

A study of Nepalese families' paid and unpaid work after  
migration to Australia

by

Basundhara Dhungel

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**Department of Social Work, Social Policy and Sociology**  
**Faculty of Arts**  
**The University of Sydney**

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## Abstract

The patterns of paid and unpaid work adopted by migrant families with dependent children are more or less similar to that of the prevailing working patterns of men and women of Australian born couples. A case study with 14 couple families, 14 husbands and 14 wives who migrated from Nepal under the “skill” or “professional” category and the literature review on paid and unpaid work of couple families with dependent children show that in both Nepalese-born and Australian families in general the trend of change of working pattern in paid and unpaid work is similar. With the increased participation of married women in the paid labour force, men have increased their participation in household work. There is increased household work for both husbands and wives, but women tend to do more household “inside” and childcare work than men. In the mean time, men tend to do more work in the “masculine” sphere of “outside” work in house maintenance, repair and car care.

The major factor that differentiates the working pattern of migrant families from Australian born families is the experience of migration and the category under which they migrated. The change of working practices of paid and unpaid work by migrant families is affected by the change of their family type from a three generational extended family to a two generational family and their education and previous work experience that they brought along with them. These professional migrants migrated as a “family unit”, that is, migrated as spouses and dependent children and they made their own decision to migrate, unlike other categories of migrants who migrated from political or economic pressure.

One of the important experiences of migrant families is that there are new opportunities, new lifestyle, new intimacy and companionship and new sharing of work between husbands and wives after migration. At the same time, there are losses of extended family relatives, close friends and cultural events which affect their day to day lives. There are Australian-based friends who provide support in the initial period of migration but these families do not provide regular assistance or support which family relatives provided in Nepal.

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