

**Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance Survey among Male Labor Migrants in 11 Districts in Western and Mid to Far-Western Regions of Nepal  
Round II**

Family Health International/Nepal  
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## Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance Survey among Male Labor Migrants in 11 Districts in Western and Mid to Far-Western Regions of Nepal Round II

### SUMMARY

This is the second round of the Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey (IBBS) conducted among male labor migrants to India in the Western and Mid to Far-Western development regions of Nepal. The field survey was carried out during the months of June to September 2008. The survey measured HIV prevalence among migrant workers including information on key behaviours and knowledge such as condom use, sexual behaviours, knowledge of HIV/AIDS and exposure to HIV/AIDS messages, knowledge of Sexually Transmitted Infection (STIs), STI treatment behaviours, and drug using habits. Overall, the study measured HIV prevalence of 1.4 percent in the Western and 0.8 percent in the Mid to Far Western region of Nepal from a sample of 360 migrants from each region.

### WHAT IS THIS STUDY AND WHY WAS IT DONE

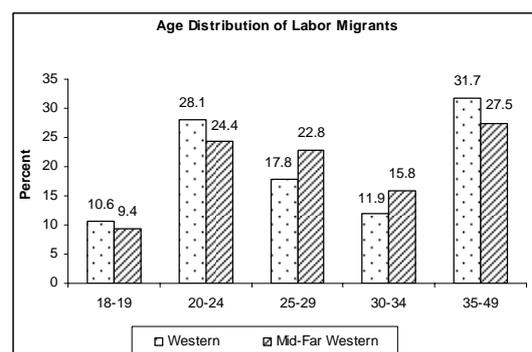
New ERA and SACTS with technical support from FHI/USAID, Nepal conducted the first round of IBBS for National Center for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) to represent male labor migrants from 11 districts in the Western (five districts) and Mid to Far Western (six districts) regions of Nepal. This is the second round of the same IBBS conducted as part of national surveillance plan of NCASC. Moreover findings of these studies are used to inform the national HIV and AIDS response programs and also help monitor the on-going programs.

### METHODS

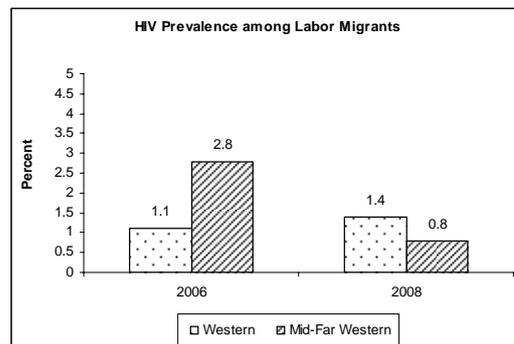
This cross-sectional study included 360 male returnee labor migrants in each region aged 18-49 years, having stayed continuously or with interruption for at least 3 months in India as a migrant worker and having returned to Nepal within three years prior to the date of the survey. Blood samples were tested using Determine HIV1/2 (Abbott, Japan) and Uni-Gold HIV 1/2 (Trinity Biotech, Ireland) were used as parallel tests and a third test was performed using SD Bioline HIV 1/2 (Standard Diagnostics, South Korea) as a tie breaker in case of a tie between the first two tests. Two different samples of size 360 each was designed for five Western districts (Kaski, Palpa, Syangja, Kapilvastu and Gulmi) and six Mid to Far Western districts (Banke, Surkhet, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Doti, and Achham). Demographic and sexual behaviour data was collected through a structured questionnaire by trained male interviewers. Ethical approval was obtained from Nepal Health Research Council and Protection of Human Subject Committee, USA. Interviews were carried out and blood sample were collected after obtaining oral witnessed consent and study participants were provided test results with post-test counselling.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

- **A majority of labour migrants is literate:** About 7 in 10 labour migrants have attended up to 9 years of schooling in both of the regions. The proportion of illiterate migrants was noticeably lower in the Western region (10.6%) than in the Mid to Far Western region (18.6%).
- **A sizeable proportion of the labour migrants are adolescents and youths.** Median age of the migrants in Western and Mid to Far Western region respectively was 28 years and 27 years. About 10 percent migrants in both samples are adolescent and about 25% were youths (20-24 age group).
- **Maharashtra and Delhi are popular destination among the labour migrants.** The destinations in India of over one-third of the labour migrants from both region (Western 36.9% and Mid to Far Western region 34.2%) was Maharashtra. However, from the Western region about 43% have migrated to Delhi. The other popular destinations in India were UP, Punjab, and Gujarat.
- **Sex with FSWs is present among labour migrants.** Eleven percent in the Western and 23 percent in the Mid to Far Western region reported of ever having had sex with sex worker(s). About 10 percent in the Western region and 22 percent in the Mid to Far Western region ever had sex with female sex workers while in India. The proportion of respondents reporting of ever having sex with FSWs while in India has decreased compared to 2006 study (17.2% in Western region and 26.9% in Mid-Far western region).
- **Consistent condom use with wife is low.** Only 5 percent in the Western and 8 percent migrants in the Mid to Far Western region had consistently used condom with their wives. A majority of respondents in the Western (77.4%) and Mid to Far Western region (63.5%) had not used a condom with their wife in the past year.



- **Awareness of HIV/AIDS is high but proper knowledge about HIV/AIDS transmission is low.** Nearly all respondents (98.6%) in the Mid to Far Western and (95.8%) in the Western region had heard about HIV/AIDS. Overall, only about half of the respondents (46.4% - 47.8%) in both regions knew of all three ways (ABC) of protecting from HIV. However, less than one-fifth of the respondents (17.2% in Western and 15.8% in the Far Western region) had comprehensive knowledge which included proper knowledge on misconceptions such as healthy looking person may have HIV infection and HIV does not transmit from *jutho* and mosquito bite.
- **Some changes in HIV prevalence is observed in the study regions.** HIV prevalence has slightly declined in the Mid to Far West (2.8 to 0.8%) in absolute values but is not statistically significant. In the Western region also no significant change is observed (1.1% to 1.4%) since 2006.
- **Reported STI symptom is low among the labour migrants.** About 96 percent in the Western and 90 percent in the Mid to Far Western region did not have any STI symptoms in the past year. Nearly three percent of respondents in the Western and about seven percent in the Mid to Far Western region reported experiencing the symptoms at the time of survey.
- **The study results indicate higher risks of HIV infection for those who are older and who go to Maharashtra State of India.** The study shows 2.3 percent and 1.3 percent HIV prevalence among the respondents in the Western and Mid to Far Western region who are above 24 years of age. The HIV prevalence rate among the migrants who went to Maharashtra was more than two percent in both samples.
- **The level of exposure of labor migrants to HIV/AIDS/STI programs was low.** A very small proportion of respondents in the Western region (1.9%) had met, discussed, or interacted with peer educators (PE) or outreach educators (OE) in the last 12 month period; 15 percent respondents in Mid to Far Western region reported so. At the same time only four percent respondents in the Western and 19 percent in the Mid to Far Western regions had ever participated in HIV/AIDS awareness raising program or community event in the last 12 months.



#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PROGRAM

- In view of the risky sexual behaviour of labor migrants, they should be educated on the high risk they are exposing themselves and their families to. Community-focused HIV prevention programs should address this issue.
- Community networks and groups are desirable to be mobilized in the migrant communities to impart information on various aspects of HIV, including means of protection.
- The program should implement intensive education programs for condom use that focus on migrant workers' wives as well. Free condom distribution programs through NGOs/health workers/volunteers should be expanded further as a part of the HIV/AIDS awareness campaign.

IBBS Key Indicators among Male labor migrants		Results	
		Western (N=360)	Mid to Far Western (N=360)
HIV Prevalence	%	1.4	0.8
Age <20 years	%	10.6	9.4
Illiterate	%	10.6	18.6
Ever married	%	79.5	89.7
Median age of marriage	year	20.0	19.0
Median age at first sex	year	19.0	18.0
Ever had sex with FSW	%	11.1	23.3
Ever had sex with FSW in India	%	9.7	21.7
<b>Migration Destination (Major states only)</b>			
Maharashtra	%	36.9	34.2
Delhi	%	43.9	11.1
Uttaranchal Pradesh	%	0.8	20.3
Gujarat	%	10.3	23.1
<b>Types of Work (Major work only)</b>			
Laborer/Factory Laborer	%	41.4	45.8
Hotel Labor	%	37.5	15.8
Caretaker/Servants	%	24.4	8.9
Guard	%	9.7	38.1
Median age of first migration	year	18.0	18.0
Knowledge of HIV preventive measures 'ABC'	%	46.4	47.8
Comprehensive knowledge on HIV 'BCDEF'	%	17.2	15.8
Reported STI symptoms in the past year	%	4.2	10.0
Visited STI clinic in the past year	%	1.7	15.0
MLM reached by PEs/OEs in the past year	%	1.9	4.2
MLM reached with targeted HIV prevention (BCC with OE/PE or DIC or STI Clinics or VCT or community events/trainings or drug treatment or rehabilitation)	%	4.4	21.9
MLM reached with HIV prevention program (Knows where to receive HIV test result and obtain condom)	%	5.6	8.3
MLM that have received an HIV test in the last 12 months and who know their results	%	3.3	6.7
Note: A=Abstinence from sex, B=Being faithful to one partner, C= Consistent use of condom, D=A healthy looking person can be infected, E=Can get HIV from mosquito bite, F=Can't get HIV by sharing meal			

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