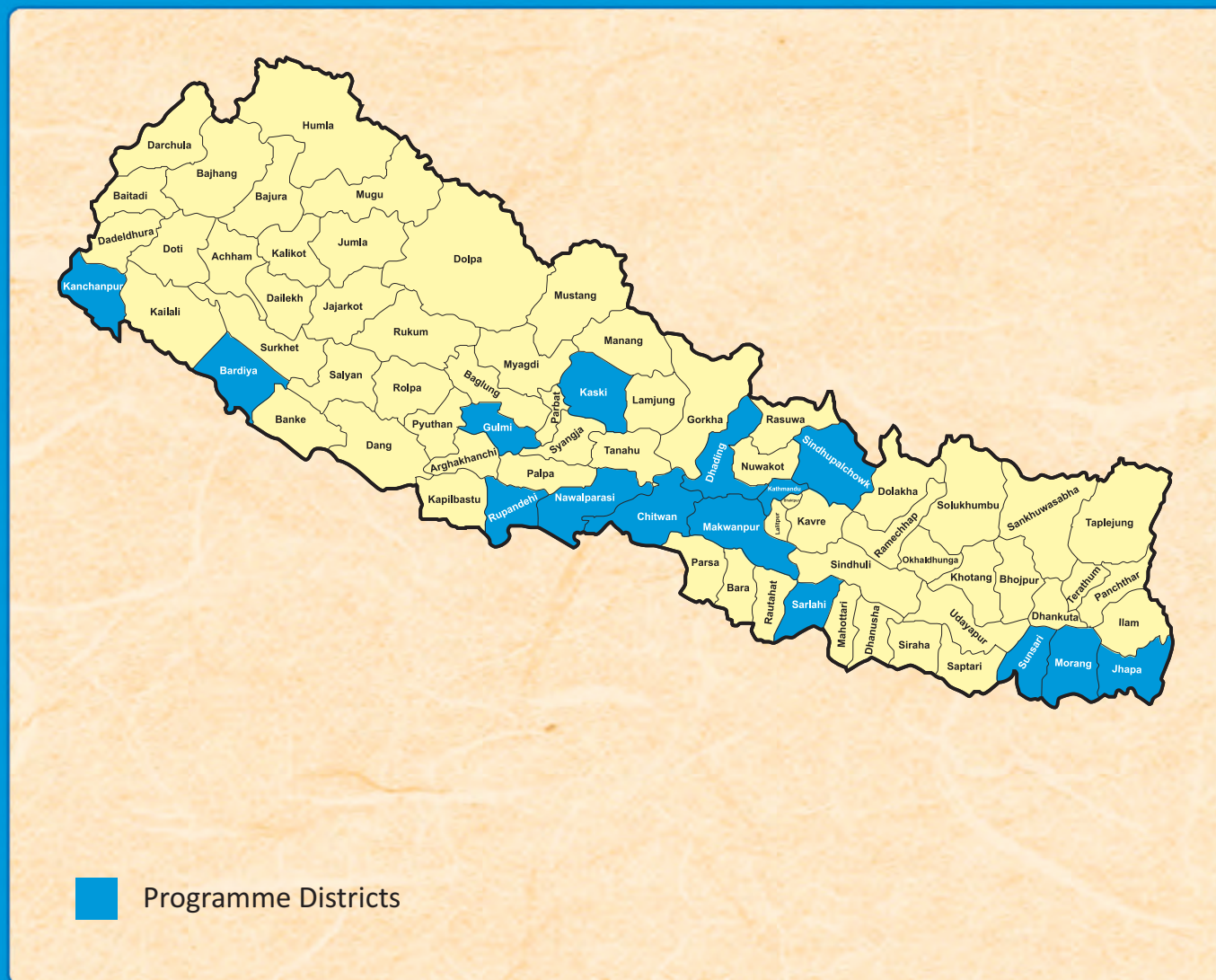


Empowerment of Women Migrant Workers of Nepal



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Sustaining the Gains of Foreign Labour
Migration through the Protection of
Migrant Workers' Rights

FOREWORD

Migration for better opportunities is a usual phenomenon and it has been a common practice in Nepal since ages. In today's context of Nepal, poverty, lack of employment opportunities and passive economic growth has made migration for foreign employment a forced choice for many Nepalese. In the case of women who opt for labour migration, factors like violence, poverty, lack of decent economic opportunities play influential role. However, with increasing migration for foreign employment, various cases of deception, abuses and economic exploitation too are reported. Lack of information, use of irregular channels, exorbitant charges by recruiting agents/agencies and deceptive recruitment agreements have contributed to the risk and vulnerability of migrant workers, especially women.

This programme 'Sustaining the Gains of Foreign Labour Migration through Protection of Migrant Workers Rights' initiated by UN Women with the support of European Commission and overall guidance of the Ministry of Labour and Employment has attempted to minimize risks associated with foreign labour migration and sustain its gains. During the programme, the government facilitated and supervised the local level coordination in 15 districts covering all five development regions to ensure effective implementation of the programme. The programme not only facilitated in the initiation of government to government dialogue with Saudi Arabia and Israel but also provided an opportunity for peer learning from the Philippines and Sri-Lankan government and experts for devising financial schemes.

I believe that this programme has been very well-timed and relevant especially considering Nepalese economy which is highly dependent on remittance sent by migrant workers. By focusing on the rights of migrant workers and their families especially on women migrant workers' plight, this programme has been able to acknowledge the role of women migrant workers in strengthening their household to the national economy.

European Commission deserves special acknowledgement for its financial support to the programme. I would like to acknowledge the role played by UN Women over the past decade on policy formulation and programming by supporting the duty bearers and rights holders on safe migration issue in Nepal. I'd also like to extend sincere gratitude to the entire implementing partners. We fully believe that this documentation will contribute to future discourse, planning and programming for sustainable development of Nepal.

Suresh Man Shrestha

Secretary
Ministry of Labour and Employment



The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of European Commission, UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.



Launch of Prabas Diary



Workshop on exit strategy after the completion of the project

FOREWORD

Nepal has witnessed high levels of foreign labour migration since the last two decades. The remittance these migrant workers generate account for almost one quarter of the country's GDP, with 11 per cent of this total coming from women migrant workers¹. The impact of these financial resources on the country's development is so significant they have been acknowledged for their contributions to Nepal's remarkable progress towards achieving its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)².

However, the people whose efforts help strengthen the national economy, the migrant workers, continue to face multiple challenges throughout the migration cycle, and women's vulnerability raises a number of serious concerns. Newspapers in Nepal regularly report on the large number of women 'missing' in foreign lands, the growing number of women returning with mental health illnesses because of abuse, exploitation and undocumented status, and evidence of the gross violation of their human rights. Without doubt, women working as migrant workers are increasingly playing a role as economic agents in their country's development. But at what price? To reduce the risks, costs and challenges associated with foreign labour migration, UN Women has been supporting the Government of Nepal since 2002 to help ensure safe migration. Under the Government's leadership, women migrant workers' issues are now incorporated in the national agenda, and their recognition and protection are now firmly embedded in key policy documents and legal frameworks.

This booklet has been developed to document the results achieved, the partnerships built and strengthened, the good practices developed, and the lessons learnt through the partnership between UN Women and the European Commission to support the Government's commitments. It provides an insight into the situation, contributions, needs and aspirations of women migrant workers. We hope this publication will contribute in raising awareness about the issues and at the same time prove to be an essential tool in guiding future interventions targeted to ensure safe migration.

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the leadership and guidance from the Government of Nepal, particularly the Ministry of Labour and Employment, and the commitment of the District and Village Development Committees and the Women and Children Development Offices. I would like to thank the European Commission for its financial support, thus making these efforts possible. I would also like to thank People Forum and Nepal Institute of Development Studies for the effective implementation of the programme, and Pourakhi, Pravashi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), National Network of Safe Migration (NNSM), Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA), Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA), Association of Foreign Employment Orientation Nepal (AFEON) and Media Advocacy Group for being an integral part of this initiative. Finally, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the migrant workers who shared their stories and experiences and who continue play their part in advancing their country's development.

¹Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010

²Chandra Bhadra, International Labour Migration of Nepalese Women: The Impact of Remittance on Poverty Reduction, Bangkok UN/ESCAP/ARTNeT, 2007.

Ziad Sheikh
Representative
UN Women
Nepal Country Office

FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT IN NEPAL

The trend of migration for foreign employment in Nepal can be traced back to 200 years ago but it was institutionalized only after the introduction of the Foreign Employment Act in 1985.

In the last few years, the country has witnessed unprecedented political transformations but on the economic front, in comparison growth has remained almost stagnant. Poor economic growth and limited employment opportunities in the country have made foreign employment a forced choice for many.



Street drama for awareness in Makwanpur



Interaction with the staff of Tribhuvan International Airport on safe foreign employment



Non Resident Nepali Association and NIDS signing an MOU for the study of the status of women migrant workers in Arab countries



Interaction with the local officers on Safe Foreign Employment

FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT IN FIGURES

According to the Department of Foreign Employment more than 350,000 Nepalese youth migrate from the country for foreign employment annually. They make significant contribution to the country's economy through remittance. Nepal received more than 400 billion Nepalese Rupees as remittance income in the fiscal year 2012 (Economic Survey, Central Bank of Nepal). Women migrant workers contribute 11% of the total remittance received. (Nepal Living Standard Survey, 2011)

The Nepalese population officially leaving for foreign employment is three million of which 90,000 are women (Department of Foreign Employment, September 2013). It is also estimated that equally significant number of population leave unofficially for foreign employment and women comprises the majority of them.

The contribution from remittance in the fiscal year 2011 was 23% of the national GDP (Migration and Remittance Fact Book, 2011, World Bank). However, a range of multi-sectoral efforts are required to ensure the protection of the rights of the migrant workers and their families, who have been significantly contributing to ensure the economic stability in Nepal.



THE LEGAL PATHWAY

■ Government policies on foreign employment for women

The Interim Constitution of Nepal 2007 ensures the fundamental rights of the citizens including their right to employment. It ensures citizens with the freedom to be involved in any kind of profession, employment, industry and business and have ensured freedom of movement for their citizens. Considering the social status of women in Nepal, the constitution has also clearly made provisions against gender-based discrimination.

The Nepal Government's Three-Year Plan 2010-13 and the draft Approach Paper for the Three Year Plan 2014-16 reinforces the need to make foreign employment safe, respected, organized and productive. The Concluding Observations of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee 2011 includes specific recommendations to the Government of Nepal to protect the rights of women migrant workers.

The Foreign Employment Act, 2007 and the Foreign Employment Policy, 2012 includes various provisions for the protection of the rights of women migrant workers. The Act further adopts the principle of non-discrimination in the processes of foreign employment.



Tika B.K., President, Pourakhi-Bardia, Speaking on issues of women



Paralegal training for returnee women migrant workers



Interaction with media persons

PROGRAMME FEATURES

Sustaining the Gains of Foreign Labour Migration Through the Protection of Migrant Worker's Rights

- 30 Community Alert Groups (CAG) formed in 30 VDCs of project districts. 1035 members trained on safe migration reaching to 42% women, 31% ethnic minority community, 8% Dalit Community and 12% returnee migrant workers. CAG now acting as the "information hub" at the community level and collating data on migrant families and proving safe migration awareness.
- 55% returned women were from dalit and indigenous community from the total 1493 oriented on safe migration and linked with POURAKHI. 96% were returnee from Gulf countries and 95% worked as a domestic help.
- Network of POURAKHI organised in 15 project districts, POURAKHI advocating for migrant's rights and providing paralegal referral services to the distressed migrants and their families.
- 289 numbers of cases of deception are received from the project districts, 65 victims received total compensation and cases of 207 being follow-up.
- 6025 community members reached through street dramas on safe migration issues of which 50% were women.
- 203 journalists including 56 women oriented and google group established for information dissemination on safe migration.
- 1,272 media reporting facilitated. 83% were published in print media, 16% in local FM/Radio and 1% in television.
- Orientation on various aspects of the migrant workers were provided to more than 3,500 representative from the government and local office, civil society, judge, legal professionals, migrant workers and their family
- For the first time, a study was conducted in partnership with the Non Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) and NIDS on migrant women workers issue in the Arab States (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon and United Arab Emirates).
- The programme facilitated the implementation of the Code of Conduct (CoC) of NAFEA and also brought the issues of women migrant workers in the mainstream programme of the Women and Children Office.

WOMEN IN FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT

Poverty, lack of decent economic opportunities and violence are the root cause of the increasing number of women in foreign employment. According to the Department of Foreign Employment, the percentage of women officially leaving for foreign employment has risen to around 6 percent in the year 2012 compared to 3% in the year 2011. Lack of information and attractive offers made by agents has misled many women to migrate unofficially via other countries for foreign employment. This trend is making women more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. In addition, most women are employed as domestic workers. This sector is not

covered by the labour laws of many countries of employment which further increases their vulnerability. To address this issue, ILO Convention 189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers came into force in 5 September, 2013.

The existing structural inequality increases women's subordination and prevents women from accessing employment opportunities. Breaking stereotypical norms, women migrant workers have established themselves as the bread-winners of their families and have been contributing financially to their families' sustenance and the country's economy.



PROGRAMME PERSPECTIVE: PAST EXPERIENCE



Many women migrant workers still migrate through irregular channels either using the open border with India or via third countries. This puts them at greater risk of deception, exploitation and exposes them to potential violence within the country, in the countries of transit and in the destination countries. In this context, UN Women¹, introduced an Asia Pacific and the Arab State Regional programme for the Empowerment of Women Migrant Workers in 2002. In the last decade, UN Women has been working in collaboration with government agencies, non-government organizations, migrant workers associations and the private sector to ensure gender responsive acts, laws, policies and service mechanisms to promote and protect the rights of migrant workers and their families.

In Nepal, UN Women has offered longstanding support to women's safe migration, including by advocating for the passage of Foreign Employment

Act 2007. It bans discrimination based on gender, removing restrictions on women working abroad, and provides for measures guaranteeing women's security and rights. Recruiting agencies are now subject to regulation, and women migrants receive information about the contractual obligations of the employer and migrant assistance centers in destination countries. Recently, UN Women helped pilot an reintegration programme for women migrants that helps them invest money earned abroad into sustainable businesses at home. Many of these women have organized village alert groups that help other women avoid fraud in foreign employment; they also spread information about forced migration. National resources have now been allocated to expand the programme.

¹ As of 1 January 2011, UN Women has consolidated four previous United Nations entities. For the purposes of this report, unless required for clarification, any of these entities will be referred to as UN Women

CONCLUSION

The goals and objectives of the programme were focused on protecting the rights of women and men migrant workers and the members of their families by strengthening the capacity of duty bearers and rights holders to sustain the gains of foreign employment.

The programme was implemented in 15 districts of the five developmental regions of Nepal. The programme has directly benefitted 300,000 people which include migrant workers, their families and organizations involved in this sector. The Rome Mission of the United Nations has highly acclaimed this programme for its effectiveness and success.

Initiated in 2011 for over 32 months, this programme aims to ensure safe migration of people for work and to reduce exploitation and violence of the migrant workers. The Result Oriented Monitoring Mission and the final evaluation of the programme has also acknowledged and appreciated the effective results generated through this programme.

Girija Sharma
Executive Director a.i
Foreign Employment Promotion Board



In spite of the short-period, this programme has delivered in great amount. Thirty CAGs have been formed in 30 VDCs of 15 programme districts involving key stakeholders both as individuals and as groups, engaged in ensuring safe labour migration. Even after the completion of the programme, these groups are actively functioning and I feel these groups need to be further sustained and given continuity. These CAGs functioning at the local level are inclusive in nature and has VDC secretary as its member representing the local authority. Other members include returnee migrant workers, para-legal professionals, political party members and others.

The structural arrangement of the programme is one of the key factors behind the success of the group. Another factor influencing this success is the partnership and coordination between UN Women, the programme implementing partners, like People's Forum, Pourakhi, NIDS and the government agencies including the Foreign Employment Promotion Board and the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Effective coordination and understanding between the organizations involved enabled the programme to deliver its objective.

'Prawas Diary', a publication on information related to foreign employment, has been published for the benefit of the migrant workers through this programme. The publication details various information involved in different stages of migration, suggests protective measures for safe migration and aware on the need to remain safe in the process of foreign employment while also includes pages to document daily experiences and information. We believe this diary will be very useful to ensure safety of the migrant workers.

'I LEARNED TO EARN'



Gita Adhikary
Beneficiary, Dharan

I went to Kuwait for work in 1996. Having returned to Nepal after 7 years, I had no option but to stay idle. After meeting Sharada Maskey from Pourakhi, I came to know about Pourakhi and its work. I joined the organization and received training on entrepreneurship development. After the completion of the training, I expressed my interest in making candles. Pourakhi together with Nepal Institute of Development Studies who were implementing the International Fund for Agriculture Development IFAD/UN Women programme provided me the required support. I started making candles and sold them mostly going door to door. As my earning became regular and stable, I then opened a shop and started selling candles at retail too. My business is doing well and I am satisfied with it. The money I earn is enough to spend for my children's education and food and I am glad that I became a member of Pourakhi as it has taught me ways to earn my livelihood.



Sharu Joshi Shrestha

Head, Economic Empowerment Unit, UN Women

Building on our previous learning and experiences, in 2011, with the support of European Commission we started uniting returnee women migrant workers to enhance their voice. Now their network has been expanded in 15 districts. We assisted government on various fronts. At the policy level, we supported the government in developing the Foreign Employment Act and Regulation and in engendering the Foreign Employment Policy. We also supported the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies to develop a Code of Conduct which was endorsed by its General Assembly.

When UN Women initiated its work, the Foreign Employment Act was discriminatory towards women. Abuse and exploitation dominated the discourse on the issues of women migrant workers. The policies and approach of the Government was more from a protectionist approach, creating restrictions in the mobility of women with an intention to protect them. However, UN Women was able to highlight the contribution of women migrant worker not only to their families through their remittance but also to the economy as they contributed to 11% of the remittance. UN Women thus helped to draw the attention of the government and all concerned stakeholders and started a national dialogue not only on the issue of remittance but also on the human rights of the migrant workers especially the rights of women migrant workers and issue that had been over shadowed.

One of the key strategies of UN Women was to build the capacity of the right holders to bring them in the forefront to lead their own agenda and influence the development discourse and interventions. Secondly, UN Women worked in close coordination and partnership with the Government agencies to ensure the sustainability and institutionalization of the issue within the priorities of the government. We also facilitated the learning and sharing of good practices from the regions in designing and implementing programme in Nepal.

We also worked in close partnership with the media. Now the Media has become not only responsible in their reporting but are becoming increasingly accountable and playing a key role in bringing out the issues of migrant workers facilitating the rescue and compensation for distressed migrants and their families while highlighting the diverse aspects of women in foreign employment rather than just focusing on the abuse and exploitation. UN Women piloted a first ever programme on reintegration of women migrant workers and promoted the use of remittance to create alternative livelihood options in Nepal which was later replicated by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The programme has been showcased as a good practice at the Global Forum on Remittance held in Bangkok in 2013. Around 1,000 returnee women migrant workers are today engaged in their own enterprises and making a good living.

Prof. Dr. Chandra Bhadra



Migrant women workers' have made significant contribution to their families and the country's economy by working abroad. Remittance sent by them has contributed in poverty alleviation and attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The project executed in collaboration between the European Commission and the UN Women has taken information and services mechanisms to the local level in 15 districts of the five development zones. This has helped women to be well informed from the early stage of their foreign employment journey. Community Alert Groups (CAGs) that have been formed at the VDC level also spreads awareness and addresses the issue of women migrant workers in their communities and collects data from the wards of each VDC. By collecting data at local level, CAG has filled in the data gap that exists at national level. Relevant data generation is one of the important contributions of this programme and this needs to be further sustained.

Building on the experiences of the past decade, in 2011, in collaboration with the European Commission, the programme on Sustaining the Gains of Foreign Labour Migration through the Protection of Migrant Worker's Rights, was implemented in 15 districts of Nepal, under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MOLE) and in partnership with People's Forum, National Institute for Development Studies (NIDS) and Pourakhi. Around sixty thousand households and twenty seven targeted communities benefitted from the programme.

The objective of the programme is not to promote foreign employment but to reduce the possible violence and discrimination women have to face throughout the cycle of foreign employment; to safeguard the rights of women migrant workers and their families and to reduce the vulnerability associated with foreign employment. The programme provided an opportunity to initiate discourse at both the national and local level on cost and benefits of migration and to sustain the gains of foreign employment.



Advocate Som Luitel
President, People Forum

The programme facilitated orientation on safe migration to officials from different government and non-government organizations, representatives of various political parties, Journalist Federation, Bar Association, Village Development Committee, District Education Office, District Administration Office, District Development Office, District Women and Children Development Office, all 15 programme districts. Altogether safe migration orientation has been provided to more than 1,500 local stakeholders including the government personnel at the district and village level. 45 trainings in 15 programme districts were also provided to 1,493 returnee women migrant workers.

One of the objectives of the programme was to disseminate information on foreign employment in every nook and corners of the villages and to provide legal referral services for the distressed migrants and their families. We have provided legal aid to 289 cases of fraud that has been referred from the programme districts by the CAG and Pourakhi during the programme period.

A SUCCESS STORY

Women, who were undermined in their own country, are now working in the international labour market. This has drawn the attention of various stakeholders and has been an important agenda in the national development priorities. On the other hand, the social cost of foreign employment is showing its effects in the lives of the migrants and their families and in the communities. Migrant women are missing in foreign lands. Many are duped to different working terms and conditions and earning than committed. There is change in traditional family structures with transnational families becoming distinct phenomenon with parents working and staying in different countries of employment. This has resulted in strained relationships among spouses with increasing cases of divorce and domestic violence in the migrant households. While mother are taking care of children in the countries of employment their own children are being deprived of parental care and guidance. This programme helped in bringing these issues in the forefront in the national and local discourses.

While the issues of foreign employment was initially addressed by MoLE in the past, it is quite a feat to note that various other ministries are also now engaging to address the issue namely Ministry of Foreign Affairs the Ministry Federal Affairs and Local Development, Ministry of Home, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare etc. Most importantly, the programme has been able to inject sense of mutual accountability on the issue of foreign employment and safe migration at all levels especially from the concerning government agencies.



Ram Chandra Paudel
Secretary, Armala VDC, Kaski

Armala VDC has a population of 5,000 people with 1,300 households. Besides the count of enrollment in the British and the Indian Army, about 600 people have migrated to other countries for work, out of which 35 are women. As we do not consider India under the foreign employment category, this figure reveals the population migrating mostly to the Gulf countries.

Until few years ago, the tendency to migrate without obtaining any information was a common practice. With CAG's active door to door campaigning, the practice is gradually declining. Aspiring migrants were unaware of their destination country and the process involved in migration but now the CAG informs them adequately about the process and risk associated with foreign employment and about the life style and culture in the destination country. People are enthusiastic about gaining as much information as possible and are also learning the required skill needed for the job at host countries before migrating.

Considering the impact of the CAG, we too have started giving importance to public awareness programmes and collection of the data from the VDC level which is expected to make our planning and response more systematic and effective.

USE OF REMITTANCE

In Nepal, 56% of the households receive remittance income (as per the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11). Despite the high inflow of remittance into the country, its utilization is still not optimized. According to the Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11, nearly 80% of the remittance funds are spent on daily consumer expenses, 7% on loan repayment, 4% on acquiring household assets and 3% on children's education. Unfortunately only 2% of it is used in capital formation.

Sustainable development is only possible through productive utilization of remittance. Economic growth can be sustained and employment opportunities can be created within the country if remittance income is further invested to support the growth of sectors like agriculture, tourism and other productive areas. The programme also helped to advocate for schemes at helping workers to utilize remittance in more productive ways and in generating livelihood alternatives in Nepal. This programme has contributed in changing the perspectives of the society towards returnee women migrant workers by providing platforms to highlight their contribution seeking their due recognition. The programme has also played a key role in developing the leadership role among returnee women migrant workers. Returnee women migrant workers who were reluctant to share their identity are united now and are advocating for their issues in national and international forums.



Manju Gurung

President, Pourakhi Nepal

This programme has helped us organize for collective action in all 15 districts and facilitated discussion and discourse among women migrant workers and with major stakeholders on various concerns of women in foreign employment. It has enabled in mobilizing the returnees to disseminate information and raise awareness on safe migration which has helped migrants become aware about their rights. Pourakhi has taken this opportunity to leverage issues and concerns of women migrant workers both at the national and community level as well at various international forums.

Most of the women leave for foreign employment for domestic work. Offering alternatives within Nepal would minimize women from being victimized from the potential risks arising from forced and unsafe migration procedures. As a solution, initially in partnership with UN Women, we provided entrepreneurship development trainings to the returnees and encouraged them to start small scale business. The Government has replicated the reintegration programme and currently, there are about 1,000 returnee women entrepreneurs that Pourakhi has supported, who earn between Rs.16,000 to Rs.22,000 on monthly basis. According to the evaluation of the pilot reintegration programme initiated by UN Women, 94 percent of the women expressed that they would not opt for foreign employment at the costs of their personal and family risks if they receive opportunities that would yield them monthly income of around Rs. 8,500 in Nepal.

COLLABORATION WITH DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS



Interaction programme organised by Nepal Association Foreign Employment Agencies on the Code of Conduct

During the programme implementation, cooperation and coordination was secured from key organizations working on the issue of foreign employment such as the MOLE, the Foreign Employment Promotion Board (FEPB), local governance bodies, National Network for Safe Migration, Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies, Nepal Foreign Employment Orientation Agencies Federation, Pourakhi Nepal, People's Forum, Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Association of Non Resident Nepalese Nationals, local stakeholders and the media.

The programme was implemented mainly through People's Forum in close collaboration of Pourakhi. It established CAGs at the local level. 70 percent of the members of these groups comprises of women and people from the Dalit, indigenous and marginalized groups and returnee migrant workers. Other members include representatives of local government bodies, intellectuals, teachers and other concerned stakeholders. The CAG is spreading awareness on safe migration and providing support to the distressed migrant workers and their families who have been

deceived, exploited and victimized in the migration process.

The programme has facilitated a high level government mission from Nepal in two primary destination countries namely the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Israel. The mission initiated negotiations for bilateral agreements to ensure protection of the rights of Nepali migrant workers. Similarly, in cooperation with the Non-Resident Nepalese Association, the programme also conducted a study on the status of women migrant workers in the middle east focusing on four countries with high-population of Nepali women migrant workers.

Facilitating returnee women migrant workers to unite under the aegis of Pourakhi and building their capacity to generate collective action and voice, raising awareness at the local level; formation of support mechanism at the community level to provide support to the distressed migrants and their families; and mobilizing them to collect data at ward level have been some of the important achievements of the project.



Dr. Ganesh Gurung
Executive Director, NIDS

Firstly, we identified four countries that hosts the highest number of women migrant workers. The four countries are Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Then, in cooperation with the representatives of the NRN Association, we conducted a study in these countries.

NRN has been helping and supporting the migrant workers and this was one of the ways to institutionalize those efforts. In 2005, UN Women had also helped to draft Code of Conduct (CoC) for one of the most important private stakeholders of foreign employment sector- the Nepal Association of Federation of Employment Agencies (NAFEA). This programme has helped to develop the implementation strategy of the CoC to enhance NAFEA's commitment to implement the CoC. It is good to note that the Department of Foreign Employment provides mandatory orientation on the CoC to recruitment agencies during the renewal of their licenses in an effort to reinforce the implementation of the CoC. The programme has also facilitated an assessment of good recruitment practice in Nepal and has tried to engage recruitment agencies in establishing such policies and mechanisms to enhance the protection of the rights women migrant workers.



Returnee women migrant workers in the capacity building training



Samjhana Chaudhary, Nawalparasi in capacity building programme



Radha Kunwar

President, Community Alert Group, Dhikurpokhari, Kaski

After the formation of the CAG, we conducted various awareness raising programmes. We included people from diverse sectors in the group. The Village Development Committee (VDC) too supported the campaign, which is a joint initiative of all stakeholders and the public to regulate the foreign employment process at the local level. We conducted door-to-door campaigns in all of the 9 wards of the VDC. We put up a notice in the VDC office informing people to seek consultancy from CAG members before leaving for foreign employment. We have also started documenting data from this VDC on foreign employment like the number of migrant women workers, the incoming remittance and the loss of life at the destination countries

In many cases, the remittance received was not utilized properly. Through our program, we helped them to initiate enterprises using remittance. In Dhikurpokhari VDC alone, our activism has created an enabling environment for safe migration and around 150 people are engaged in foreign employment.



PARTNERSHIP WITH MEDIA

Foreign employment issues were barely given media coverage in the past but today the issue is analysed in terms of broader framework of sustainable development. Following the media campaign after 2001 there has been remarkable change in the media reporting. Many reporters have made foreign employment as their specialized reporting sector and some media houses now have correspondents stationed in the countries of employment for regular media coverage. During the Media Campaign journalists were oriented and trained on the safe migration issues. The neglected issues of women migrant workers are now mainstreamed in the reporting by majority of reporters. Opinions and voices of women in foreign employment including that of the experts from this sector are given due priority by the media. Through this programme, reporters were oriented and encouraged to explore various aspects of foreign employment by taking an investigative approach to their reporting.





Babita Basnet

President, Media Advocacy Group

Though foreign employment has become a pervasive phenomenon of many households in Nepal, media friends especially working at the districts had never imagined that foreign employment could be an important beat to cover. Today foreign employment issues are featured regularly by most of the media which is a significant achievement for us. Issues, challenges and success stories from all of the 15 project districts have been generated through media coverage. Such media coverage provided information on various aspects of foreign employment which not only benefitted the potential migrants and raised awareness among the general public but have also proved useful to the returnee workers as media is highlighting the cases of successful returnees who are using their remittance and generating alternative livelihood opportunities in Nepal and also providing job opportunities for others. Media personals realized there was a great demand among the people for information in this issue while at the same time it was taken up as their social responsibility to report more on the issue especially when large numbers of households were affected by this phenomenon in their districts.

Various issues have been raised and journalists from national to local level are keen to do more investigative reporting which was unheeded before. Media at the national level has been reporting to enhance accountability of the concerned government machineries to implement various policies while locally people are now able to make an informed decision while opting for foreign employment.

Through this programme, media were able to highlight the issues of migrant workers in India. To put it concisely, the programme was able to reiterate that media can be a very powerful advocacy tool. UN Women has been working in collaboration with the media since 2002 and today media stands as a strong partner working in the sector of foreign employment.

Arjun Uprety

Media person, Itahari



We started working in the area of foreign employment since 2002. In initial days, UN Women motivated to understand various dimensions of foreign employment including its cost and benefit and why it should be comprehensively covered by the media. Also at the beginning, only issue of human trafficking was reported while reporting on migration. Later on, we realized that it is an entirely different issue than trafficking despite its close nexus but a worthy area to research on. We then started covering various issues of foreign employment in the media. We built a network of colleagues from 15 districts and collectively raised the issue to minimize the negative and highlight the positive aspects of foreign employment. As the media's attention started growing, the Chief District Officer (CDO) of Sunsari District formed a monitoring team under his leadership and started monitoring foreign employment agencies. One 'manpower' agency in Itahari and one in Dharan which were operating unofficially were closed down while three agents were arrested. The CDO office is continuing the monitoring of such fraud recruitments. A help desk is being operated at the District Administrative Office which offers safe migration counseling to aspiring women migrant workers. Media campaign has thus reduced the number of irregular migration as more and more people are leaving for foreign employment through a formal and regular process than relying on the agents.

ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY ALERT GROUPS

Maximum numbers of migrant workers are going from villages but organizations working in this sector are mostly centralized in Kathmandu. The challenge starts from here. Foreign employment cannot be safe without adequate information. Therefore, 30 CAGs were formed at the local level to decentralize information dissemination in the 15 project districts. These CAGs have been sharing credible information on foreign employment

benefiting not only the workers seeking foreign employment but their families as well. They not only also provide support to the distressed migrants and their families and provide referral support to the concerned agencies for those deceived but also facilitate the rescue of stranded migrants by liaising with the concerned offices and supporting to claim compensations and seek legal redress.



Meeting of Community Alert Group