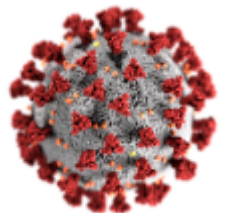


No wealth, poor health: Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on marginal communities of Nepal

Romy Das Karna, Ph.D.

Associated Assistant Professor, Salem College
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

romydas.karna@salem.edu



I. Background: Global impact of COVID-19

- COVID-19 has already inflicted huge damage in economies around the globe.
- World Bank estimated that pandemic could push about 71 million people into extreme poverty in 2020.
- The worst impact is expected in Sub-Saharan African and South Asia where huge proportion of population lives in poverty.
- The pandemic poses a real challenge to the UN Sustainable Development Goal of ending poverty by 2030.
- It could cause a reversal of a decade in the world's progress in reducing poverty (Sumner et. al., 2020).

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on the marginal and vulnerable communities of Nepal.
2. To provide immediate short and long-run action plans as policy recommendations.

3. Methodology

- Study is primarily based on:
 - governmental/non-governmental reports
 - media information
 - personal communication with stakeholders

- Study period: June 20 - October 30, 2020

4. Findings: Status of COVID-19 in Nepal

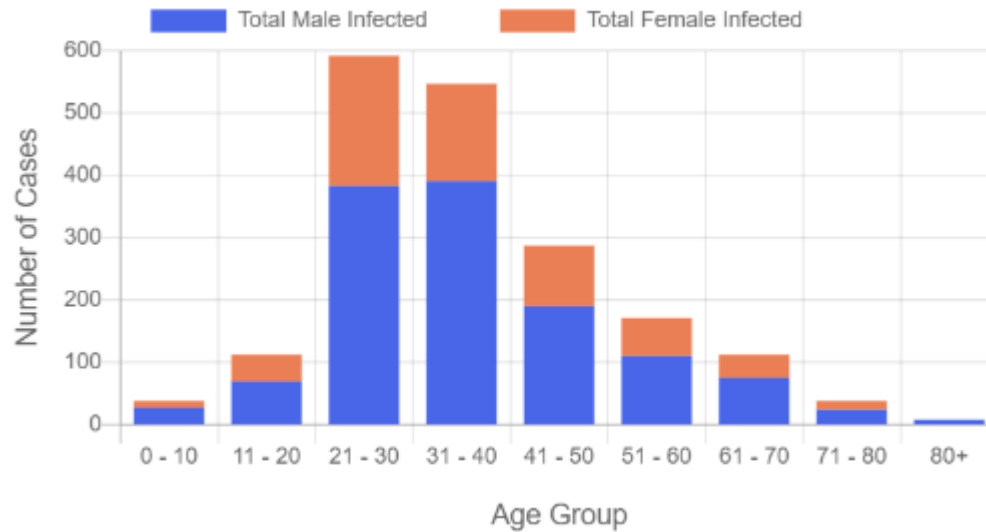


Fig 1: COVID-19 cases by age group as of October 1, 2020

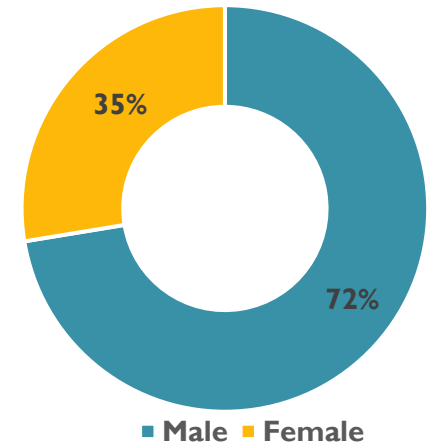
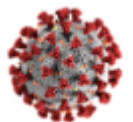


Fig 2: COVID-19 cases by gender as of October 1, 2020

Source: Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal, 2020



4. Findings: Status of COVID-19 in Nepal (cont.)

- Marginalized communities were impacted due to two major factors:
 - direct exposure to the virus
 - economic lock-down imposed by the government.
- More than a million informal sector workers lost their jobs temporarily or permanently (Awasthi, 2020).
- Thousands of Nepalese migrant workers were stranded at the southern and western Indian border when they were denied entry to the country.
- Several cases of death were reported at the border due to hunger and sickness including COVID-19.



4. Findings: Status of COVID-19 in Nepal (cont.)

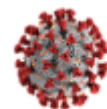


4. Findings: Status of COVID-19 in Nepal (cont.)

- Economic lockdown brought deprivation of an income source for rural and urban poor.
- Also, cases of death due to poverty, hunger, and domestic violence were reported as government continued economic lockdown for > 2 months.
- In the far-western province, 175 people, 93 males, and 82 females committed suicide during the lockdown (The Himalayan Times, 2020 July 7).

4. Findings: Impact on Women and Children

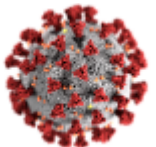
- Though the infestation rate is lower in women (35%) than men (72%), women bore the brunt harder.
- 231 cases of gender-related violence were reported between Mar. 24 - May 9 (WOREC, 2020).
- Lack of effective maternity and infant childcare services due to economic lockdown.
- Death of 56 new mothers between (Mar. 29 - May 27, 2020) and 60,000 women were deprived of prenatal services (Onlinekhabar, 2020 May 31).
- Children were mainly deprived of educational and instructional opportunities.



5. Policy Recommendations

➤ Short-term Actions

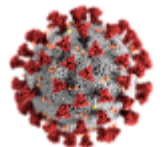
- Expand capacity of testing labs, isolation centers, and (Personal Protective Equipment) PPEs for front-line workers.
- Increase communication with vulnerable groups to raise awareness on:
 - social distancing
 - use of face mask/covering & sanitization
- Ensure COVID-19 relief packages reach to the needy groups.



5. Policy Recommendations (cont.)

Medium to Long-term Actions

- Strengthen the legislation to include informal sector workers in the social protection plan.
- Provide returning migrants with sources of employment, entrepreneurship in agriculture, tourism, and energy.





Thank you!