

# The Impact of Male Migration on Women's Reproductive Health Outcomes

Nokafu Sandra Chipanta, MPH, Dominick Shattuck, PhD, Sharada Wasti, PhD, Sarah Thompson, MA, Christina Riley, MPH, Naramaya Limbu, MS | Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University



## Understanding Migration in Nepal

**Nepal has a long history of migration. Migrants aim to improve life for their families**

- ✓ Until 1981, **India** was the primary destination for most migrant workers. Today the **Middle East** is the primary destination
- ✓ There are approximately 1.92 million (7.2% of the total population) migrant Nepalese
- ✓ Some ethnic groups have higher rates of migration (i.e.: Hill Dalits 50%, Muslim 46% households).

### Migration's Impact on Women and FP

#### Women with migrant husbands are referred to as "left wives."

- ✓ They take on almost all of the **workload**
- ✓ Migration **alters exiting norms** associated with autonomy and decision-making power
- ✓ Research suggests that migration **negatively impacts left wives' health**, education, and child wellbeing

#### Migration is linked to increased discontinuation of modern methods

- ✓ FP use is three times higher among married women who live with their husbands (62%) than left wives (23%)(NDHS, 2012).
- ✓ Left Wives discontinue family planning:
  - To avoid rumors about infidelity
  - Due to low coital frequency and reduced risk of pregnancy
  - Due to increased demand for children as a source of labor and support

## Addressing Findings Through Pragati

The Fertility Awareness for Community Transformation (FACT) project developed Pragati, a series of informational games that use critical reflection to catalyze dialogue around fertility awareness, family planning (side effects, myths and misconceptions), and social norms around FP use.



## Study Design & Methods

- Longitudinal, quasi-experimental study to assess the association between fertility awareness and family planning use in Nepal:
  - Pragati arm: 9-game intervention
  - FP arm: 3-game intervention
  - Control arm: no intervention
- Average CPR (42%) across five study districts used to estimate a sample size of 162 women per cluster to detect a 10% increase in CPR among women 15-25 years old.
- Measured fertility awareness, spousal communication, perceived community norms towards FP-use, couple communication, fertility desires, FP use, and intention-to-use among married women
- Of 2,430 women at baseline and endline, analysis included:
  - Baseline: 1,123 married women, 485 left wives
  - Endline: 1,136 married women, 467 left wives
- Study tools were pilot tested with data collected using mobile tablets.

## Conclusions

- 1** Pragati game play was associated with significant improvements in fertility knowledge and spousal communication. The magnitude of these changes were greater among left wives versus other married women, suggesting that Pragati game play is an effective way to reach left wives.
- 2** Pragati game play promotes a more supportive environment for factors associated with FP use including positive community perception of FP use and couple communication norms.
- 3** Compared to other wives, left wives have different fertility intentions and reproductive health needs. Programs like Pragati help communities address more diverse FP needs.

## Study Results

### Demographics

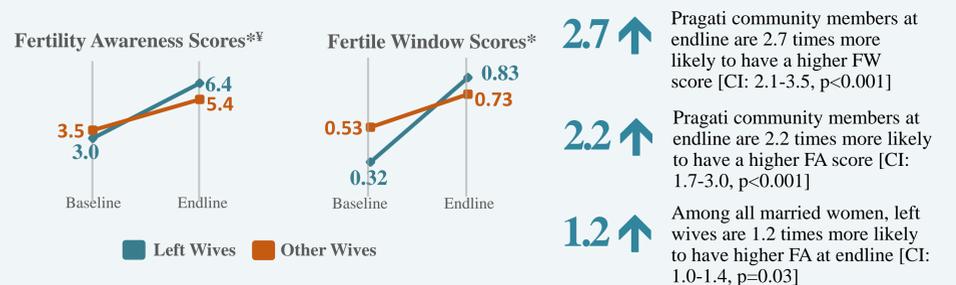
	Left Wives	Other Wives
Baseline	485	638
Endline	467	669

- Mean age: 21.5 years (SD 2.5), no differences between groups
- Mean no. child = 1.1 (SD: 1.0), no differences between groups
- Left-wives are more likely to have at least 1 child
- 25% of married women wished to become pregnant at endline

Statistically significant in Pragati at  $p < 0.05$ :  
 \*Baseline vs Endline  
 †OR of Left-wives vs. Other-wives

## Individual-Level Outcomes

### Fertility Knowledge



### Spousal Communication



Spousal communication and relationship scores significantly increased in the Pragati arm, particularly among left wives compared to other wives:

- Discussion of birth-spacing scores increased by 28.1 points
- Discussion of FP-use scores increased by 11.3 points
- Strength of relationship scores increased by 13.3 points

## Community-Level Outcomes

### Perceived Community Acceptance of FP Use & Couple Communication

**Associations between participants' perceived community acceptance of FP-use, attitudes towards couple communication, and other determinants of FP use across study arms:**

**Community acceptance of FP at was associated with:** Being in a Pragati community (OR: 1.4), having a high FA score (OR: 2.3), discussing FP with spouse (OR: 2.1), and education (OR: 1.2)

**Positive community attitudes toward Couple Communication was associated with:** A high FA score (OR: 1.4), discussing FP-use with spouse with spouse (OR: 1.4), discussing child-spacing with spouse (OR: 1.4) and education (OR: 1.4)



## Family Planning Outcomes

### FP Intention-to-Use

**Women were more likely to report intention to use FP in 6 months if they were:** From a Pragati community (OR: 1.4), Discussed FP w/ spouse (OR: 3.6), and reported a high perceived acceptance of FP (OR: 2.0).

**Left wives were half as likely (OR: 0.5) to intend to use FP in 6 months than other married women.**