

*Draft (Nov. 15, 2006)*

**Strengthening National Statistical Capacity by Promoting  
The 2010 Round of Population and Housing Census  
*Expert Group Meeting on ESCAP Regional Census Programme*  
27 – 28 November, 2006  
Bangkok, Thailand**

***T. S. Bastola,  
Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal***

**Background**

The first population “count” of Nepal was undertaken in 1911. Since then nine more censuses have been accomplished in the country. Among them, the scope of the first four censuses was limited. The first scientific as well as synchronised census was conducted in 1961. After 1961, a census has been taken every ten years. The 2001 census is the tenth in a series of population enumeration in Nepal. The next census is due in the year 2011.

Population census is an important source of international migration statistics in Nepal. Question on the “place of birth” provides information on foreign-born population including both foreign and national citizens. “Citizenship” provides information about foreign nationals residing within the country. Questions like “the place of residence five years ago” provide important information on immigration. Similarly, “person absent and living abroad” provides information on number emigrants (number of out-migrants from Nepal). The items included in the census schedules have varied from one census to another. These variations over the censuses have complicated the migration data analyses and their uses.

## **A. Currently available international migration statistics**

### ***1. Measurement***

For the first time, the 1961 census collected international migration data on the basis of “place of birth” and “citizenship” for all individuals counted in the census. Since then the censuses of Nepal have been collecting information on these two items. The 1981 census collected additional information on “duration of residence” and “reason for migration”. In the 1991 census both of these new questions of 1981 were dropped and a new question on “place of residence one year ago” was added for all persons aged one year and above.

In the 2001 census, the question items related to migration were again changed. The “place of birth” and “citizenship” questions were included but the question on “residence one year ago” was replaced by “residence five years ago”. Further, information on “duration of residence” and “main reason of staying” at the present place of residence were also collected.

In the 2001 census information on the population “absent from the household and who have gone abroad” was also collected from each household counted in the census. In fact, information on “absentee” population has been collected since the 1952/54 census.

### ***2. Concepts and Definitions***

On the basis data availed from the population censuses of Nepal, the major categories of international migration can be grouped into “lifetime migration” and “period migration”. Another category is based on the concept of “citizenship”. “Absentee” population provides information on the stock of emigrants.

The migration concept is based on the change of usual place of residence. An international migrant is a person who changes his or her country of usual residence.

Usual place of residence – It refers to the place of residence of members of household where they usually come back for spending their night. It also means that they have no other place to reside at the time of enumeration other than the usual place they report.

Lifetime migration – A lifetime migrant is a person who has moved from his/her place of birth to the present destination where he/she is enumerated (at the time of the census) irrespective of the number of times he/she has migrated in between. In other words it does not capture the return migration or multiple migrations.

Period migration – Migration that has occurred during a specified period (of one year or five years) preceding the census date is called “period migration” for the analyses of migration data in Nepal. In the 2001 census, for example, a person whose place or country of usual residence five years ago differed from place or country of usual residence at the time of enumeration was defined as a period migrant.

Citizenship – It is the state of being a citizen of a particular country. A citizen of a particular country is a person who has the legal right to belong to that country and enjoys certain political rights of the country. It refers to the legal nationality of the person.

Absentee population – An individual absent from the household and gone abroad for more than six months before the census date has been defined as an “absentee” for the census enumeration purposes.

Question on the purpose of stay and purpose of emigration each has several answer categories (Annex I).

### ***3. Sources of data***

Population census and household surveys are the principle sources of data on international migration in Nepal.

Population census – The most important source of data on international migration is the periodic national census. Population censuses provide migration data up to a large scale of spatial dis-aggregation. As in other many countries, the existing main source of migrant stock data in Nepal is the population census.

Household survey – Another important source of international migration data is the household survey carried out periodically. Nepal Living Standards Survey 2003/04, for example, has collected data on migration and children away from home. It provides data on migrant population stock, origin of migration, reason of migration, and status of children (aged 0–14 years) away from home. It also provides data on remittances received by households from outside the country.

Official records – Official records in the Department of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Transport provide data on the number of emigrants. However, there are discrepancies between the official numbers and estimated numbers from other sources. There might be several reasons for such discrepancies. Some of them are – migration between India and Nepal is undocumented, a large number of emigrants to the Gulf and Tiger states is illegal and undocumented.

There is no explicit coordination mechanism as such among different sources within the country to produce aggregate statistics on international migration.

#### ***4. Policy relevance***

It has been long felt that the currently available migration data is not sufficient for policy development of the country.

One of the objectives of the current tenth plan in the “Population” management sector is “to manage the migration processes”. Strategy related to this objective is to systematise “the internal and external migration”. To manage the international migration the action plan of the tenth plan document states – “appropriate policies and programmes will be

formulated by carrying out necessary study and research”. But the study on international migration has yet to be launched.

There are several data gaps in the currently available migration statistics of Nepal. There is no information, for example, whether the people of Nepal migrated outside the country because the circumstances prevailing within the country pushed them out or whether they were lured by the attractive conditions and employment opportunities outside the country. The insurgency within the country also was accountable for the push and pull factors of the international migration but it has been never officially studied.

All data users are not directly consulted regarding migration data needs. CBS is under the National Planning Commission Secretariat. The members of the Planning Commission provide their suggestions regarding the needs. Up to now no full fledged migration survey has been done by the Bureau.

### ***5. Dissemination***

There is no separate dissemination mode and frequency for migration data. Information from the census is disseminated along with the other information included in the census reports.

In the 2001 census, along with the traditional methods of dissemination other modern methods were used. These included: workshops at the central as well as at the regional levels. Census data have also been disseminated in the present-day popular electronic media. Sample raw data (about 12 percent of the whole census data) from the 2001 census is placed in the domain in order to facilitate the analyses according to the user’s need.

There is no formal mechanism to share country’s international migration data with other countries on a regular basis. The information collected from census and surveys are made available to other countries as well as to international basis as and when they are published or on demand or on reciprocity.

## **B. Upcoming Census**

Population Census 2011 will be the eleventh in a series of the population enumeration in Nepal. Moreover, this census marks the “one hundred years of census taking” in Nepal.

At present we are at the juncture of political changes in the country. The issues related to the restructuring of the set up of the country’s political system will no doubt affect the scope and content of the upcoming census.

In the upcoming census (of 2011), international migration topic will certainly be included. Up to now the tentative thinking is that the questions included in the last census of 2001 will be continued. Before finalizing the census questionnaire a series of interactions with the stakeholders, data users and interest groups will be held and their suggestions will be collected and finally whatever is feasible within the census framework will be accommodated. For reference, the questions that were asked in the last census are listed in annex I. Some of the tables extracted from the 2001 census reports are presented in Annex II.

## **C. Good Practices and Limitations**

Questions on “place of birth” and “citizenship” have been included in all of the modern population censuses of Nepal. Over the years there has been an increasing trend to emphasise the importance of information related to migration statistics. This realisation has lead to the collection of more information on migration of the population in recent census and surveys.

There are some special features of the international migration in Nepal. Migration between India and Nepal is mostly not documented due to migration across open border especially since there is no need of passport and visa for cross border movement.

Migration between Nepal and India is often seasonal. Therefore the number of migrants highly depends on the season of the year during which enumeration takes place. More

than that due to the long open border between these two countries, many people crossing the borders are commuters.

A considerable portion of out migration to countries other than India such as Gulf and Tiger states is often illegal and as such undercounted.

**Annex I: Topics on migration included in the 2001 Population Census of Nepal**

H<sup>1</sup><sub>11</sub>. Is anybody absent from the household living in other countries?

1. Yes → H<sup>1</sup><sub>12</sub>
2. No → Form 2
3. Don't know → Form 2

H<sup>1</sup><sub>12</sub>. Description of persons absent and living in other countries:

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age when left home</u>	<u>Reason of absence</u>	<u>Duration of absence (years)</u>	<u>Destination (country)</u>
1. Male				
2. Female				
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
<u>Reason of absence</u>				
1. Agriculture		2. Business	3. Household service	
4. Institutional service		5. Study	6. Marriage	7. Others

I<sup>1</sup><sub>9</sub>. What is ..... 's citizenship?

1. Nepali
2. Indian
3. Chinese
4. Other .....

I<sup>2</sup><sub>4</sub>. Where is ..... 's place of birth?

1. Same district↓
  2. Other district
  3. Other countries
- I<sup>2</sup><sub>7</sub>
- i) VDC
  - ii) Municipality

I<sup>2</sup><sub>5</sub>. What is ..... 's duration of stay here?

I<sup>2</sup><sub>6</sub>. What is ..... 's main reason of staying in this district?

1. Business
2. Agriculture
3. Service
4. Study
5. Marriage
6. Other

I<sup>2</sup><sub>7</sub>. Where ..... was living 5 years ago?

1. Same district
  2. Other district
  3. Other countries
- i) VDC
- ii) Municipality

## Annex II: Tables extracted from the 2001 Population Census Reports

Table 12(1): Population absent from household by sex and country of destination, 2001

	Male	Female	Total	Percent of total
India	520500	68550	589050	77.29
Other SAARC countries	2271	420	2691	0.35
China	1018	336	1354	0.18
Korea	2433	246	2679	0.35
Japan	3087	639	3726	0.49
Hong Kong	8143	3858	12001	1.58
Singapore	2679	684	3363	0.44
Malaysia	6742	71	6813	0.89
Australia	1991	500	2491	0.33
Saudi Arabia	66629	831	67460	8.85
Other Gulf countries	42166	1200	43366	5.69
Other Asian countries	3130	719	3849	0.50
Europe	9887	2017	11904	1.56
USA, Canada and Mexico	7227	2330	9557	1.25
Other countries	1566	311	1877	0.25
Total	679469	82712	762181	100

Table 13(1): Population absent from household and reason for absence by sex, 2001

	Male	Female	Total	Percent of total
Agriculture	6608	1155	7763	1.02
Business	11140	910	12050	1.58
Personal service	481278	24943	506221	66.41
Institutional service	91007	3322	94329	12.38
Study/training	24929	6818	31747	4.17
Marriage	2157	11944	14101	1.85
Others	62350	33620	95970	12.59
Total	679469	82712	762181	100

Table 20(1): Population by citizenship and sex, 2001

	Male	Female	Total	Percent of total
Nepalese	11292559	11327804	22620363	99.49
Indian	60839	41629	102468	0.45
Other Asian	5278	6543	11821	0.05
Other countries	702	1580	2282	0.01
Total	11359378	11377556	22736934	100

Table 7(2): Population by place of birth and sex, 2001

	Male	Female	Total	Percent of total
Native born	11176340	10952501	22128842	97.33
Same district	9845995	9353784	19199779	84.44
Other district	1330345	1598717	2929062	12.88
VDC	1252269	1491863	2744132	12.07
Municipality	78076	106854	184930	0.81
Foreign born	183038	425055	608092	2.67
Total	11359378	11377556	22736934	100

Table 9(2): Population by place of stay 5 years ago and sex, 2001

	Male	Female	Total	Percent of total
Native born	9925447	9968106	19893552	99.56
Same district	9622628	9667563	19290191	96.54
Other district	302819	300543	603361	3.02
VDC	265896	268484	534379	2.67
Municipality	36923	32059	68982	0.35
Foreign born	38216	49953	88169	0.44
Total	9963663	10018059	19981721	100