problems of clarity.

Another experience made me aware of the difficulty to realize a perfect fieldwork. Dipshika, a smiling thirty-year-old friend who worked for ICIMOD, and newly graduated in Development studies, told me a Nepalese joke about research: “Even you ask the oldest women in the remotest village in Nepal, she will ask you if you are doing a master or PhD research. Depending your answer, she will give you the information you want”. By this, she would like to say that Nepalese are used to seeing researchers, organisations and various people coming and asking questions in their villages. This puts into question the validity of the answers knowing that people may control what they say, maybe depending on the interests involved in the project.

IV. Fieldwork Analysis

This core chapter presents the data collected using the methods of observations, conversations or interviews conducted during the field phase in Gatlang and Kathmandu, and presented in the previous part of this report. The content of the analysis is completed by research in the literature.

First, I detail the context of the study area. Secondly, I turn to the introduction of the women and few men interviewed during the fieldwork period, and factors perceived as limiting by women to develop new activities. Thirdly, I approach the topic of the remittances and economic situation of the interviewees, and how it impacts their agricultural activities. Finally, the last topic that emerged from the interviews and I discuss in this part of the report concerns the strategies develop by women left-behind to sustain agriculture in a context of male outmigration and absence of work force. If the initial idea was to identify their strategies through their answers, I focused on 2 small specific projects that I examine here: the construction of greenhouses and development of medicinal herbs cultivation.

9. Context

9.1. Study area

To present the administrative context of Gatlang, it is necessary to mention the recent key political events that took place in Nepal. Since the new Constitution implemented in September 2015, Nepal became the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. The administrative structure of the country changed and moved toward decentralisation. Henceforth, there are three main levels of structure: federal, provincial and local²³. Meanwhile, the country is clearly engaged in a relatively new and complex process of political and territorial transition. For that reason, the people I met and the additional literature to which I referred, for instance the Census of 2011, rely on the previous structure of the country. It is why I turn to a brief description of the major changes between the

²³ The Constitution of Nepal. Consulted at <http://www.constitutionnet.org/v1/item/constitution-nepal-2015-official-english-translation-ministry-law-justice-and-parliamentary> (accessed on July 11, 2017).

previous and new organization, for the purpose to connect the former names employed in this document with the current situation.

The country changed from 5 Development regions to 7 Provinces, at that time called simply Province No. 1 to No. 7. There are still 75 districts, but these entities are not anymore constituted of Village Development Committees (VDC), but of *Gaunpalika* translated as Rural Municipality²⁴, the smallest administrative division of Nepal. The village of Gatlang is situated in the western part of Rasuwa district (fig. 4), in the Province No. 3, formerly included in the Central development region.

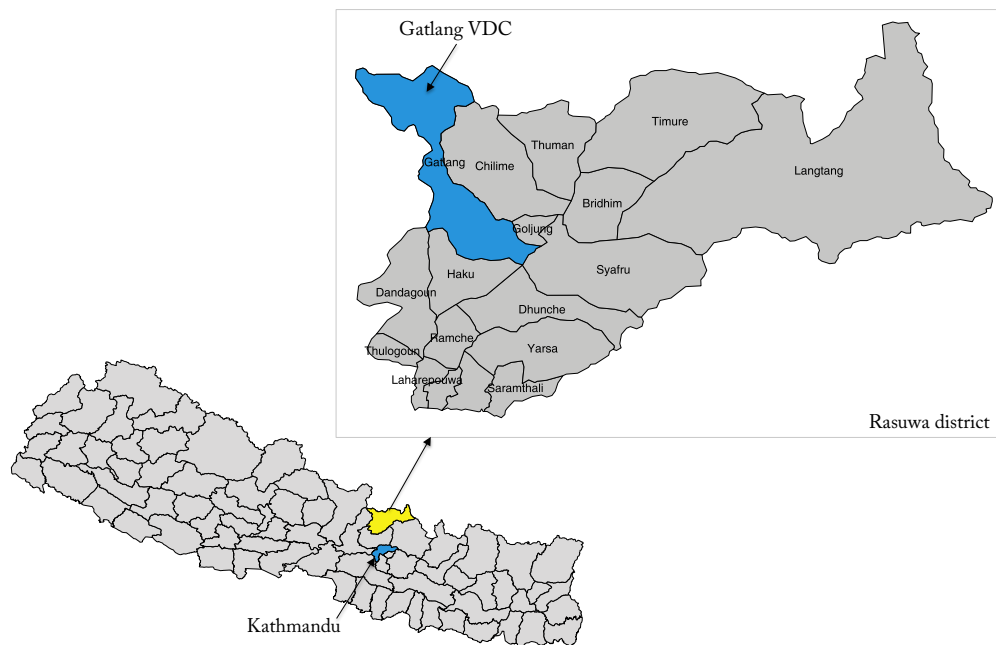


Figure 4: Map of the districts of Nepal and VDCs of Rasuwa before September 2015 (prepared by the author). Source: <http://www.diva-gis.org/datadown> (accessed on July 12, 2017)

Previously, the village of Gatlang was part of the VDC of the same name (fig. 4), but the numbers of 18 VDCs was reduced to 5 *Gaunpalika*, and Gatlang is now situated in *Parvatikunda Gaunpalika* (fig. 5). At the smallest scale, the VDCs were shared in 9 wards on average. These very small political divisions have also been reorganised and expanded.

²⁴ Gaunpalika. In *Wikipedia*. Consulted at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaunpalika> (accessed on August 7, 2017)

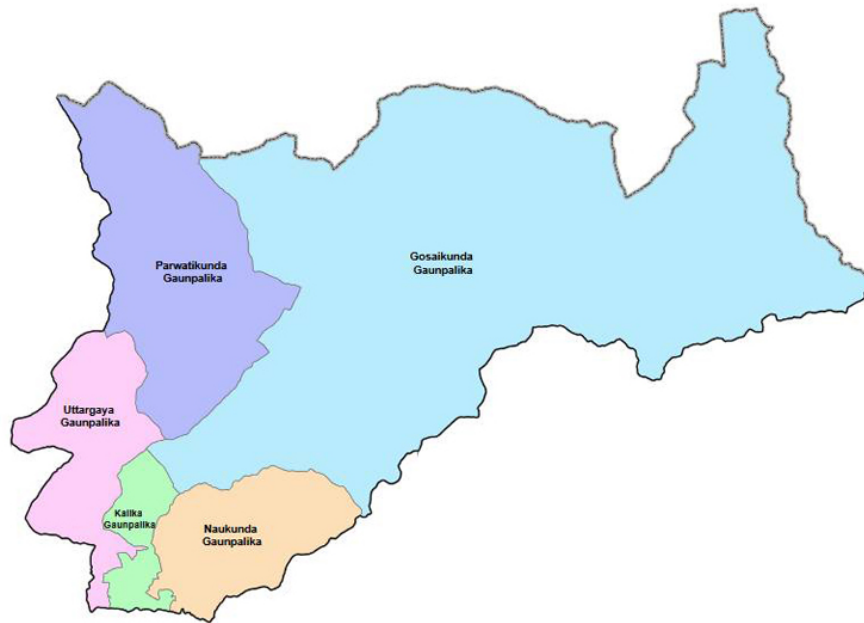


Figure 5: Current structure of Rasuwa district. Source: <http://election.ekantipur.com/?lng=nep&panto=rasuwa> (transmitted by Tshering Sherpa)

Rasuwa counts almost 43'000 inhabitants (around 9780 households) and a population density of 28 people per sq. km (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Regarding Gatlang, the local partners of Norlha, SEED and PPYC, recorded 520 households in 2016.

Rasuwa is considered as a mountainous district in the Himalayan range and is situated at the border with Tibet. The altitude varies from 614 to 7227m above sea level (Norlha, 2014). This induces a high variability of climates from valleys bottom to peaks: upper tropical, subtropical, temperate, subalpine, and nival and trans Himalayan (Norlha, 2014). The village of Gatlang, at an altitude of 2300m, is characterized by a cold temperate climate and it can snow during the winter period. The settlement is on the mountainside of a small remote valley and overhangs a river called Bamdang (fig. 6).

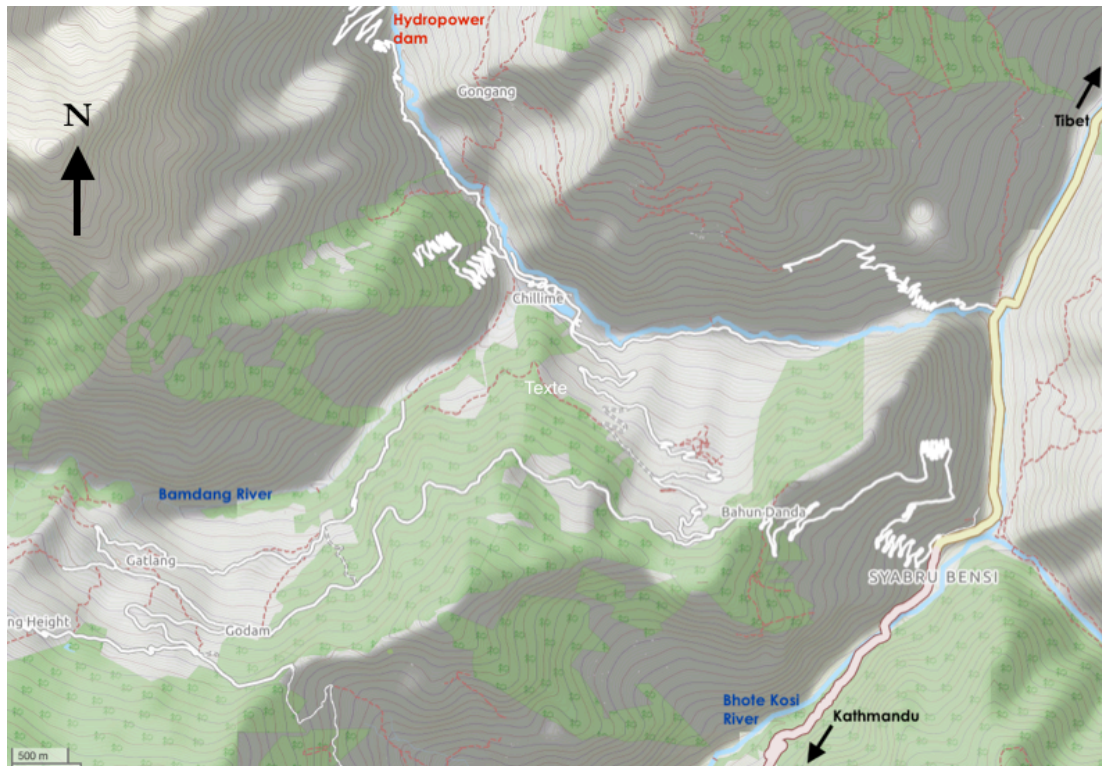


Figure 6: Map of the area of Gatlang village. Source: Openstreetmap (modified by the author)

The village was originally compact and comprised traditional Tamang farmhouses of stones and dark wood with two stories (fig. 7). This dark colour gave it the nickname of “Black village”. Unfortunately, the earthquake damaged or destroyed most of them and some inhabitants managed to cover the roofs with plastic or metal sheets, and some others left their houses to build shelters around the village in which they are still leaving. It became the “Multicolour village” according to some inhabitants. In the traditional houses, the ground floor is used for the cattle and the family lives in the upper floor. The other buildings are guesthouses, generally built with wooden boards, or shelters for cattle scattered in the fields. A program of the VDC²⁵ requires inhabitants to construct latrines and related to this I observed permanent infrastructures with concrete wall, or simple temporary tents in plastic sheets built for toilets.

²⁵ Information collected from a women controlling that inhabitants had built latrine with funds received from the VDC and MANEKOR Society Nepal.



Figure 7: Traditional houses in Gatlang. Source: Author

The proximity of a hydropower dam located upstream of Chilime allows Gatlang to be connected to an electrical network. Indeed, the government of Nepal seek to provide electricity for all the villages situated around these kinds of projects according to local partners of Norlha. There is no Wi-Fi, and Internet access is definitely very slow and most of the time impossible due to poor reception. To own a smartphone or basic mobile phone seems to be a common practice, however I do not have precise information about the access and type of use of this technology in the village.

9.2. Access to the village

It takes one day of jeep from Kathmandu on potholed roads to access to village of Gatlang. Travel time may be longer if the road is blocked due to rock falls, traffic jam, difficult crossings between cars and bus, or road works. A gravel road connects Gatlang to Syaphru Besi (1460m), the city where the last public buses stop and where the travellers leave the main road to climb in direction of Gatlang (Adhikari et al., n.d.). An unpaved road connects the village to the main road since 2004, following the construction of the hydropower dam in Chilime. However, it takes more than 1 hour to drive from Syaphru

Besi to Gatlang, and vice et versa, and there are no public transports or regular private drivers moving between the village and bigger cities. Finally, many security checkpoints punctuate the travel, to control the access points to the Langtang National Park and prevent smuggling of protected species, according to Tshering Sherpa. Moreover, this way leads also to the frontier boarder with Tibet.

9.3. Tourism

Gatlang is situated very close to the Langtang National Park. This nature reserve was established in 1976 as the first Himalayan National Park and covered almost one half of the district of Rasuwa in the eastern part. Since 2004, Gatlang is also on the Tamang Heritage Trail and has developed tourist accommodations. Thus, before the earthquake, this region benefited from its proximity with Kathmandu and the attractiveness of the Langtang and Gosaikunda treks among others trails for the tourists. Tragically, the village of Langtang, situated in the nature reserve, was completely destroyed by a massive avalanche and landslide on April 2015, causing the death of many local people and tourists. Gatlang was also severely affected and the region was closed for a while to tourists. Phurpu²⁶, local coordinator of the Mahila project, noted that the efforts made before the disaster, for instance to clean the village, or to perform traditional Tamang activities with the tourists accompanied by information, were abandoned at the present time and priorities have changed since to rebuilt the village. Despite this, I observed several newly constructed guesthouses, but few tourists according to the keepers of these hostels. However, the highest touristic season seems also to be in October-November according to Phurpu and the three weeks fieldwork were conducted in March.

9.4. Tamang community

Rasuwa district and the village of Gatlang are mostly inhabited by the Tamang mountainous ethnic group, native to the Tibetan region and representing 6% of the total population of Nepal (Bista, 2014). The Tamang settle around the Kathmandu valley, from

²⁶ My interpreter and I stayed for 3 weeks in Phurpu's guesthouse in Gatlang.

the North of this valley, and extended to Langtang region up to the Tibetan plateau (Bista, 2014; Kukuczka, 2011). In reality, the Tamang are not a homogenous group, and are composed of several distinct groups and categories created by the Tamang themselves (Kukuczka, 2011). For instance, Rasuwa district is crossed by the Bhoté Kosi River, and those living on the east side of the river are called *Shyarpa*, and those of the western side are designated as *Nuppa* by the “eastern Tamang” (Kukuczka, 2011). Therefore, Gatlang people are *Nuppa*, and considered as more traditional by the *Shyarpa* because they wear more traditional dresses and have a different song style (Kukuczka, 2011). Within these “eastern” and “western” groups, people distinguish between sub-groups having their own terms, for example for honorific expressions (Kukuczka, 2011), and it is illustrated by the words of a woman in Chilime²⁷: “Gatlang is closed to us but we use different words when we speak Tamang”.

In Nepal, the women’s status varies from community to community. In the case of my subject research, as explained by Anita Ghimire (NISER), a woman living in a mountainous community will not encounter exactly the same constraints as one from the Terai region, due to environmental reasons, religious practices or other ancestral traditions. Women from the mountain regions have fewer restrictions than the ones from the Terai or higher caste like Brahmin. For instance, they can go out of their house and work in the area of their village. Dalits, Janjatis and Muslims living in the Terai region are relatively more deprived than other ethnic groups living in hill or mountain areas, impacting directly the women of these communities (FAO, 2010). In the case of the Tamang, some research has shown that women have a place in decision-making process, but this is limited to household chores and farm-works (Luitel, 2008).

9.5. Agriculture

The Tamang are mostly farmers, but some of them are also porters or artisans (Bista, 2014). According to the Norlha baseline survey for the Mahila project in Gatlang, around 76% of the households are involved in agriculture in this village. In Rasuwa district, agriculture is characterized by subsistence farming, weak farming infrastructures, small plots

²⁷ Chilime is at 2 hours’ walking distance from Gatlang.

of cultivated terraces and low quality of farming inputs, such as seeds and breeds (Norlha, 2014). I observed a similar situation in Gatlang considering that for instance people cultivate firstly to feed their family, do not have solid infrastructures to protect their fields from the cattle, plots of land are too small for mechanized farming and some are also really difficult to access in any other way than on foot.

The major crops cultivated are maize, millet, barley, buckwheat, potatoes, beans and vegetables. Potatoes and beans grow in the upper part of Gatlang and maize, millet and barley in the lower part, near the river. According to some farmers, this area is more fertile. The inhabitants plant²⁸ millet and beans during the months²⁹ of June, July and August, *ashad* and *shrawan* in Nepal. These months, including September (*bhadra*), are also dedicated to harvest barley, and maize and to take care of and weed the maize, beans and millet fields. From mid-September to mid-November, they prepare the fields and in November/December they plant barley, wheat and *kearn*³⁰ and harvest beans, and then millet in December/January. Potatoes are planted between February and April and harvested in August, at the end of the monsoon. They also plant maize and soybeans in April/May before the monsoon starts. The irrigation of the fields is only from rainfed sources and highly dependent on the monsoon season between June and September. To realize all these farm works throughout the year, the villagers employ the social *parma* practice to collect firewood, to plant or harvest crops, to build houses and shelters, etc. Those who asks for help have to accomplish similar tasks in return. Both men and women practice *parma*, however gendered discriminations exist in this practice as we will see below.

Finally, I introduce also two elements in this contextualization of the state of agriculture in Gatlang that I observed and discussed with the women. Firstly, during walks through the village, I saw greenhouses more or less maintained and equipped for instance with irrigation systems. Thanks to the knowledge of Urmila in botany and plants, she recognized cabbage and what Nepalese called green vegetable (spinach) growing in one of

²⁸ The following information is based on the “Agriculture calendar” realized by the local partners of Norlha in Gatlang (tab. 6 in annex), who collected the data through a baseline questionnaire.

²⁹ Nepalese calendar refers to lunar months and solar sidereal year. The Nepalese lunar calendar varies from 12 to 13 months each year, and has 15 days of difference in the beginning of each month compared to the Gregorian calendar. For instance, mid-December to mid-January corresponds to the month of *Paus* and the following month of *Mag* fits from mid-January to mid-February Gregorian calendar (see tab. 6 in annex). The year starts in mid-April and Nepalese are currently in the year 2074.

³⁰ A type of barley extensively cultivated before and appreciated as highly nutritious food (Khadka, n.d.).

these greenhouses. Secondly, I discovered that there was also a developing project of medicinal crop cultivation, but the nursery of plants we visited was disorganized and the plants were in a bad shape. I decided to discuss these 2 projects with the women left-behind to understand if they perceived these as strategies to overcome the difficulties associated with the absence of men and for instance lack of work force.

9.6. Migration in Gatlang

I finish this contextual setting of Gatlang by investigating the state of migration in the region and the village. According to Norlha's researches, around 19% of the households in Gatlang had at least one absent family member in 2011 for more than 6 months and almost 73% of these migrants were male. They also found that the migrants stayed abroad up to 5 years on average. In comparison to the whole district of Rasuwa, 25% of the household had a member abroad for more than 6 months and 70% of the migrants were male. Of course, this situation has consequences on agriculture, as male work force disappears and children, who are still considered as labour force, are more and more sent to school out of the village, paid by remittances. Women suffer from a drastic increase of workload and they do not have always the resources to counterbalance the absence of men.

Before turning to the analysis of the effects of male outmigration on women left-behind and their strategies to maintain agricultural activities or develop new skills in Gatlang, I first introduce briefly the women I met and whose answers and perceptions of their conditions of living form the basis of this fieldwork study.

10. Introduction to the interviewees

I was able to conduct semi-structured interviews with 19 women concerned by the migration of their husband, and one husband who had migrated and was back home since a few years. They are part of the women and girls from 260 households impacted by male outmigration in Gatlang. I based my analysis on the own perceptions, comments and experiences of the interviewees that I briefly introduce in the following paragraphs.

10.1. Brief portraits of the interviewees

Even though the research theme was not particularly sensitive, I preferred to maintain the anonymity of the interviewed respondents, since I did not have the certification of their consent to publish their names. Thus, I coded their names (tab. 8 in annex). Furthermore, my interpreter noted that they were sometimes unknown under their own name by the neighbourhood, but under the name or nickname of their husbands. I introduce each of them briefly in the following paragraphs by giving basic information on their profile in connection with the topic of research. Their profiles are summarized in the Table 1 below.

Name (Codified)	Age	Nb of Children	School grade	Other income-generating activities	Husband
Interviewee 1	25	1	?	Sell potatoes/beans, sometimes traditional clothes	Trekking guide
Interviewee 2	30	2	12	Social mobilizer	In Malaysia since 4 years, but came back after earthquake
Interviewee 3	25	2	0	Sell potatoes/beans, rent rooms	In Dubai since 8 months, for 4 years before the earthquake
Interviewee 4	34	3	8	Sell woven products	In Saudi Arabia since 2 years, before was in Iraq for 1.5 years
Interviewee 5	26	2	8	?	Kathmandu
Interviewee 6	29	2	Literate	Sell of potatoes/beans (main income)	Hydropower project/Somdang, seasonally
Interviewee 7	25	2	8	Sell potatoes/beans/millet/barley and maize	Trekking guide or porter, seasonally
Interviewee 8	27	3	0	Only remittances	China/Tibet (driver) since 20 years
Interviewee 9	26	2	10/12	Had a shop	In Malaysia since 1 year
Interviewee 10	41	6	?	Mainly remittances, sell potatoes/beans	In Somdang (metal work), seasonally
Interviewee 11	37	3	6	Sell woven products, if surplus sell potatoes/beans/millet	In Malaysia since 2 years
Interviewee 12	28	2	12	Sell potatoes/beans, start guesthouse	Trekking guide, seasonally
Interviewee 13	27	3	3	Sell woven products	Hydropower project/Somdang, seasonally (start 2 years ago)
Interviewee 14	33	3	0	Sell potatoes/beans, sell sometimes handicrafts	In Iraq since 3 years (disappeared!), does not receive remittances
Interviewee 15 (ex-migrant male)	-	-	-	Agriculture, medicinal herbs	He was in Malaysia for 5 years
Interviewee 16	21	2	10	Clothes for babies	In Iraq since X years
Interviewee 17	27	2	0	Sell potatoes/beans/less maize/millet	In Dubai since 7 months
Interviewee 18	33	2	0	Sell potatoes/beans	In Malaysia since 4 years and 3 months, before was there for 5 years
Interviewee 19	37	4	0	Agriculture	Was in Malaysia for ? years, did not receive remittances, but a little for children education
Interviewee 20	30	3	8	Sell few potatoes/beans	Trekking guide

Table 1: Profiles of the interviewees in Gatlang

Interviewee 1 was 26 years old and mother of one child around 2 years old. Her husband was out of home during the touristic season, it means from March to May, and from August to mid-December. Her incomes were mostly based on trekking, agriculture, and she sometimes sold traditional clothes, but it was not easy. She had irregular incomes, depending also the number of treks done by her husband.

Interviewee 2 was 30 years old and she had 2 children. She was living only with her mother and daughter, because her son was studying in Dunche and her husband was in Malaysia since 4 years. He briefly came back after the earthquake. She managed alone the household, because her husband did not send money since the earthquake. Since she was social mobilizer, she had a regular income, and she got this job thanks to her school grade 12 (see chap. 10.3).

Interviewee 3 had not received remittances from her husband since 8 months and she earned money by renting rooms. Before, he was in Dubai for 4 years and came back after the earthquake, to leave again 8 months earlier. She said she was 24 years old and had 2 daughters. She sold a very small quantity of farm products, because her husband had 4 brothers and he received very few lands to cultivate. For this reason, she needed first these products to feed her family. She also had to repay loans for migration and for the house destroyed by the earthquake.

Interviewee 4 was 34 years old and mother of 3 boys. Her 2 oldest sons were in school in Kalikasthan³¹ and her husband was in Iraq since 1.5 years. He had already been in Saudi Arabia for 2 years in the past. He sent irregular remittances and she also wove products that she sold locally, or in Syaphru Besi and Haku, the farthest places she could go. She had very few fields she cultivated to feed her family and thus she was not able to sell products.

Interviewee 5 was a 27-years-old mother of 2 children. Her eldest daughter was in Kathmandu, while her 2 years-old son stayed with her. She did not know what her husband did when he went to Kathmandu. She wove *che*³², but it was only for her family. She worked

³¹ Kalikasthan is approximately at 3 hours by car from Gatlang, on the main road for Kathmandu.

³² Piece of cloth draped around the waist and lower body of women that permits to maintain their dress.

alone in the field to cultivate potatoes, millet, beans, barley and maize, but did not sell any products. She cultivated all the lands she had and had abandoned none of them.

Interviewee 6 was 29 years old and mother of 2 sons aged less than 3 years old. Her husband worked before for a hydropower project, but since the earthquake the project stopped. He worked also sometimes in Kathmandu, but the household was thinking to send him abroad. He came back in November-December to collect firewood and she could call him when she needed help in the fields, for instance to plough.

Interviewee 7, at 25 years old, had 2 children and her husband was trekking guide or porter. At the time of the research, her elder daughter, 6 years old, was in school in Kathmandu and her husband was working on their house construction just next to their shelter. She said the household had few fields, but they produced and sold potatoes, beans, millet, barley and maize. She wove only for herself because it was expensive to purchase the source material and to find a market to sell.

Interviewee 8 was 28 years old and had 3 children. Her husband was working as a driver in China since around 15 or 20 years. He came back in September until November for the *Dashain* and *Tihar* festivals³³, and in June/July because of heavy rains in Tibet or China and the dangerousness of the roads. She produced only potatoes and beans in a small amount because she was busy with her children. She also started to share the land with her father-in-law 5 years ago, but she has never received something for that.

The husband of **Interviewee 9** was in Malaysia since one year and she raised her two young sons alone. She used to have a shop, but it became too difficult to manage with the children. She tried to finish a secondary school and she would like to learn English. Earlier, she was also a social mobilizer for the medicinal herbs farming project, and now she was in charge of the nursery for the medicinal plants.

Interviewee 10 was a smiling 40-years-old women, the oldest of the sample, and mother of 6 children. She had first 5 girls and the last and youngest one was a 1-year-old boy. Her two elder daughters were in Kathmandu in school. Her husband worked 6 months

³³ *Dashain* takes place during 15 days and is the greatest festival celebrating Gods for Nepalese during the year. *Tihar* festival, also called “The Festival of the Lights”, is the second most important festival for Nepalese after *Dashain* celebrated mainly by Hindus in October or November. Source: <https://www.acethehimalaya.com/dashain-and-tihar-greatest-festivals-of-nepalese/> (accessed on July 22, 2017)

in Somdang³⁴, and was 6 months in Gatlang from April to September. She also sold potatoes and beans to buy rice and supplement the income of her husband.

Interviewee 11 was 30 years old and she was alone in the village: her husband left for Malaysia 2 years ago and her 3 children were in school in Kalikasthan. She said she was living from remittances and woven products she made and sold. She cultivated potatoes, beans, millet, maize and also a little bit of wheat. From what she cultivated, she had to send potatoes and beans to her children. The household had already repaid the loans taken for migration, but she said they did not have as much money as the people think.

Interviewee 12's husband was a trekking guide in Kathmandu and they had two young children of 3 years and 5 months. She seemed to be from those who had a comfortable life in comparison to the others. She produced potatoes and beans for herself and received maize and millet from fields shared with other farmers. Her parents-in-law were doing most of the agricultural works and she was taking care of the new guesthouse she had recently built with her husband, although they had few tourists.

Interviewee 13, 26 years old, 3 children, did not know exactly what her husband did when he went to Somdang. She said he was generally away from home in May-August and November-February. He started 2 years ago and their financial situation since then has improved. Besides this, she sold potatoes and beans, but also wove products on the local market, or sometimes until Dunche³⁵. According to her, there was a good market over there to sell *che*.

Interviewee 14, 38 years old, lost dramatically contact with her husband 3 years ago. She did not know if he was alive or dead. Since then, she tried to survive from agriculture and handicraft with her 3 children aged between 12 years old and 18 months. The two oldest were in school in Kalikasthan. She planted mostly potatoes and beans and did not have abandoned lands “in comparison to those who leave to Kathmandu” she said. However, she lost one field on the landslide during the earthquake.

Interviewee 15 was a man who migrated in 2007 in Malaysia and had stayed there for 5 years. He worked in a vegetable farm. Although he learned how to use pesticides, he

³⁴ In Somdang there is a mine of lead and zinc, situated at 12km from Gatlang (Baharani & Chakrabarti, 2008).

³⁵ Main city of Rasuwa district.

was not using these techniques in Gatlang because he did not have problem with insects, like in Malaysia. Thanks to her wife involved in an agricultural project, he started to cultivate chairaito (medicinal herb) one year ago and had to wait 2 years more to harvest and see the benefits.

Interviewee 16 was the youngest woman I interviewed. She was 21 years old and mother of 2 daughters of 4 years and 9 months. It was really complicated to meet her, because she was never at home. Her husband was in Iraq since 16 months and when her financial situation was better, it was much more difficult to do agricultural works. She had to pay someone to plough and collect firewood, because she had to look after her small children.

Interviewee 17 was 27 years old and had a boy of 5 years old and a daughter of 1 year old. Her husband was in Dubai since 7 months and if he sent regularly remittances each 3 months, they will have repaid the loans in December. She sold mainly potatoes and beans, less maize and millet. She had also produced *raksi*³⁶ but this requires a lot of firewood to cook and she had not the possibility to get more of it.

Interviewee 18, a 34-years-old mother of 2 children, was used to be alone in Gatlang and had returned to her parents' house. Her husband was in Malaysia since 4 years and 3 months for the second time and had already been there for 5 years. She also sold potatoes and beans. She had not abandoned lands; otherwise she would not have enough to eat.

The tough experience and interview was with **Interviewee 19**, mother of 4 children. She related her very hard life and feeling of insecurity when her old mother would die, since her brothers will inherit all the fields and she will have nothing. She was married to a brutal and disrespectful man who left her for another woman in the village, but the society considered she was always her wife. Her case was very far from clear, but it also brought to light traffic of children in orphanage in Kathmandu and the not very constructive work of missionaries in Gatlang: to promise money and education of children in exchange for her conversion to Christianity.

³⁶ Traditional strong Nepalese alcohol made with millet in Gatlang, but can be made with rice also. The distillation process required a lot of wood through the different step of cooking process. Normally served and offered for various social rituals.

Interviewee 20, 30 years old, had 2 small daughters and one 12-years-old son studying in Kathmandu. Her husband was working since 6-7 years as trekking guide and her financial situation was better than before. However, she abandoned lands one year ago down to the village because it was too far for her. She would like to leave Gatlang to have easier access to the school and health centre.

Finally, I also present **Phurpu Singi**. He was the local Mahila project coordinator of PPYC in Gatlang, but he moved recently to Kathmandu with his wife and 4 children and returned regularly to his village where his mother cultivated his fields. He did not know yet what he would do once his mother would not be able to work in the fields. Next to that, he was also the owner of a guesthouse in Gatlang and he said: “In my case, I am also involved in other activities, but the families who depend on agriculture will try to find new technologies, new crops”. In this way, Phurpu was an actor of the migration in Gatlang whose behaviour and activities influenced the sustainability of agriculture and development of the village. His testimony completed those of the women left-behind.

All these women had different lives and experiences of the migration of their husband, but regardless of all these particularities, there are some general trends that will be discussed in this thesis. Before considering strategies developed by women, it was necessary to look into what they perceived as constraints that kept them from starting new activities. For instance, they all had young children who still required their help and that was felt as a barrier for some women, not so much to sustain agricultural works at the same level than before, but to develop new strategic activities to cope with the absence of their husband. Some of them also invoked their lack or low level of education as a limitation to develop new activities. I go deeper into these 2 topics in the coming paragraphs.

10.2. Childcare responsibility

It is traditionally the role of the women to take care of the children in Nepal. However, the conditions of this task vary from place to place, depending on the ethnic background of the women, for instance from Hindu or Tibetan culture, and living environment (Levine, 1988). The social conditions of women are different in the

Mountains and Terai, where women are much more confined at home than at higher altitude where the work force of everybody is needed to cultivate and survive (Levine, 1988). In this way, women of Gatlang have to combine heavy workloads in and out of the house and childcare. In the following paragraphs, I firstly give some quantitative data, before exposing the constraining situations for the women observed and heard in Gatlang.

The women left-behind I interviewed in Gatlang had 2.47 children on average (tab. 1). In Nepal, this number varies from one region to the other, depending on the environment, and rural or urban dimension of the area (Ministry of Health and Population, 2012). I did not find any precise information about the fertility rate in Rasuwa, even less especially for the women concerned by male outmigration. The Ministry of Health and Population (2012) reports that in rural areas women have 2.8 children and 3.4 children on average in the Mountain zone. Furthermore, in the Central region, which included Rasuwa district and Kathmandu, women have 2.5 children on average. These figures are higher than the one of my sample in Gatlang, and it could be explain by the regular absence of the husbands (Shakya & Gubhaju, 2016) and the low average age of 26.4 years old of the interviewees.

During my own collection of qualitative data, I noticed that the women interviewed had young children, aged between 16 years old and less than 1 year old. I counted that 6 women breastfed their children during the interviews (interviewees 3, 6, 8, 12, 14, 16) and at least 4 others had children in aged to be breastfed (interviewees 10, 17, 20). That is the way to nourish these young children and for this reason they had to carry them everywhere they went. Other children were not in an age to go to school, because they were too young; nevertheless they needed attention to prevent from foolishness as every young child. For instance, walking in the street we saw children being scolded by their mothers, because they had climbed on the roof of the house or put their hands into the tailpipe of a jeep. The older children were at school in Gatlang, or sent in Kalikasthan or Kathmandu to study.

Over and above these figures, the women repeated several times that they considered children as a constraint in their daily activities. “I produce only potatoes and beans and I do a little farming, because I have to take care of 3 little children”, said interviewee 8. This sentence echoed the comments of other interviewees. Panter-Brick (1989) found that in a

Tamang community of Nuwakot district, West of Rasuwa, subsistence agriculture was the main responsibility of women, and that the working behaviour between the ones pregnant and lactating did not vary much from those who were not. Despite the harshness of the work, childbearing women continued to work throughout the year (Panter-Brick, 1989) and it was also the case in Gatlang according to the experience of Norlha partners and my own research and discussions.

In the case of my research, the women expressed particularly the problem of children in their current tasks, but also to undertake new activities. The comment of Interviewee 12 illustrates this latter assertion: “With children, I cannot do anything, but later I will cultivate some vegetables” when I asked her about what she thought to do to mitigate the fluctuation of her income. I got a similar answer from Interviewee 16 about the possibility to cultivate medicinal plants (see chap. 12.5): she had already started to prepare the fields, but her husband left, and now she was more taking care of her children and had postponed the development of this activity. From the side of Interviewee 2, it would have been impossible for her to have an extra-job, not only because she was already a social mobilizer, but also because it was “complicated” with the children. Interviewee 3 and 7 said they had two young children to leave them to find a work, and Interviewee 8 was absolutely too busy with 3 little children to think about strategies to diversify her incomes. Interviewee 14 had no one to take care of her children, and Interviewee 16 had to ask someone else to collect firewood for her. Finally, smiling and laughing, Interviewee 10 said she had so many children that when they will grow up “I will be too old to start new things”.

In Gatlang, I did not observe any kind of childcare organisation between the women. Of course, sometimes one or the other woman had a look on the children of their friends or the neighbour. For instance, Interviewee 1 was taking care of a second little child during our interview. During the training held by Norlha, many women came with their children swathed in baskets they carried on their backside or with little children, sometimes turbulent and asking for toilet, biscuit or breastfeeding. They could obviously not leave them alone in the village.

In conclusion, if the issue of childcare concerns many families around the world, the very hard living conditions and workload endured by some rural Nepalese women create

additional difficulties that can cause health problems and limit possible actions to develop new skills and improve their livelihoods. Interviewee 12 said “I have a grade 12 at school, but with children it counts for nothing”. Even if a woman received a good level of education in comparison to the other women, it could “count for nothing” since she is the one in the household in charge of the children. It enables me to introduce the next section in which I expose the second topic previously introduced and regarded as limiting factor by the women themselves to improve their situation: their level of education.

10.3. Level of education and opportunities

The topic of access to education is central in strategies of development, and many NGOs sustain school in several villages of Nepal. Furthermore, Nepalese girls are still largely discriminated in comparison to the boys in the access to school and education. One reason among others is because they are not the ones who are predestined to take care of their parents since in some castes it is not socially acceptable to live in the earning of a daughter. In addition to this, the early marriages around 12-15 years old obligate them to leave school when they are still teenager, mostly in the Terai and Hills regions (Luitel, 2008). It penalizes them since the level of education is potentially directly related to the empowerment of the women and capacity to wide their knowledge and skills (Jayaweera, 1997).

During my research, I rapidly started to ask the school grade of the respondent since Interviewee 2 said she had accessed a role of social mobilizer, because she had a grade 12 at school. It made me supposed that this element might count in the capacity of women to undertake project and access some employments. The level of education of the women interviewed are itemised in the Table 2 below (and tab. 1), and I discuss the relation between education and the information given by the interviewees in this section.

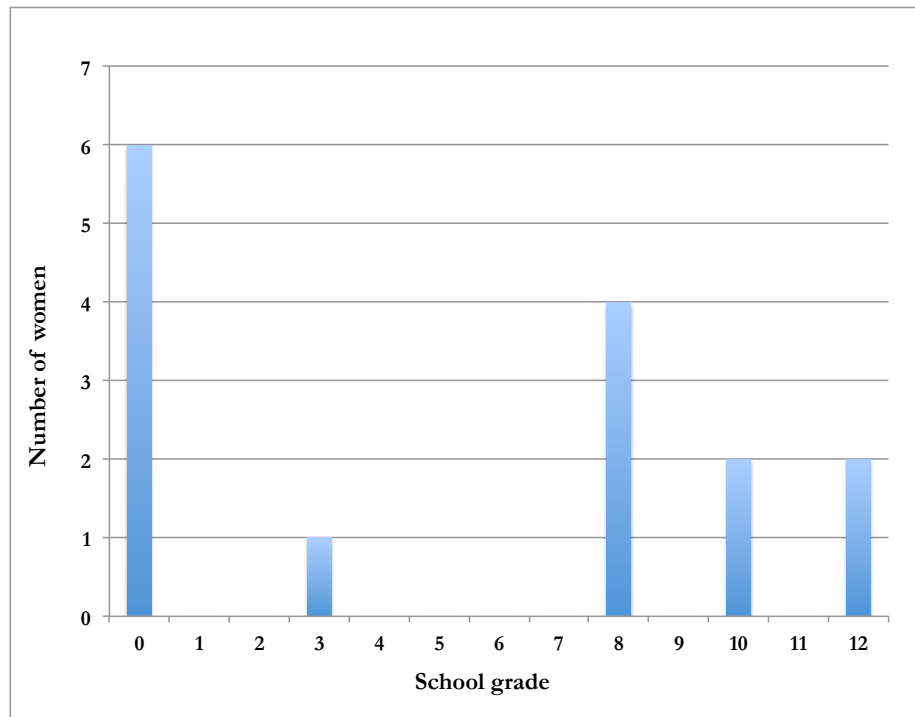


Table 2: Level of education completed by the women interviewed

The formal education system in Nepal is composed of 12 grades with a certificate of “Higher Secondary School”. However, the lack of resources implies a delay in the introduction of this system and most of the public schools deliver a “School Leaving Certificate” when students reach the end of the grade 10 at almost 15 years old³⁷. There is a public school in Gatlang, but children attending private schools have to leave the village.

Among the women I interviewed, 2 of them completed the ultimate grade 12 of secondary school, and at the other extremity of the spectrum 6 of them said they did not get to school (school grade “0”). Otherwise, one had a grade 3, 4 of them had a grade 8, 2 had a grade 10 including Interviewee 9 who was studying to get a grade 12 and wanted to learn English. Finally, interviewee 6 said she was literate without specifying her grade. Thus, among the women asked about their level of education, the proportion of uneducated women was around 37% and that is consistent with the low literacy rate of 51% for female recorded in the Nepal Living Standards Survey (2011).

³⁷ Education system in Nepal: http://www.educatenepal.com/education_system/display/education-system-in-nepal (accessed on June 9, 2017)

Beyond those figures, the lack of education was felt as a barrier to start new activities, even in the restricted area of the village. This issue merged mainly when women were questioned about their ideas to diversify their incomes for the purpose to mitigate the fluctuation of their incomes: “Of course, I am asking me what to do? But I am not educated, so what can I do? What to do if I go abroad? I have any chances to get a job” [Interviewee 8], “I don’t know what to do, how to do and where?” [Interviewee 6].

Another example could be Interviewee 3 who wanted to leave Gatlang to work but her first argument was that her children were too young and she also did not know the job she could do because “I am not enough educated. For example, I could go to Kathmandu, but I am not enough educated to go there”.

For her part, Interviewee 9, who had already a grade 10 at school, saw better possibilities to find a job when she would have complete the grade 12. She was very curious, asking why I was taking everything in note, and to Urmila, if it was easy to learn English. She explained that it was already difficult to learn Nepali at school, because the vernacular language in Gatlang was Tamang. Thereupon, Tshering Sherpa³⁸ was wondering about the capacity of women to count and exchange with middle-buyers who buy the products of the farmers in Gatlang. However, according to Mahesh Raj Maharjan³⁹: “Women do not really have problem to count. They have more problem with the language and to speak with the middle buyers, according to my research.” However, I did not talk about this specific issue with my respondents in Gatlang.

In the way to conclude this section, these women made systematically a link between a better education and the possibility to find a job abroad and leave the village, as if it had more opportunities outside of the settlement. Furthermore, it is necessary to underline that the 3 women with a grade 12, including Interviewee 9, were the only ones involved in less common generative-income activities, respectively: social mobilizer (Interviewee 2), managing a new guesthouse (Interviewee 12), and formerly social mobilizer and involved in the project of medicinal herbs farming developed in a next section (Interviewee 9).

³⁸ Informal discussion on March 29, 2017, at Norlha office in Kathmandu

³⁹ Meeting on March 31, 2017, in Kathmandu

A second topic that concerned education and reported indirectly by the women interviewed was the impact of education on agriculture. As interviewed 12 said: “Now, young generation come to Kathmandu and the one who are educated don’t work in the fields and the ones who are less educated go to work as labour somewhere. They think that to work as a labour is more profitable”. That was also confirm by interview 5 who thought that people who were more educated did not work anymore in the fields and left them. It is part of the challenge for the future of agriculture in the village of Gatlang, and I deepen the topic of abandoned lands in a next section.

10.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the portrait of the women involved in my research and I highlighted 2 general trends, childcare and education, regarded by themselves as limiting factors to develop coping strategies. If women are used to take care of their children alone in the village of Gatlang, it would be interesting to understand how they would therefore be helped and discharged of this responsibility in order to have more time to integrate trainings about agriculture or literacy class for instance. In this way, childcare and education of the adult women are connected and influence each other.

11. Women’s financial management

Before starting the fieldwork, I hypothesised that one of the strategies women left-behind might used to cope with male outmigration and sustain farming works could have been the investment of a part of the remittances in agricultural activities to reduce for instance the workload or develop new agricultural techniques. Indeed, the purpose of the Mahila project⁴⁰ is to improve the capacity of women left-behind to manage remittances they receive and to teach them to invest in farming or other generative-income activities. In this way, I planed to study how the women potentially already dealt with remittances and agriculture in Gatlang for the purpose to understand if the women had access to and

⁴⁰ Norlha. How we empower women impacted by migration in Nepal. *Norlha, aide aux populations himalayennes*. <http://norlha.org/en/mahila-norlhas-new-project-women-coping-migration/> (accessed on July 31, 2017)

control over this financial resource to sustain agriculture. I would like also identify other resources of income that could have been developed by women and influence agricultural practices. Thus, I first expose the patterns of reallocation of the remittances, then the conditions of access to and control over this resource I discussed with the women, and finally I investigate the other incomes of the women.

11.1. Reallocation of remittances

The reallocation of the remittances in non-farm area obviously penalizes the sustainability of agriculture in rural areas. As it is the case in many other regions of South America, Africa and Asia, much research has found that remittances are mainly invested in daily costs of living, household stuffs, and others goods and services, but not in productive activities (Cohen, 2005). The baseline survey conducted in Gatlang by Norlha's local partners in 2016 (2016) confirmed that investment to increase the agricultural productivity represented a negligible part of the total investments of remittances, around 0.5%⁴¹. According to their quantitative survey and classification, the areas of investment, in decreasing order of amounts invested, are: "other things"; "business"; "animal husbandry"; "to pay debt"; "children's education"; "household expenses"; "household goods" and finally "agricultural production".

In the qualitative data I gathered in Gatlang, women mentioned first kitchen stuffs (rice and oil), and social rituals (wedding and death rituals) as their main expenses. Then, some of them told about education, or loans to repay. Perhaps their answers were influenced by the numerous weddings held in the village during this period. Indeed, families have to give money or other things to the newly weds, depending if there are invited by the bride or the groom family. Interviewee 8 explained us that if they were invited by the bride's family she had to give money from her, her husband, even if he was not her, and her 3 children. If the groom's family invited her household, she had to give money from her, her husband and clothes because she had a daughter. Only the family with daughters have to give clothes. According to Tshering Sherpa (Norlha), to avoid all these social expenses, some poor households could have converted to Christianity and invoked religious reasons

⁴¹ Unpublished baseline survey of Norlha in Gatlang

to not take part anymore to these costly traditions. Beside this, none of them mentioned specific investment in agriculture, excepted Interviewee 3 who mentioned the marginal necessity to employ sometimes someone to repair tools.

To explain this low rate of investment in agricultural production, the respondents of the baseline fieldwork survey explained to local partners of Norlha that they lacked of information about investments in agriculture and were not aware about that. According to the local coordinators, beside these reasons, the respondents were busy to look after children and were “not able” to do agricultural works. From my side, I explain the low level of investment in agriculture firstly due to the still very traditional agricultural practices in the village. They do not buy fertilizer, because they use the manure of the cattle to enrich the soil. They also do not use pesticides to treat the fields, because they do not have insect attacks according to Interviewee 15. Then, when they harvest, they share the harvest between food and seeds for the next year. None of the women answered they had to buy seeds. Finally, I noted that other organisations intervening in Gatlang (and Nepal in general) gave all the material needed⁴² to the household, making them not responsible of the investments needed to start a project. For instance, in Peru I visited a project of bricks oven for which probably uneducated people received only technologic trainings but had to buy all the material needed, and prepare business plans⁴³. In Gatlang, that was not the case and people were just waiting to receive promised seeds, bamboo and plastic sheets to construct for instance greenhouses. However, women are confronted to a total absence of financial skills, illiteracy and lack of time to acquired this knowledge⁴⁴ since they assume household cores, children care, agricultural works, and for some of them

11.1.1. Access and control over remittances

The husband of Interviewee 6 said: “she manages everything here, she is the one who decides everything”, when I ask them who managed the money earn by the couple. However, this type of statement has to be considered carefully. Indeed, women generally access remittances, but recognize they do not have the entire control over this resource.

⁴² See the project on medicinal herbs farming introduce in a coming section of this report.

⁴³ Foehn, A. (August 27, 2013). *La coopération Suisse au Pérou. La Cordillère à vélo de Lima au Cap Horn*. <http://limatocapehorn.blogspot.ch/2013/08/la-cooperation-suisse-au-perou.html> (accessed on August 15, 2017)

⁴⁴ FDG conducted by Norlha’s partners in Gatlang in January 2017.

This means, they can use the money but often have to ask and justify its use⁴⁵. Among the women interviewed, none of them said she did not have access to remittances and they stated that they managed the current expenses of the household. Here, there was a slight difference between those who had husbands abroad, or whose husbands were working seasonally. In the former case, the responses were consistently: “It is always me who manage the money I have and receive” [Interviewee 3]. In the second case, Interviewee 7, and 12 explained they shared the responsibility of the expenses with their husbands when they were at home, and Interviewee 10 had to say what she did with the money of the household. Probably that it was also different for the bigger expenses, like house or cattle. Despite this, Interviewee 3 and 7 said they decided together with their husbands to spend money to construct a house.

If the husbands intervened in the decision process of remittances allocation, none of them mentioned members of the family-in-law interfering in the management of the incomes or expenditures of the household, excepted Interviewee 9 who was one of the few women collecting remittances from the bank: “If I do not have time to go to Syaphru or Dunche, I send my brother-in-law”. In this case, the issue was not about reduced access or control over the resource for the women left-behind, although I might suppose the family-in-law could also benefit of a part of the remittances. I observed that the village was organised in nuclear families, not necessarily including the cohabitation of different generations under the same roof.

11.2. Other income sources

The incomes of the women left-behind were poorly diversified. The earnings of the women interviewed were mainly composed of remittances, sale of potatoes and beans, and sale of woven products. I also noted that the fact to work in the field, to produce potatoes and beans, and to sell them was not automatically associated to a generative-income activity. For instance, Interviewee 3 said she was not involved in any paid activities “as the work in the fields or the collect of firewood”, despite the fact that she sometimes sold potatoes and

⁴⁵ Norlha’s gender training conducted on March 7-9, 2017 in Gatlang.

beans. With this in mind, it is possible that other activities generating money may not have been reported by the women, like the sale of non-timber forest products (NTFPs).

All these incomes were irregular, fluctuating, and raise problems for the daily consumption. In case of lack of money to pay the current expenditures, they borrowed money from relatives and friends, but did not have particular ideas of sources of extra-incomes. In addition to this, Interviewees 14 and 19 did not have much contact with their husband and did not receive remittances, Interviewees 2 and 3 did not have received remittances since a long time and did not dare to ask money to their husbands: “He says he does not have enough money to send” [Interviewee 3]. The poor diversification of the incomes put women left-behind in difficulty if they lacked one of them, with very limited capacity to find sustainable solutions.

The necessity to increase the economic incomes and diversify the incomes had impacted directly the agricultural practices. Fields of potatoes and beans have replaced progressively the fields of barley and other cereals. “You need to work a lot to cultivate barley and you earn a little. It is easier to cultivate potatoes, because once you have harvested it is ready to sell” according to Interviewee 20. Potatoes and beans represented now 75% of the production of Interviewee 15, but before he used to cultivate much more barley. Interviewee 13 specified that the change from subsistence to commercial agriculture was occurring since 10 years, and it had permitted to earn more money to buy rice.

11.3. Conclusion

The first finding is that remittances were not invested in productive activities and women did not plan to do so. These types of investments is not enough promoted in Nepalese rural areas among the families of migrants, still largely dependent on agriculture, despite the remittances could be used as a source of generating employments in these areas (Chapagain, 2014). The lack of financial skills, network and assistance limit the women to build local businesses.

In addition to remittances, women left-behind also earned money from the sale of agricultural products like potatoes and beans, and artisanal works. To supplement the

knowledge, it would be necessary to identify other activities generating incomes in the village, like the potential sale of NTFPs, and who can access and control these products (see also chap. 12.5). In most of the cases, women said they managed the expenses of the household by themselves due to the absence of their husband. Furthermore, they also had to cope with the fluctuation of these incomes, and to overcome this situation they borrowed money from relatives. It would be necessary to identify clearly the cycle of incomes and expenditures, depending on remittances or harvest for instance, to teach them how to manage a budget.

Based on the acknowledgement that remittances are not invested in agricultural projects, that the burden of work greatly increase for the female members of the families with the absence of the male, but considering that the wives of migrant have to continue to feed partially their families thanks to their agricultural production, I turn to the next chapter on the difficulties encountered and the coping strategies developed by them to sustain agriculture.

12. Coping strategies of women in agriculture

In Nepal, women are key actors of the subsistence farming, and that is exacerbated with the increasing male outmigration and children sent to school far from the house (Tamang et al., 2014). Women have to take over additional work and responsibilities, without the same degree of autonomy of the male. In this chapter, I focus on potential strategies developed by women to cope with the absence of males, implying labour shortage, increase of workload, and feminization of agricultural work. Thus, before to talk about strategies, I first expose difficulties mentioned by women due to the absence of male work force. Secondly, I discuss my findings about the increasing phenomenon of abandoned lands which has been identified as one of the consequences of male outmigration among other cultural and social factors (Ojha et al., 2017; Paudel et al., 2014). Thirdly, I examine two projects I studied in Gatlang: the implementation of greenhouses and the development of medicinal herbs plantations. It was motivated by the idea to understand if these projects

were perceived as strategies to improve their livelihoods by the women interviewed, or what were the constraints they had to face to access these kinds of activities.

The interview I conducted with Phurpu Singi in Kathmandu allowed me to complete the information gathered from the women and to better understand the traditional farming system of Gatlang, in particular some disadvantages experienced by women and more generally the difficulties encountered by the farmers to switch from subsistence to commercial-oriented agriculture. It allowed me also to better understand the mechanism of fields' abandonment, as he was himself a migrant who moved from Gatlang to Kathmandu 2 or 3 years ago. He moved with his wife and 4 children in the urban centre, and her 50-years-old mother, who was widowed, was taking care of his fields in the village and dependent on his lands.

12.1. Access and control over lands

Traditionally, in Gatlang the lands are inherited from father to son, and daughters are put aside. The equal share of the lands for the sons, in terms of size and location, is discussed between the sons, the uncles and males of the family. Phurpu even specified that they play heads or tails in case of sticking points. This kind of practice implies low rate of female land tenure and ownership in rural areas, even though women might legally enjoy equal rights to inherit their parents' fields (Rawal & Agrawal, 2016). For instance, in Gatlang no woman had fields registered in her name, and if they had access to this resource, they said it was the men who had control over it⁴⁶. Deere (2005) found similar practices of inheritance of the land in South America, where men are preferred to the women to received the lands from the parents.

Certainly there are also specific behaviours in each family that lead, for instance, to the situation of Interviewee 19. She had been rejected by her husband and family-in-law and was living with her old mother. She was cultivating the fields of this latter and was worried about her future, when her mother will die. Indeed, the fields will be inherited by her brothers and she did not know what would happen to her. If her case was not directly the

⁴⁶ Information gathered during Norlha gender training on March 8, 2017.

consequence of her husband's migration, this brought to light the difficulty for women to access and control lands, and by this way the possibility for them to develop their own agricultural project. According to Kaspar (2005), this land-dependency might be one reason of the lowest participation of women in decision-making process in comparison to the men.

In the same perspective, Phurpu also explained that it was really not usual to sell or buy lands to others in the village, even less to cultivate them, but eventually to build a house. Sometimes, they shared their fields with other farmers, letting them cultivating their plots and receiving a part of the harvest. Interviewee 8 was sharing the lands with her father-in-law since 5 years, however she did not received anything from that. In the opposite case, Interviewee 12 was sharing some fields and from that she got maize and millet. From her side, she was cultivating potatoes and beans that she sold if she had enough after her own consumption. She explained that the farmers who were cultivating her fields had bigger family and enough labour force to work in the fields. According to Interviewee 15, the male ex-migrant from Malaysia, this practice of sharing lands was decreasing: "You work very hard to have less, that is difficult". This fits in the general trends of young generation's disinterest for hard agricultural work (Ojha et al., 2017). A part of the answer is also in the response of Interviewee 9 who said: "To share the lands you need people, and there is nobody to work". This latter item enables me to turn to the next point mainly repeated by the women and mentioned in the literature, that is the inexorable lack of work force in the rural area owing to the absence of men, and to a lesser extent of women too.

12.2. Lack of work force

As mentioned already mentioned many times in this report, in mountainous region of Nepal all the family is traditionally required to work in the fields, but subsistence agriculture lies mainly on the shoulders of female members. During my research stay in Gatlang, the lack of work force emerged through 2 main factors mentioned by the women:

1. Lack of time to accomplish the task of the men,
2. The difficulty to find a male worker who could achieve the work traditionally prohibited for women.

Indeed, the additional works reported by women that they had to accomplish were the collection of litter, fodder, and firewood, which take a lot of time. Beside this, they were not allowed to plough the fields. Interviewee 18 told us there was a popular belief that if a woman ploughed the plots, a landslide would destroy them. It seemed to be specific to Gatlang, since Mahesh Raj Maharjan did not have seen that during his own research in Kathmandu Valley, knowing that in his cases of research farmers were not ploughing the fields. To overcome the situation 1, women relied on *parma* system if they are not able to accomplish the task, or for instance they buy firewood like Interviewee 9. In the case of situation 2, I did not identify clear strategies other than the women had to struggle to find a male worker and pay him. None of them said she had ploughed her fields to resolve this issue.

To conclude this topic, I also realized that the lack of work force was not only due to the absence of males, but also because children were more and more sent in school far from the village and could not be employed in the fields. Of course, I saw children working in the field, collecting fodder, or washing clothes, but according to Interviewee 19 the lack of this kind of labour force could encourage parents to leave their lands. This latter item caught particularly my attention, because it revealed that the process of abandonment of the agricultural lands was more complicated than a direct consequence of male outmigration and lack of work force, and for instance education was also playing a role. I turn to this topic in the following paragraphs.

12.3. Abandonment of cultivated lands

The trend of abandonment of agricultural land is significantly rising throughout Nepal since the last 2 decades (Khanal & Watanabe, 2006; Paudel et al., 2014). If the increasing trend of youth and male outmigration is the main reason, there are also other causes behind this phenomenon, like climate change and changes in rainfall patterns, increase of imported foods and changes in food habits, or too low returns on investments (Paudel et al., 2014). Paudel et al. (2014) suggest also that rural farmers prefer for instance livestock rearing to crop productivity, because it requires less work. It seems to be also the case in Gatlang if I look at the patterns of allocation of the remittance (see chap. 11.1),

however the women never told about these type of changes in agricultural practices. In the case of my research, I thought that the first strategy of the women left-behind to reduce the workload due to the absence of the men was to reduce the quantity of fields cultivated. It appeared that fewer women than I had expected said they abandoned fields (tab. 3), and I discuss their responses in the coming paragraphs.

Interviewees	Husband's migration patterns	Abandoned fields (yes/no)
Interviewee 1	Trekking guide	?
Interviewee 2	Malaysia	?
Interviewee 3	Dubai	No
Interviewee 4	Iraq	No
Interviewee 5	Kathmandu	No
Interviewee 6	Kathmandu	No
Interviewee 7	Trekking guide	Yes
Interviewee 8	China	No
Interviewee 9	Malaysia	Yes
Interviewee 10	Somtang	No
Interviewee 11	Malaysia	No
Interviewee 12	Trekking guide	No
Interviewee 13	Somtang	No
Interviewee 14	Iraq	No
Interviewee 16	Iraq	Yes
Interviewee 17	Dubai	No
Interviewee 18	Malaysia	No
Interviewee 20	Trekking guide	Yes

Table 3: Husband's patterns of migration and abandoned fields

As shown in Table 3, only 4 women said they had to abandoned fields. The main causes mentioned by these women to explain their strategy were:

- The migration of the husband,
- Little children to take care,
- Fields to far from their house⁴⁷,
- Absence of children to help (Interviewee 20)

For instance, Interviewee 16 confirmed that she was not the only one to adopt this strategy, but she did not know why other people were leaving their fields: “I do not know

⁴⁷ The earthquake of 2015 obliged sometime households to relocated their shelters far from their fields.

the specific reasons, perhaps they have enough fields?”. The ones who were still cultivated all their agricultural plots mentioned principally that they did not have some much fields and would not have enough to eat if they stopped to cultivate. But most of them supposed that if people in the village were abandoned fields it was because:

- People left to Kathmandu with their family,
- They preferred to work as a labour than in the fields,
- Their fields were too far,
- They were educated,
- They were rich and did not need to cultivate their food.

Among the people I interviewed, Phurpu was also directly concerned by this question. Since his mother was cultivating his fields, I asked him what he would do when her mother will be too old to farm the lands. He responded: “First, you do it until you are not able to do so. Secondly, I could share the land and thirdly to give all to someone. Not the land, but the harvest. Finally, I could also abandon my fields”. He also specified that the lands in West of Gatlang were abandoned because of the landslide. They were fields of potatoes, too difficult and dangerous to access after the monsoon when it was harvest time in August.

Despite the fact that a much more clearer and precise map would be needed to study the current situation of abandoned lands in Gatlang, I provide a draft (fig. 8) of what I observed and from the indications given by my respondents (“behind the hill”, “upper part of Gatlang”, “far from the village”, etc.).

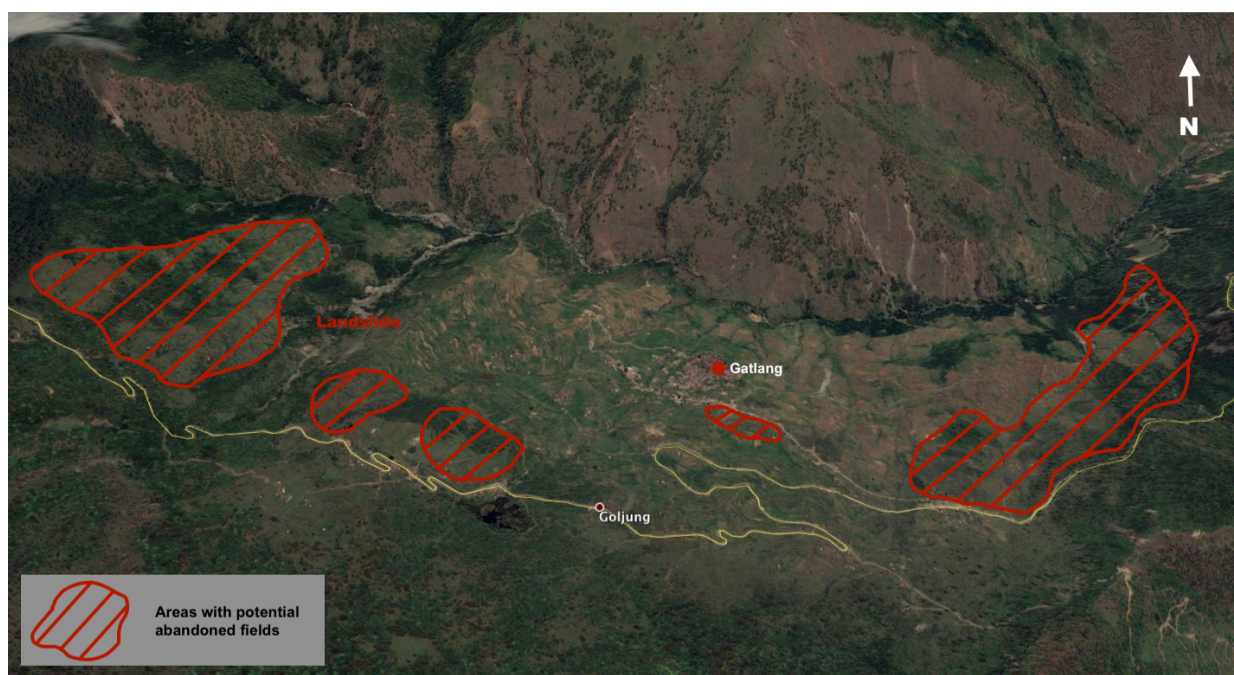


Figure 8: Areas with potential abandoned fields around Gatlang. Source: Google Earth (modified by the author)

It seems clear that a large part of lands were not use at that time, even if it was only temporary. According to the indication of the inhabitants, the fields near the river were the most fertile, and consequently preferred to the remote ones, which were abandoned.

Notwithstanding this, the husband of Interviewee 6 said that not so many people were abandoning their fields. But she intervened and said that due to lack of men to plough some women left-behind preferred to leave fields. Cradling her baby, she explained:

“For women, the biggest problem is the lack of men to plough and for example if I call a man to plough it costs NRs. 1000/day⁴⁸ (~CHF 9), plus NRs. 1000/day for oxen and NRs. 500/day for the *fala*⁴⁹. But if I ask a woman to work for me I pay her NRs. 300/day”.

The difference between money earned by women and the gains made by the men is huge. I give a second example of this kind of discrimination. Before, I mentioned the *parma* system, the share of work between families, relatives and friends. I also indicated that women suffer from potential discrimination in this exchange of time of work. Indeed,

⁴⁸ CHF 1 ≈ NRs. 107

⁴⁹ Plough pulled by oxen

Interviewee 7 said that when her husband was not available to plough their lands, she had to ask for a man and she practiced *parma*. If she employed a male family member she worked one day in return, but if she asked a man who was not part of her family, she had to work 2 days in return. In this case, it is understandable that women left-behind prefer to leave their fields, but also surprising that only Interviewees 6 and 7 mentioned these disparities. These inequalities seem to be deeply embedded in the traditional practices, and to be implemented now in economic exchanges.

Before to conclude this discussion on abandoned land, I turn to an issue I mentioned in the chap. 5.2. In interviewing women concerned by seasonal and international migration the idea was to compare if significant differences existed in strategies developed to cope with the absence of the husbands depending on the patterns of migration of these latter. I supposed that women concerned by seasonal migration would be less concerned by the abandonment of fields, since their husbands would come back regularly at home to help to cultivate in comparison to those who should have take a plane to return home. However, only Interviewee 1, 6 and 7 specified their husbands came back to help them during the monsoon or to plough. Interviewee 5 even said she worked alone in the fields, despite her husband was at home. On the basis of the discussion conducted with the women, and the information gathered about patterns of migration and abandoned lands (tab. 3), I am not able to say if women left-behind concerned by international migration tend to leave more their fields than the women whose husbands are absent seasonally since among the 4 women who abandoned fields for a while, 2 of them had husband abroad and the 2 others were wives of trekking guide.

In the coming sections, it is not question of abandoned lands but to what might be called a reconversion of the usual use of the fields. Indeed, to construct a greenhouse or plant medicinal herbs, the peasant women needed to sacrifice one or several of their lands to develop these activities. Thus, I expose the 2 projects I analysed for the purpose to determine if they were perceived as strategies to improve the livelihoods and sustain agriculture by the women concerned by this research, and the potential barriers encountered.

12.4. Greenhouses

As introduced in the agricultural contextualization of the area, I observed greenhouses distributed in the village of Gatlang. I decided to examine if the women I planned to interview had this kind of agricultural infrastructure or not, and if they perceived that as a strategy to diversify their income and support a new way to do agriculture. The first step was to understand how inhabitants had obtained these greenhouses. Secondly, I needed to understand if the women left-behind interviewed had or not one of these greenhouses, and why. Finally, I wanted to know what was growing inside and if they thought it was a sustainable and efficient activity for them.

After discussing with people in the village and through the answers of the women interviewed, I established that it was a test and the project was running since 1 or 2 years. This organization had distributed around 10 greenhouses, called “plastic tunnel” by the inhabitants, seeds of chilli, carrot, pumpkin, spinaches (green vegetables), tomato, cucumber and cabbage, and provided training to learn how to plant, and to treat in case of disease and insect attacks (Interviewee 12). However, the name of the organisation was absolutely unclear (“something green”, “STEP Nepal”, “VDC”, or “the government of Nepal”). It is through Internet researches that I finally found the organisation⁵⁰, involved in the region and Gatlang. It confirmed that 10 greenhouses have been distributed, and that they effectively planned to distribute more. It was not particularly a gendered project.

Among the women I met, 2 of them had received this structure, Interviewee 7 and 12. Interviewee 7 was effectively using it next to her house and had planted spinaches at that time. She did not remember the name of the donors, but there were foreigners. Seeds, plastic and bamboos were provided by the organisation. Interviewee 12 received the material and followed trainings. She got pumpkin, carrot, Nepalese spinaches (green vegetables), chilli and tomato seeds that she had not planted yet, because she was waiting that her children would have grown to have time. Women who did not have received this material said “they did not give one to me” (Interviewee 16, 17), or most of them were not aware of this project, or that they should have followed a training to get one.

⁵⁰ Sustainable Steps Nepal. *Greenhouses*. <http://www.sustainablesteps.org/contact/> (accessed on July 2017)

The greenhouses have permitted to produce new crops that it was not possible to grow before due to climatic reasons (Phurpu). Interviewee 12 said: “We planted maize and pumpkins in the same plots, just in little quantity. We used to do it before to receive the new seeds. Our pumpkins are big and sweet compared to the ones they gave to us which are smaller and green”. However, Phurpu noted that it might imply also changes in the eating patterns of the inhabitants and the necessity to find markets, because last time it was impossible to sell the tomatoes because people were not use to cook and eat these vegetables. According to him, farmers finally had to give them as a gift. Indeed, only Interviewee 16 mentioned these new vegetables and this type of change in agricultural practices, and said she bought sometimes vegetables like tomatoes or green chillies to the producers: “Before, it was only possible in Syaphru” she added. If the absence of market was a constraint, there was at least one other difficulty to overcome to construct a greenhouse. Interviewee 20 said that the proximity of her house with this structure was an important condition to take care of the plants, and because she did not have lands near by her house, she could not built one.

To summarize, few women were informed about this project and had one of these greenhouses. Land available to build the structure and proximity with the house seemed to be conditions of efficiency of this type of project, in addition to the necessity to develop an access to market to sell the products. At that time, this project was not perceived as a strategy by the women left-behind to cope with the absence of their husband. It should also be studied if their husbands would let her develop this type of agriculture. Now, I turn to the second project about medicinal herbs farming which was a potential very fruitful income for local people according to the literature, but more difficult to approach in reality.

12.5. Medicinal herbs

The farming of medicinal herbs was another project running in Gatlang. Only one respondent, Interviewee 9, was officially involved in this activity promoted by Rural Tourism and Environmental Education Society (RTEES)⁵¹ and The Mountain Institute

⁵¹ RTEES Nepal. Current MAPs program in Rasuwa District: <http://rteesnepal.org.np/category.php?title=Current--MAPs-program-in-Rasuwa-District> (accessed on July 6, 2017).

(TMI) since 3 years according to her. She was in charge of the nursery in place and had to irrigate the plants. Inhabitants and women interviewed were not very talkative about this type of NTFPs, but I discovered thereafter that it seemed to be a common practice in the region and economically profitable for the local people (Baharani & Chakrabarti, 2008; Uprety et al., 2011). In this section, I firstly give an introduction on medicinal herbs practices in the region, and then I expose the results of my discussion with the interviewees.

According to the data collected by Humagain and Shrestha (2009), the market of medicinal herbs seems to be very unclear and largely based on illegal trades, as they discovered throughout a very interesting research about medicinal plants in Chilime, at 2 hours walking distance from Gatlang in the valley. The District Forest Office is the governmental authorities in charge of the regulation of the NTFPs, so including the trade permits for medicinal herbs. Due to the illegal trades, the official volume of marketed medicinal plants seems to be lower than the reality (Humagain & Shrestha, 2009). Furthermore, they find that medicinal herbs were crucial livelihoods, generating sometimes up to 40% of the family income. Thus, I remain a bit dubious about the little interest shown by the women when I asked if they were involved in medicinal herbs farming. Even more this is a common practice in the Himalayan regions (Uprety et al., 2011).

I see 2 possibilities to explain this lack of concern and poor answers. On the one hand, my translator and me always told about the medicinal herbs in terms of agricultural activities and, as far as I know, we have never ask the women if they were used to collect this product in the nature and selling it to traders. On the other hand, as local people do not perceive the market of medicinal herbs as easily accessible, they do not identify this activity as a potential good income generative activity (Uprety et al., 2011). That could explain why women interviewed have never proposed medicinal plants as a retributive practice they could develop.

Furthermore, in Gatlang the project was unstable and not running very well. We found a completely disorganized nursery (fig. 9). Original plants had dried up and had been replanted, but without paying attention to the names listed on the boards. A young woman, working in the adjacent guesthouse, confirmed this.



Figure 9: Medicinal herbs nursery

In Chilime, Humagain and Shrestha found 60 medicinal herbs species, including 26 species that were sometimes commercialized. Among them, 12 species were highly prioritised by the collectors and traders. In the medicinal herbs nursery of Gatlang, the names of the 8 following species were noted on little boards⁵²:

- ❖ Chairaito^N, Timda^T, *Swertia chirayita*
- ❖ Jatamasi^N, Pangpe^T, *Nardostachys grandiflora* DC.
- ❖ Pakhambev^N (Pakhanved), Brajimendo^N, *Bergenia ciliata*
- ❖ Panchaunle^N, Ompolakpa^T, *Dactylorhiza hatagirea*
- ❖ Kutki^{N,T}, *Neopicrorhiza scrophulariiflora*
- ❖ Sugandhawal^N, Lungbe^T, *Valeriana jatamansii* Jones
- ❖ Sarmaguru^T, *Swertia multicaulis* D. Don
- ❖ Nirmasi^N, Bongmar^T, *Aconitum* sp.

5 of these plants were on the list of the 12 species of high interest for the collectors and traders in Chilime and studied by Humagain and Shrestha between 2006 and 2009: Jatamansii, Chairaito, Kutki, Sugandhawal and Nimasi. In Gatlang, during the interviews, we

⁵² Information collected throughout Urmila and the research of Humagain and Shrestha (2009). ^N = Nepalese name, ^T = Tamang name, *scientific name*

were mainly told about *chairaito* (called also *chiraito*, *tikta*) or *timda* in Tamang (Humagain & Shrestha, 2009), the only medicinal plant in the region which is mainly cultivated instead of being harvesting in nature (Humagain & Shrestha, 2009). In Chilime, the researchers found that the average price between 2005 and 2007 was NRs 160/kg for the collectors and NRs 250/kg for the traders in the village. In Gatlang, Interviewee 9 explained us that prices dropped from NRs. 700/kg (CHF 6.5) before the earthquake to NRs. 450/kg (CHF 4.2) after, and that now it was sold at around NRs. 300/kg (CHF 2.8). The ones who had already harvested had not sold their product yet, waiting for better prices. There are significant disparities between this data, and further research would be needed to clarify the situation.

Among the women and man interviewed about this topic, Interviewee 15 was also cultivating Chairaito since 1 year through the initiative of his wife, and Interviewee 16 had started to prepare the fields but she stopped when her husband left. The others interviewees referred to the fact that they did not have enough space and fields to cultivate medicinal herbs, which you have to protect from cattle and thieves with fences. I also heard that “it is not appropriate for a women to stay alone in the night to look after her fields!”. The particularity of Chairaito is that it is planted once and harvested every 3 years. Interviewee 12 did not have lands available for that but was convinced that: “You harvest more and you earn more”. Regarding interviewee 15, he hoped to have a good income from the buyers who will come to the village.

Again, as in the case of the greenhouse, the interviewees mentioned the lack of fields available to start this project, and the need of proximity to protect the plants. According to this information, medicinal herbs farming and harvest constitute an interesting livelihood for local people and women have a role to play. It does not require machines and technologies that women are, at that time, not allowed to use. However, this activity should be protected and controlled to prevent from over-exploitation, and collectors protected from greedy traders and industries. It would be really interesting to go further on this activity and see the opportunities and constraints for women to develop such a business in Gatlang.

12.6. Conclusion

In Gatlang, I found peasant women left-behind embedded in traditional agriculture practices that limited them to initiate efficient coping strategies and sustain farming. Beside this, they also had to assume all the household cores and were in charge of the children education and care. The labour shortage accentuated their incapacity to react and maintained them in logic of survival strategy, planting potatoes and beans that allowed them to feed their family and earn money to buy food. For this reason, most of them did not have abandoned their fields, but other alternatives need to be considered to reduce the workload that rely on the women shoulders.

The projects observed during my fieldwork, greenhouses and medicinal herb farming, do not appear to provide satisfactory solutions to the specific needs of women. According to Bharat Bhandari⁵³ from Li-Bird, the production of vegetables should have to be situated in road corridor area, and the development of fruit trees such as apples or apricots could be appropriate in this environment and the context of labour shortage.

Finally, the rural mountain communities are particularly sensitive to climate change. The indigenous knowledge will have to develop new modes of coping strategies to face environmental change and stress such as floods or droughts (Nellemann et al., 2011). As seen many times in this document, women play definitely a key role in managing and sustaining natural resources and agricultural development. Thus, the future agricultural projects should have to take in account this climatic factor and the capacity of peasant female to adapt their livelihood strategies.

⁵³ Email received on May 17, 2017

V. Conclusion

13. Conclusion

This research exposes the situation of women left-behind concerned by male outmigration in a remote mountainous area of Nepal. It assesses the potential strategies developed by women to cope with male outmigration and sustain the agriculture, in considering the potential role of the remittances in the productive sector, despite the low interest of farmers to invest in this type of development in Nepal.

After only 3 weeks in the fieldwork, it is rather difficult to propose detailed, consistent and reliable information. In spite of the dynamic and careful work of my interpreter, it did not permit to enter to the private sphere and settlement functioning, for instance to identify specific groups or *ama samuba*⁵⁴ that can provide opportunities for women to express themselves and take part in some projects at the local level (Kaspar, 2005). This type of groups should be useful to strengthen the social capital of women, creating assistance networks among the members. The relatively big size of the village complicated also this type of closed immersion, and the smiling Tamang people remain discreet, excluding drunken men when the *raksi* flows abundantly.

Despite migration not being a new phenomenon, Nepalese authorities have failed to organize and secure this increasing livelihood strategy adopted by the young generation, whereas the state has accepted it as a strategy to reduce poverty (Chapagain, 2014). The security of the migrants, often under-skilled and poorly informed, from the process of recruitment, to the respect of their rights by their foreign employers, or secured transfers of remittance, until their return in the country of origin should be ameliorated⁵⁵. As in other sectors of development in Nepal, international institutions and organizations, like IOM, CMIR or Pourakhi Nepal, have investigated the problems linked to migration in a context of recurrent political instability. With local partners, they work to ameliorate the situation of and help male and female migrants before, during and after their experience.

Beside these migrants, there are the “left-behinds”, those who endure the absence, from a few months to several years, and sometimes disappearance of this relative, like

⁵⁴ *ama samuba*, literally “mothers’group”, are groups of mothers and exist for a long time in Nepal (Kaspar, 2005)

⁵⁵ Information collected from discussions with IOM, NISER, Pourakhi Nepal.

Interviewee 14. These left-behinds get less attention, despite their key role in the changes and development of the country. Furthermore, female migration is increasing also and I was confronted to this appeal for foreign opportunities in my discussion with the women. Nepalese authorities should establish clear guidance and agricultural strategies to sustain the remote areas in such a way it may benefit for the whole country. The country is facing a huge challenge of complete dependency to major external financial contribution through remittances and development cooperation funded by foreign donors.

Local elections, the first since decades, conducted after my stay in Gatlang are maybe an opportunity to bring until the local level of the country the tools to develop specific and adapted projects for each regions. That was the hope of some Nepalese I met. The future will say if this movement toward decentralization will bring significant changes.

13.1. Challenges and perspectives for women

Kaspar (2005) found that in the hilly regions the before/during/after migration experience of the husband women do not see real changes in their daily labour workload. After my fieldwork, I can confirm that in Gatlang women are already greatly involved in farming and that the departure of the male member of the household is particularly problematic for the ploughing of the fields. Due to a popular belief women were not allowed to do that. The burden of work also increases if the household were used to work together in the fields, and if the wife has to take care of young children.

However, it was much more difficult to assess the changes in decision-making power of these women within the household, but also at the settlement level, in the agricultural activities. In this way, I noted that none of them mentioned any social restrictions to take part in new medicinal herbs farming or implementation of greenhouses, but few of them were also aware of or active in these projects. Thus, I assume that the phenomenon of feminization of agriculture could appear more at the managerial than the labour level in Gatlang.

The improvement to such a decision-making power depends also to on human or social capital, and access to resources, like land. In Gatlang, no woman has fields in her

name. In Nepal, Kaspar (2005) observed and stated that access to land property is a factor that will increase the decision-making power of the women and reduce their dependency to men.

Remittances have largely contributed to the poverty reduction in the country (Joshi et al., 2012), but women left-behind remain largely dependent on this money sent by migrant members and do not dispose of their own financial assets. I noted a poor diversification of incomes of the women in Gatlang, essentially composed of the remittances, sale of potatoes and beans, or sale of artisanal product within the village. Since the earthquake, incomes from tourism were quasi inexistent, at least among the women interviewed, but this activity was gently restarting and I observed few groups of trekkers passing through the village. Tourism would be a way to promote local products and handicraft, as well as the Tamang culture. But inhabitants need to be trained in the management of this type of activity, to insure for instance the sustainability of natural resources. Women have to be involved in these types of project, not only as farmers but as managers also.

13.2. Challenges in agricultural practices

It is evident that the traditional small-scale subsistence farming is not a sustainable and viable practice for the coming generations and that the aspirations of the younger generations are different from the one of their parents. Complementary activities and changes are needed in the agricultural sector in mountainous rural areas, even more as effects of climate change begin to be felt, impacting drastically the rainfall patterns among other resources. Education also increases the abandonment of the rural areas. The children, who were sent in private schools out of the village, will reach a good level of education and will not be willing to come back to the village to work in the fields.

Khanal et al. (2015) also called for an effective technology and production plan in agriculture to increase the productivity, develop niche productions based on farming system such as off-season vegetable farming, fruit farming or agroforestry. In my opinion, it must be asked how this has to be financed. Probably that men and women should have to be

encouraged to invest their remittances in such projects. Women particularly lack financial skills and have to be trained in this field for the purpose to take an active part in the development of projects. Norlha is promoting this type of formative approaches throughout the project Mahila.

13.3. NGOs and researchers

A personal key concern during my project has been the benefits my research would provide to Norlha and, to a lesser extent, to others organisations working in the area of Gatlang. It was also the opportunity to question what (student) research could bring to NGOs and vice versa. Behind the fact that it is a way to enrich the network and create new connections of both sides, I give examples of my own experience of collaboration with Norlha in conclusion of this report.

Student researchers can benefit from the fieldwork knowledge of the NGO and their connection with local stakeholders. If the data of the NGO are based on quantitative baseline survey, researchers may obtain qualitative data to complete the baseline study or bring further information. The student researchers could also take part in the collection of the data that constitute the baseline survey of the organisation. I found that my role was to report some extra-knowledge, linked to the spectrum of action of Norlha, and to explore other aspects of the impacts of migration in Gatlang, for instance in the agricultural sector.

However, NGO and researchers do not work necessarily at the same rhythm and on both side deadlines might be different. Thus, it implies an anticipated and flexible approach to the partnership. I suggest that the topic of research should also have to be complementary to the work of the NGO, in order to not disturb the work of the local partners and create confusion between the work of the NGO and the questions of the researcher. Local partners have also an active role to play in the proposition of topics of research, since they are probably the ones who are the best informed but have to stay focus on the objectives and activities of the project.

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Annexes

Personal information

- Name
- Age
- Number of children
- Since when she is married
- School grade

Questionnaire

1. Who has migrated in the family? Where, since when, why?
2. What are her main generative income activities?
 - *Farm and non-farm**
 - *For her / her husband*
 - *Who manage the money in the household?*
3. How the incomes of the household fluctuate during the year?
 - *Regularly or irregularly? Why?*
 - *How is it linked to farming cycle?*
4. What are her strategies to mitigate these fluctuations?
 - *Does she try to reduce these fluctuations of incomes and how?*
 - *Does she try to have extra incomes? Does she try to have extra incomes with agricultural products?*
 - *Does she take part in a community saving system?*
5. In the fields, does she have to do work she was not allowed to do before her husband has migrated?
 - *How does she do to overcome these barriers?*
6. Does she have noticed any changes in agriculture last years?
 - *Which ones, and why?*
 - *Is she able to cope with these changes?*
7. Does she cultivate medicinal plants?
 - *Why or why not?*
 - *Which ones?*
8. Does she have a plastic tunnel (greenhouse)?
 - *Why or why not?*
 - *What grow in her greenhouse?*
9. Does she have to buy seeds and is she always able to do so?
10. Does she have to leave fields?
 - *Since when, why?*
 - *Does she know if other people have abandoned fields in the village and why?*

11. Does she have any exchanges with other villages?

- *Where is the furthest place she is allowed to go?*
- *Why? Which activities?*

12. After the earthquake, did she need to modify her activities?

- *Other generative income activities?*
- *To do something she was not allowed to do before?*

**Questions in italic used to guide the discussion if limited answers*

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Table 4: Baseline questionnaire

Overall project goal: Identify the strategies adopted by women to cope with male outmigration and sustain agriculture in their village? A case study from Gatlang, district of Rasuwa, Nepal.

Hypothesis: Women may dispose of remittances and invest, for example, in agricultural activities to improve their livelihoods.

Theoretical framework: Feminization of agriculture, theory of access and sustainable livelihood framework

First main objective (Contextualization): to contextualize and understand the situation in rural areas in Nepal and Gatlang in a context of male outmigration.		Second main objective: to identify economic strategies developed by women left-behind to cope with male outmigration.	
Sub-objectives	Information needed to reach objective/data categories	Sources of information and methods to access	Assumptions / risks / alternative strategies
<p>Sub-objective 1.1: To understand the livelihood system in Gatlang/Nepal in rural areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration • Agriculture (access to market) • Livestock • Incomes generation activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporality • Past/current/future practices • Difficulties • Foreign/governmental/local interventions • Level of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Reports • Interviews in KTM • Personal observations • Baseline survey (November 2016) • Interviews of women and men in Gatlang • VDC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impossibility to go in Gatlang for climatic or political reasons or road route impassable • Sensitive information • Sensitive information, difficult to collect • To work with a translator requires preparation • To work with a translator requires preparation
<p>Sub-objective 1.2: To understand the role of women in agriculture in Nepal/Gatlang.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work distribution • Role of women and men in the household • Role of family-in-law and extended family • Market access, land tenure, ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Report on migration (Government of Nepal, IOM, others organisations) • Tshering and team Northa KTM • Anita Ghimire from NISER • Yubraj Nepal from CMIR • Leah Morrison or Prasuna Saakha from IOM • Literature review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impossibility to go in Gatlang for climatic or political reasons or blocked road • Sensitive information, difficult to collect • To work with a translator requires preparation • Stéphanie Jaquet's advise: to work with a woman translator to interview women
<p>Sub-objective 1.3: Research on migration, specifically on Tamang culture and rural areas of Nepal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History • Patterns of migration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators on migration (for example : proportion of migrants, trends, ...) • Indicators on remittances (for example : % of GDP, part of income of household migrants) • Government programs • Why, who, where, how 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on migration (Government of Nepal, IOM, others organisations) • Tshering and team Northa KTM • Anita Ghimire from NISER • Yubraj Nepal from CMIR • Leah Morrison or Prasuna Saakha from IOM • Baseline survey (November 2016) • Interviews of elderly people (past and current information) • Interviews of VDC representatives • Personal observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unreliable and/or unclear indicators • Unavailability of contacts in Kathmandu
<p>Sub-objective 1.4: To identify outcomes of male outmigration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remittances • Agriculture • Lack of work force • Workload • Empowerment of women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews in Gatlang • Observations • Informal discussions • Literature review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unavailability of respondents • Difficulty to identify clearly the specific outcomes of male outmigration from other economic or social changes
Second main objective: to identify economic strategies developed by women left-behind to cope with male outmigration.			
<p>Sub-objective 2.1: to understand conditions of access to and control over remittances by women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conditions of access • (Money transfer system, familial system, lack of knowledge, ... (to complete)) • Condition of control – decision making-power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline survey (November 2016) • Interviews with the Northa KTM team • Interviews with the local partners of Northa if possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impossibility to go in Gatlang for climatic or political reasons or route impassable • Sensitive information • Sensitive information, difficult to collect

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews of women and men in Gatlang • Interviews with researchers and experts in Kathmandu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with a translator requires preparation • Stéphanie Jaquet's advise: to work with a woman translator to interview women
Sub-objective 2.2: to understand if agriculture is an area of investment for the women left-behind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of knowledge in remittances management • Types of investments in agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline survey (November 2016) • Interviews with the Norlha KTM team • Interviews with the local partners of Norlha if possible • Interviews of women and men in Gatlang 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No investments in agricultural sector • Low level of knowledge of women and no answers
Sub-objective 2.3: Other economic strategies? Guesthouse, market, handicraft, tourism (trekking), cooperatives?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with the local partners of Norlha if possible • Interviews of women and men in Gatlang 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Third main objective: to identify strategies of women left-behind to sustain agriculture			
Sub-objective 3.1: To identify activities develop by women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New market • Agricultural techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ (crops, livestock, collect, calendar, incomes, (access land), ...) • Impacts of development projects and governmental actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review • Reports (Norlha) • Baseline survey • Personal observations • Interviews with the Norlha KTM team • Interviews with the local partners of Norlha if possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On my side, lack of knowledge in agriculture • No new activities
Sub-objective 3.2: to analyse women difficulties to develop strategies to sustain agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current state of agriculture • Needs • Impacts of development projects • Lack of work force • Lack of knowledge • Household workload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information mainly collected in Gatlang: • Baseline survey (November 2016) • Interviews with the Norlha KTM team • Interviews with the local partners of Norlha if possible • Interviews of women in Gatlang 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive information, difficult to collect • To work with a translator requires preparation • Stéphanie Jaquet's advise: to work with a woman translator to interview women • Incapacity to evaluate or explain their needs and wishes
Fourth (optional) objective: to identify if other events or phenomenon impact the life of women left-behind and agriculture in Gatlang			
Sub-objective 4.1: Earthquake, climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend of outmigration: return of men to rebuild their homes or increase of outmigration to earn money • Increase of female outmigration • Level of awareness of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews of women/men in Gatlang • Interviews with the local partners of Norlha if possible • Literature review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough information and statistics unavailable • Gatlang not directly concerned

Table 5: Logical Framework (log-frame)

Months/ Activities	Baisakh Apr/May	Jesth May/June	Ashad June/July	Shrawan July/Aug	Bhadra Aug/Sept	Asoj Sept/Oct	Kartik Oct/Nov	Mangsir Nov/Dec	Paush Dec/Jan	Magh Jan/Feb	Falgun Feb/Mar	Chaita Mar/Apr
Plantation	Maize Soybeans	-	Millet	Millet Beans	-	-	-	Balrey Wheat Karu	-	-	Potatoes	Potatoes
Weeding	Potatoes	Maize	-	Maize Beans	Millet	-	-	-	-	-	-	Potatoes
Harvesting	-	-	Barley	Potatoes	Maize	-	-	Beans	Millet	-	-	-
Preparation of fields	-	-	-	-	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	⌘	-	-
Separation beans from pods	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Beans Barley Karu	Beans Millet Soybeans	-	-	-

Table 6: Agricultural Calendar. Source: Norlha

Interview n°#	Name (coded)	Date	Husband	Where
1.	Interviewee 1	March 9	Trekking guide	In her house (shelter)
2.	Interviewee 2	March 9	In Malaysia. She does not have contact since months.	In her house (shelter)
3.	Interviewee 3	March 9	In Dubai.	In front of her house, partially destroyed by earthquake
4.	Interviewee 4	March 10	In Iraq (has already been in Saudi Arabia)	In her house
5.	Interviewee 5	March 10	In Gatlang/sometimes in Kathmandu	In her house (shelter)
6.	Interviewee 6	March 11	Kathmandu/Hydropower projects	In front of her house
7.	Interviewee 7	March 11	Trekking or porter guide	In her house (shelter)
8.	Interviewee 8	March 13	Driver in China	In her house (shelter)
9.	Interviewee 9	March 14	In Malaysia	In front of her house (shelter)
10	Interviewee 10	March 15	Hydropower project (in Sanjen?), probably in Chilime	In front of her house (shelter)
11.	Interviewee 11	March 16	Malaysia (cut small pieces of tissue)	In front of her house (shelter)
12.	Interviewee 12	March 16	Trekking guide in Kathmandu	In front of her guesthouse
13.	Interviewee 13	March 17	Go to Sanjen (probably project in Chilime)	In front of her house (shelter)
14.	Interviewee 14	March 18	Iraq? She lost contact with him 3 years ago.	In her house (shelter)
15.	Interviewee 15 (Husband)	March 18	He was in Malaysia for 5 years in 2007.	Next to his shop.
16.	Interviewee 16	March 19	In Iraq since 16 months	In front of her house (shelter)
17.	Interviewee 17	March 19	In Dubai since 7 months	In front of her house (shelter)
18.	Interviewee 18	March 20	In Malaysia since 4 years and 3 months	In front of her parent's house
19.	Interviewee 19	March 20	In Malaysia, but he has an other wife in the village now	In her house (shelter)
20	Interviewee 20	March 22	Trekking guide	In front of her house (shelter)

Table 7: Grid of the interviews conducted in Gatlang