



Government of Nepal

Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security



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स्वीस सरकार बिकास सहयोग एसडिसि



LEARNINGS FROM THE SAFER MIGRATION PROJECT PHASE II (2013 – 2018)

Learning Series 2019/3



Safer Migration Project (SaMi) - Helvetas Nepal

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Cover photo: Informing and counselling passport applicants at the MRC of Manthali in the district of Ramechhap.

Photo Credit: SaMi/Helvetas Nepal

FOREWORD

Labour migration has become a global phenomenon. Between the fiscal years 2008/09 and 2016/17, the Department of Foreign Employment issued labour permits to over 3.5 million Nepali workers. The resulting remittances, equivalent to over a quarter of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), have contributed to reduce poverty and improve the living standards of migrant families as reflected in better health, education and housing outcomes.



Despite these apparent benefits, the migration cycle i.e., the recruitment, employment and return of migrant workers is fraught with many risks. They may include high recruitment fees, deception on contractual conditions, low wages, inadequate medical care, exploitation, and gruelling working conditions. Many female returnees and families left behind, particularly the wives of migrant workers, find themselves overburdened with social and economic responsibilities while stories of harassment and stigmatization are also common. It is in this challenging context that the Government of Nepal has taken initiatives to ensure that migration is an informed choice and those migrants and their family members have access to a strong support system.

Federalization presents an opportunity to improve Nepal's migration governance system, in particular by improving access to services related to safer migration. With the promulgation of the 2015 Constitution the local governments have been prescribed important functions on foreign employment governance including data collection, skills training, financial literacy training, operation of information centres, and socio-economic reintegration support to migrant returnees. With the devolution of migration related services, a key policy priority now is to ensure that the local governments are sufficiently equipped to carry out their functions and duties to support migrant workers and their families effectively.

The Safer Migration (SaMi) Project was initiated in 2011 as a bilateral initiative between the Governments of Nepal and Switzerland with the objective of ensuring that migrant workers access reliable information for informed decision-making as well as adequate protection throughout the migration cycle. Phase II of the project took place between 2013 and 2018 across 19 districts in Nepal and Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. It featured different interventions to enhance informed migration decision-making and to ensure a safe and productive foreign employment experience for those opting for this path. The lessons from these interventions are important to inform the policies and practices on foreign employment in Nepal at all levels, particularly in the context of federalization as local governments throughout the country gear up to strengthen migration related service delivery. In addition, it is felt that many of the results of the initiatives and the lessons captured in this learning document will be relevant in the regional and global dialogue on migration and development which has gained increasing prominence in the recent years as part of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mahesh Prasad Dahal', written over a horizontal line.

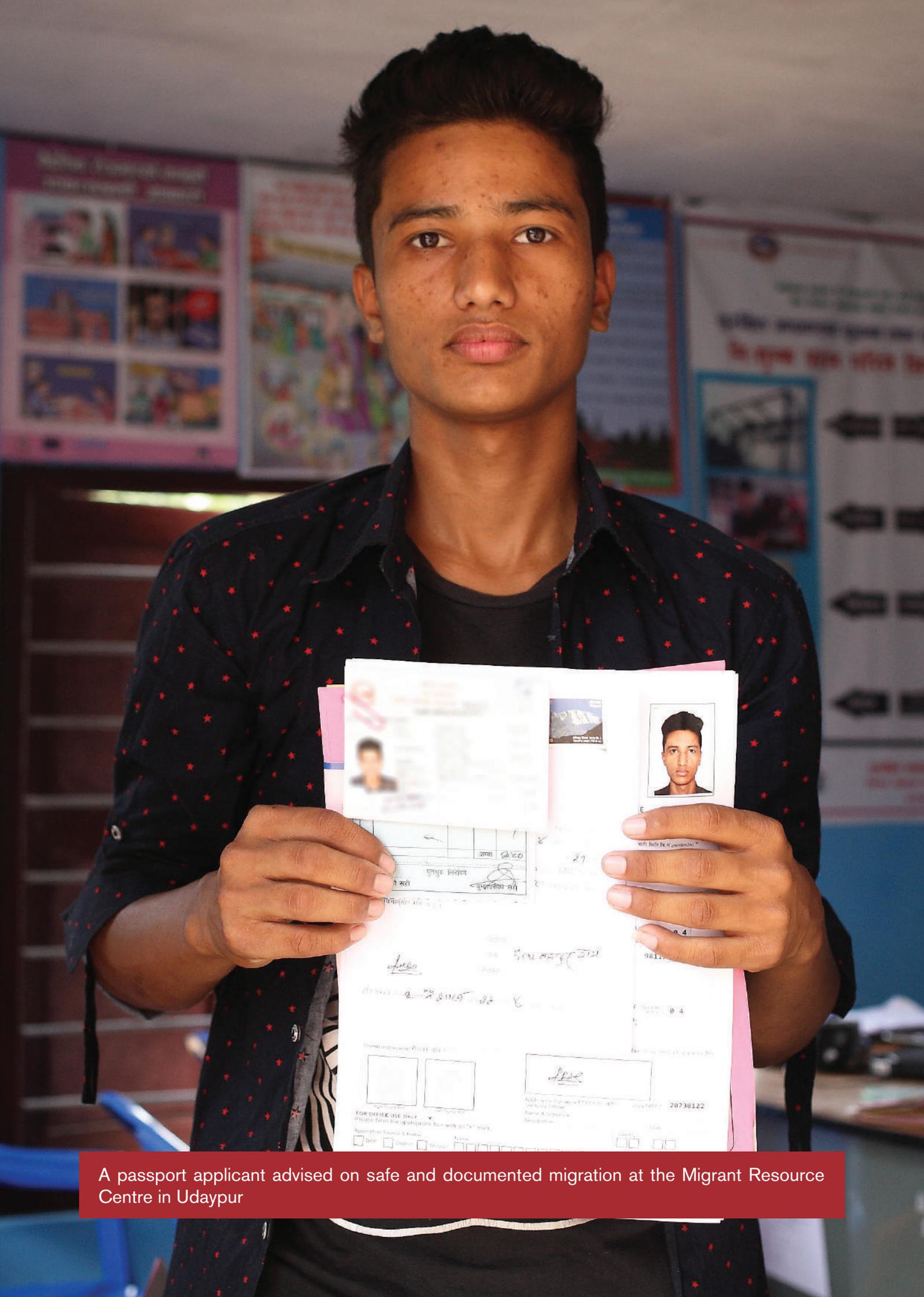
Mr. Mahesh Prasad Dahal
Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
Government of Nepal

ACRONYMS

CMC	Centre for Mental Health and Counselling
COD	Country of Destination
DAO	District Administration Office
DDC	District Development Committee
DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment
DoP	Department of Passport
FEA	Foreign Employment Act
FEB	Foreign Employment Board (formerly FEPB: Foreign Employment Promotion Board)
FEIMS	Foreign Employment Information Management System
FET	Foreign Employment Tribunal
FER	Foreign Employment Regulation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
MoLESS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (formerly MoLE: Ministry of Labour and Employment)
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NNSM	National Network for Safe Migration
PCU	Project Coordination Unit
PMU	Project Management Unit
PNCC	Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RV	Returnee Volunteer
SaMi	Safer Migration Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
TIA	Tribhuvan International Airport

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Passport application form with a photo of the applicant. The form includes fields for name, date of birth, and address. The name is written in Hindi as 'सुरेश कुमार शर्मा' and the date of birth is '27/04/2000'. The form also has a section for 'FOR OFFICE USE ONLY' with checkboxes for 'New', 'Renewal', 'Change', and 'Other'. The form is held in front of the man's chest.

A passport applicant advised on safe and documented migration at the Migrant Resource Centre in Udayapur

1. THE SAFER MIGRATION PROJECT: SAMI

The Safer Migration (SaMi) Project was launched in 2011 as a bilateral initiative of the Government of Nepal and the Government of Switzerland and is implemented through a partnership between the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal (hereinafter Helvetas). The project's overall goal is to support safer and productive migration for Nepali women and men. With official records showing that about 400,000 individuals embark for foreign employment every year, migration constitutes a key dynamic in Nepali society. It also generates important human and social costs for migrants and their families.

Nepal and Foreign Employment

- » *An estimated 4 million Nepali workers are engaged in labour migration.*
- » *418,713 labour permits were approved for Nepali migrant workers in 2017, of which 20,000 were for women. This means that between 1,200 to 1,500 Nepalis leave for foreign employment every day.*
- » *One in every two families receives remittances, which in 2017 represented about 30% of the country's GDP.*
- » *Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates were the four top destination countries for Nepali migrant workers in 2017.*
- » *Dhanusa, Jhapa, Mahottari, Morang, Siraha, Saptari, Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta East, Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta West, Sunsari, Sarlahi, and Rupandehi are the top districts from which migrant workers originate.*



Passport applicants at the District Administration Office

The Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) issued over 3.5 million labour permits in the period 2008/09 - 2016/17. Close to 420,000 labour permits were approved in July 2016 to June 2017, of which around 20,000 were for women.

This translates into an estimated 1,200 to 1,500 individuals per day converging on Tribhuvan International Airport for embarking on overseas employment, with the majority of them heading to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, or Malaysia.¹ In parallel, many Nepalis also migrate informally to India. Given the historic and cultural ties, the proximity and the absence of visa requirements for Nepalis, India constitutes an important destination for Nepali migrants and has also become a transit route for undocumented migration. While the importance of this corridor is recognised, there is a lack of reliable estimates or data on this migration route and its implications.

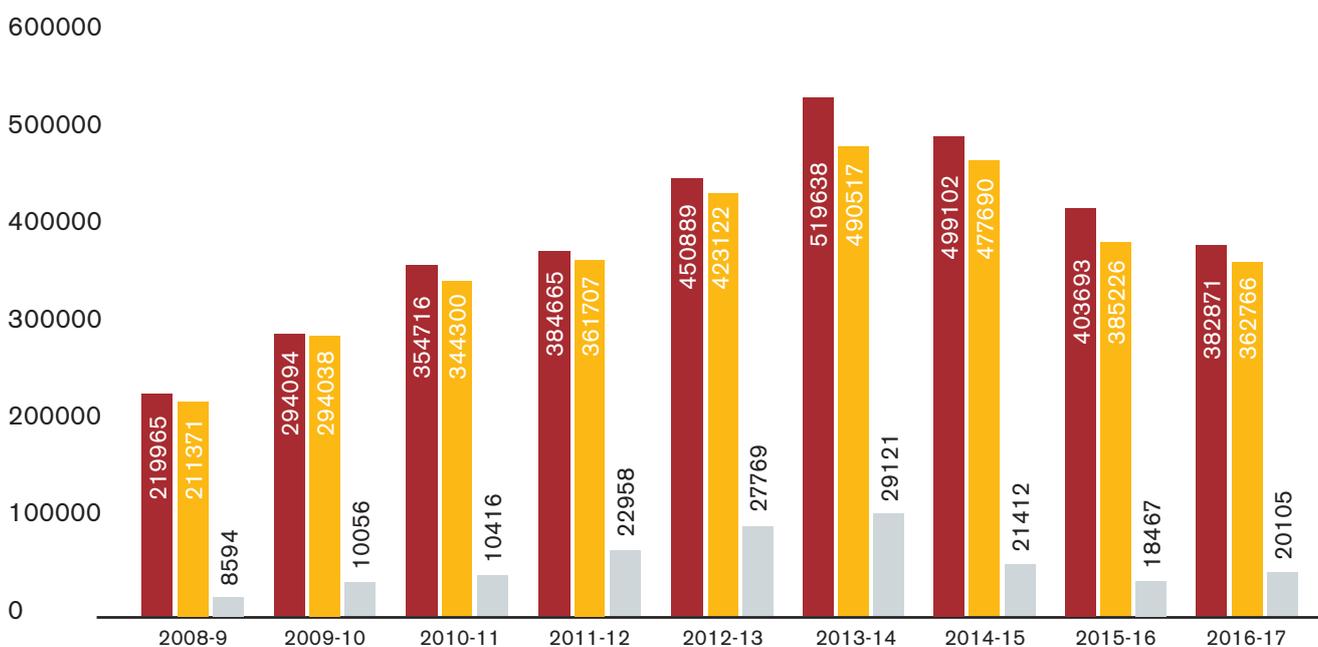


Fig 1: Distribution trend for labour permits 2008/09 – 2016/17²

SaMi Phase II in Brief

- » **Time frame:** 16 July, 2013 – 15 September, 2018
- » **Donor:** Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Government of Switzerland
- » **Primary target group:** Migrant workers (potential, actual and returnees) and their families
- » **Project districts:** Dang, Dhading, Dhanusha, Jhapa, Kailali, Kaski, Khotang, Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta East, Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta West, Mahottari, Nuwakot, Ramechhap, Saptari, Sarlahi, Sindhuli, Sindhupalchowk, Siraha, Sunsari, Udayapur. This makes a total of 19 districts following the division of Nawalparasi district into two districts in the 2015 Constitution. In addition, Kathmandu is also included as project area.
- » **Implementing agency:** Joint implementation – Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) and Helvetas
- » **Total fund for phase II:** CHF 13,616,000 (NPR. 1,290,257,000) for 5 years (2013-2018)

SaMi considers migration a reality. It neither promotes nor prevents migration but supports awareness raising and information on safer migration. It has developed a range of support services to respond to the needs of migrants and their families throughout the migration journey. Its implementation offers lessons to inform the Government of Nepal as well as interested stakeholders in Nepal and abroad to set up needs-based, effective and efficient policies and services related to foreign employment.

¹ Ministry of Labour and Employment, Labour Migration for Employment: A Status Report for Nepal: 2015/2016 - 2016/2017, 2018

² Labour Migration for Employment: A Status Report for Nepal: 2015/2016-2016/2017, 2018.

Since its inception in 2011, SaMi has developed and tested concrete interventions to support migrants and their families. Starting with three districts in 2011, the project expanded its coverage to 19 districts and Kathmandu in 2018, working closely with the Government as well as civil society and private sector partners. The last seven years have allowed for continuous learning and adaptation of intervention strategies implemented throughout the migration cycle, often conceived as pilots. These project interventions and the lessons learnt can serve as an important basis for policy dialogue on migration governance.



Information and counselling on documented migration at the Migrant Resource Centre in the district of Udaypur



Learning process during SaMi's classes on Financial Literacy

2. KEY COMPONENTS

Labour migration in Nepal is surrounded by numerous risks. These risks increase when the migrant is not aware of the administrative process and requirements for documented migration and the advantages and disadvantages of overseas labour migration.

In an effort to better protect migrants and maximize the impact of foreign employment on poverty reduction, the project is based on different and complementary components.

2.1. Information and Awareness Raising on Safer Migration

Receiving relevant, accurate and adequate information about the risks and benefits of migration is crucial for the potential migrants and their families. This can help them make informed choices as to whether they want to pursue foreign employment or not and how to reduce risks for migrating in a safer manner. If a potential migrant opts for foreign employment, it is desirable that s/he acquires a range of information about the entire migration cycle, including administrative procedures and requirements.

Considering the importance of information and awareness regarding foreign employment, SaMi has deployed an entire system for mass awareness and information combining different communication channels and strategies.

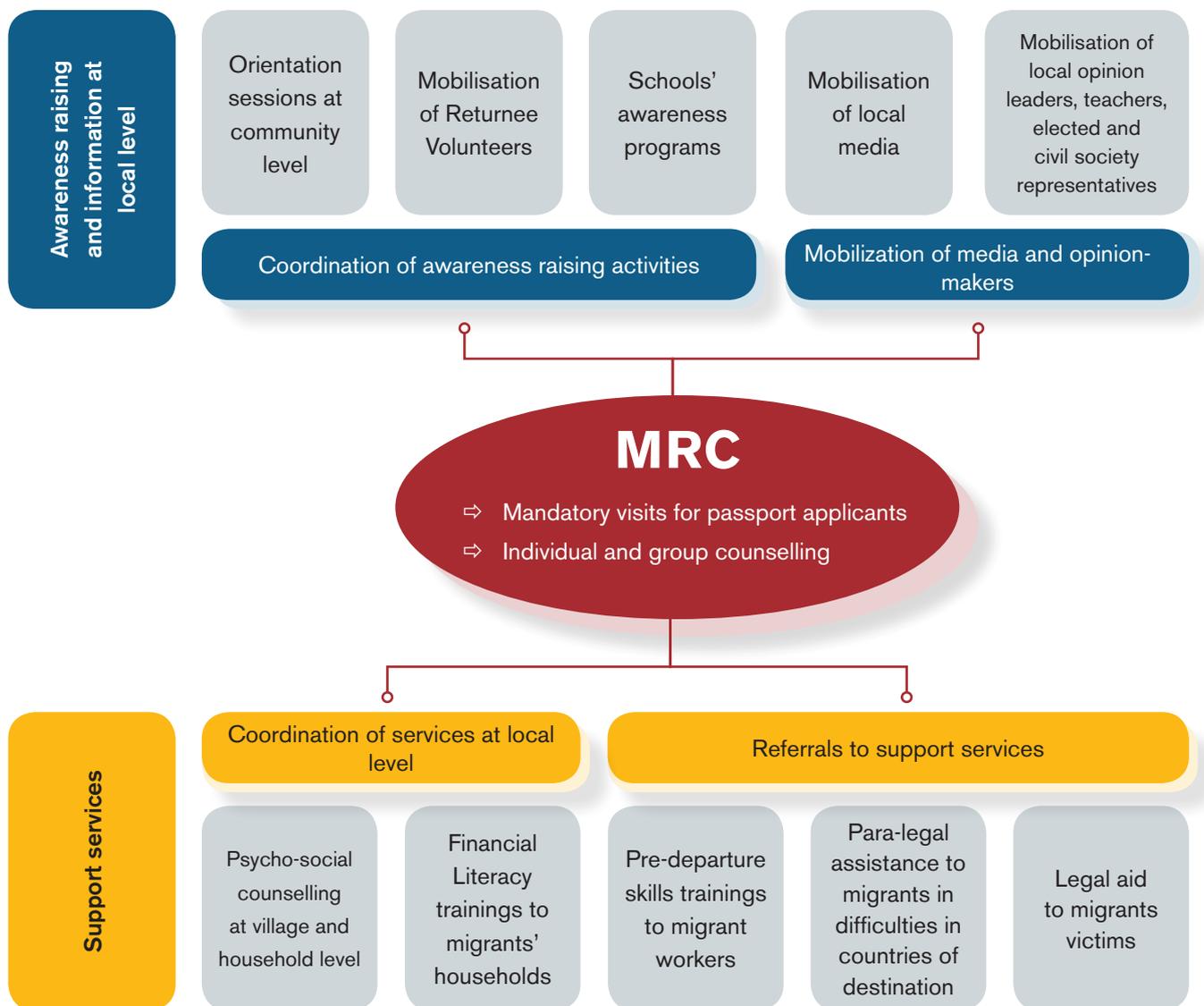


Community Orientation in Kailali

2.1.1 Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs)

The district level Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs), previously known as Information and Counselling Centres (ICCs), are a central hub that interlinks all project initiatives, including community outreach activities, mass awareness campaigns and other services required by potential migrants and/or their families such as skills training, legal and paralegal support, psychological counselling, and financial literacy classes. The MRCs also provide information on the usefulness of pre-departure skills training and emphasize the importance of the government provided pre-departure orientation training that informs migrants of the laws, culture and customs of the destination country, as well as the available legal recourse mechanisms in the case of fraud.

The project supported the establishment and operations of 21 MRCs in 19 districts. They are strategically located within the premises of the District Administration Offices (DAO) and Illaka administration offices, where passports are made. In the project districts, the DAOs have made a visit to the MRCs a mandatory step in the passport application process.



The MRC counsellors create an atmosphere of trust, openness and reliability which encourages open and honest conversations with potential migrants on all aspects of the migration process, including possible destination countries and occupations, the right steps to be taken, the importance of acquiring skills and other good practices such as leaving copies of relevant documents with their families before their departure.

MRCs refer interested migrants to skills training centres in Kathmandu. They also refer individuals that have been cheated to legal and para-legal support services. In specific cases where documentation is lacking, and the parties

involved are residents of the same district, the MRCs can also initiate and facilitate a local level mediation process.

Six months after their visit, a systematic follow-up is done on ten percent of all potential migrants who visited the MRC. The follow up covers information on whether the person migrated, what their current situation is, their occupation overseas, and the country where they are based, and whether the information provided at the MRC was useful and applied.

MRC Key Figures on Visitors and Referral to Services

(16 July 2013 – 15 July 2018)

Potential migrants/family members visiting a MRC:

- » *Information provided to 475,851 persons in 19 districts and Kathmandu - 17% women;*
- » *Free skills training trainees for 8,076 migrants - 24% women;*
- » *Access to justice in 13,448 cases;*
- » *Referral of 2,930 individuals to psychosocial support services, and*
- » *Enrolment of 5,073 families for financial literacy training.*

Follow-up phone calls to 10% of the 475,851 potential migrants who visited MRC revealed that:

- » *22% of the potential migrants left for foreign employment within six months;*
- » *72% of the migrants who left for foreign employment have applied the information provided by the MRCs. This includes leaving a copy of relevant documents at home, and*
- » *22% of the migrants negotiated and reduced pre-departure costs, leading to a total savings amount of NPR. 49,112,900.*

13,448 people received legal aid and associated services. A total of 6,299 complaints which were submitted at national and local level received financial compensations from various institutions including the FEB, DoFE, FET and insurance companies. Project support ensured the disbursement of a total amount of NPR. 813,431,082 in compensation between 2013 and 2018.

Out of the 2,930 individual psychosocial clients, 66% have improved their wellbeing at the end of Phase II.

Out of a total of 8,076 graduates of skills trainings, 58% were placed in gainful employment, and are earning above NPR. 25,000 per month.

Out of a total of 5,073 beneficiaries of financial literacy support, 64% kept records of their expenses and incomes, 59% have increased savings, and 38% have started income generating activities.

In addition, six information desks have been established at the level of Illaka administration offices. Illaka offices constitute branches of the central administration and issue citizenship certificates, register passport applications, and distribute them. SaMi supported the establishment of information desks in Illaka offices that were opened in the project intervention areas. Unlike MRCs, the information desk is established with minimum human resources. Only one staff is positioned to provide information and distribute related materials. Visiting potential migrants are also referred to the MRCs for more detailed orientation and support services such as case referrals and relevant information on skills training.

2.1.2 Outreach Mechanisms:

SaMi deploys a range of outreach activities and approaches to reach potential migrants, both at community level and in Kathmandu. All forms of locally available media, including radio, television and print press have been used for wider dissemination of information and key messages. Various types of information, education and communication (IEC) materials such as wall paintings, posters and leaflets have been developed, produced and distributed and displayed at strategic locations on the occasion of project programmes and events. Street dramas have been locally produced and staged in local languages. Folk singers have been hired to sing migration related 'gandarba geet'. Screenings of documentaries on issues of foreign migration have also been organised. Besides using media and IEC materials, various programmes have also been organised in public institutions and during events to orient people about various

aspects of migration, primarily in schools, citizens' forums (at ward level), in the community, and at haat bazaars (markets).

Returnee Volunteers (RVs) are individuals who have returned from labour migration. Their migration experience and anchorage within the target communities positions them well to approach potential migrants in their locality to provide information and referral to MRCs for further information and counselling. They are the “front-line workers” of the project, reaching household level. Under Phase II, a total of 280 RVs were mobilised by the project in its districts of intervention.

Social Mobilizers visit villages for community presentations and discussions on migration. They disseminate messages through community orientation sessions organised with the entire local community or specific groups such as women and youth, returnees and potential migrant workers.

Radio programmes have been used in all project districts to disseminate basic information about safer migration and about the services potential migrants can obtain from the MRCs. With the support and mentoring of the project partner Ujyaalo Multimedia Pvt. Ltd. (media company specialised in radio programmes), radio plays, public service announcements (PSAs) and radio magazines have been produced and disseminated across the country. A range of local FM radio stations have been airing these programmes and messages.

Schools programmes are used as forums to discuss foreign employment with senior school students between the ages of 13 and 16 (Grades 8 to 10, and occasionally 11) to help distinguish between safe and unsafe processes of migration. This is an ideal time for raising awareness among students as many of them consider foreign employment as an option for livelihood after completing high school. These students can also share their learnings with their families and friends who are considering opting for labour migration, thereby disseminating the information they received to a wider audience.



Students in Parwanipur during a session of orientation on safer migration

In Kathmandu:

An MRC at the Department of Passport: Passports can be made both in the districts of origin and in Kathmandu at the Department of Passport. Every day, an estimated 900 to 1,100 Nepali citizens apply for passports at the Department, making it a crucial site for setting up an MRC.

The Airport Information Desk: The Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu is an important crossing point for migrants. This prompted SaMi to support the establishment of an information desk. It is not conceived as an MRC but it provides last moment critical information to migrants departing for foreign employment. The information desk can

also refer returning migrants and their families to relevant support structures such as a shelter house for immediate protection or to partner NGOs for legal support.

**The Information Desk at Tribhuvan International Airport Kathmandu
(16 July 2013 – 31 December 2016)³**

- » 113,832 persons, including 11,215 women, informed about foreign employment through direct exchange on site;
- » 669 families received assistance following the death of migrant in the course of foreign employment;
- » 1,118 persons, including 141 women, were informed about the procedure for labour permit renewal;
- » 373 returnee women in distress were referred to shelters;
- » 82 men who were cheated or exploited during the migration cycle were referred for legal support;
- » 2,037 persons, including 303 women, were supported with last minute photocopies of important documents.

2.1.3 Key Results:

There is clear evidence that the information provided to people has made an impact in their reflections about, and preparation for, migration. The combination of various outreach activities and mobilization approaches coupled with the use of mass media has effectively reached potential migrant workers and motivated them to visit a MRC for more information and counselling. Data shows that potential migrants and/or their families who visit the MRC apply the information received there.

**Information and Awareness
Key Achievements in Figures, (July 2013 till July 2018)⁴**

- » Total number of people reached with information: 4,75,851 (17% women);
- » Total number of people reached through community mobilization: 1,69,500 (53% women);
- » Of the 10% of visitors reached through phone calls six months later, 22% of migrants reported having negotiated with recruitment agencies. This led to an estimated total reduction of recruitment fees of NPR. 49,112,900.



Counselling at the Migrant Resource Centre in Hariwan in the district of Sarlahi

³ TIA booth assessment report 2017

⁴ SaMi project progress reports

A Mission, Not a Job

My name is Ram Kumar Shrestha. I am 33 years old and come from Khalle Municipality in Khotang District.

I studied in my village till Grade 8. Then I studied in a higher secondary school in Diktel, the district headquarters, but could not pass the exams. Back then there was an increasing trend of going for foreign employment in my village. So, I also went to Malaysia in 2002. I paid NPR. 65,000 (650 USD) to the recruiting agency. However, I was deeply frustrated when I received my first pay as I was paid less than what was promised to me. Nevertheless, I stayed and worked there for five years. A year after I returned to Nepal I went to Kuwait where I worked as an office helper for three years. I returned two years ago and have been working as a returnee volunteer for the last 10 months for SaMi.

The work of a returnee volunteer is challenging as well as rewarding. Some people even take us negatively and accuse us of working just for the sake of a salary. On the other hand, it is really rewarding to be able to inform people and raise their awareness about foreign employment, the risks and benefits involved, so that they can be protected from potential risks and suffering. As I live in a hilly district with difficult terrain and bad roads, it is not easy to travel and reach all of my working area, ward number 4 of Khalle municipality. I generally visit 10 or 11 houses per working day. By now I have visited 98 percent of the total 224 households in my working area. Though the job is meant to be part-time I work almost full time. These door-to-door visits I make raise awareness on foreign employment, its risks and benefits. I also refer potential migrants to the Migrant Resource Centre in the district headquarters. I am also invited on the occasion of meetings and gatherings that take place on other topics in the village and am given a time slot to present and share about foreign employment. I share my experiences and also whatever information I have at such platforms.

In the past 10 months as a returnee volunteer, I have referred 11 potential migrants to the Migrant Resource Centre, out of which five have already left for foreign employment. Four of them enrolled in pre-departure skills training. Eighty-four families in my ward have requested their family members for a copy of important documents, including their passports and contracts. Among these, I have referred nine cases to the MRC for further support.

For me this is not just a job but a mission - a mission to ensure that all potential migrants from my village are provided with adequate information to make their foreign employment experience a safer one.

2.1.4 Major Learnings

The identification of MRCs as a platform to resolve problems at the local level: The MRC/Information Centre, an initiative of SaMi, is locally recognised as an institution that works for the benefit of migrants and possible victims of foreign employment whether they are migrants, local agents or family members. MRCs have gained recognition as an institution that is transparent in all its processes, and this has been further validated by the fact that local public authorities and elected representatives also send referrals to the MRC. People who have benefited from MRC services also become ambassadors for SaMi.

A holistic approach is necessary: Financial literacy, psychosocial counselling, returnee volunteers, social mobilizers, skills trainings, and support in access to justice are all key dimensions of the MRC model and success. MRCs are not a stand-alone entity. MRCs' performance is fortified by a holistic approach and the availability of various services.

Coordination between local governments is necessary: Following federalisation, local governments have been given key responsibilities on foreign employment, including information, data collection, and support to skills and financial literacy. The effective provision of these services requires good coordination with other levels of government (provincial and federal). Inter-municipal collaboration is also key for standardised and combined approaches, co-financing and economies of scale.

Tailor-made approaches and messages for female potential migrant workers: Women, who are potential migrant workers, have different needs and vulnerabilities when it comes to foreign employment. Often the approach used to engage with male potential migrant workers does not work in the case of women and modalities need to be adapted accordingly. The information provided also needs to take into account the specific needs and risks women

are confronted with. Since women feel more comfortable opening up in front of other women, SaMi has hired female counsellors for effective communication with female potential migrants.

MRCs need constant backstopping and updated information: Foreign employment is a rapidly-changing phenomenon influenced by a range of national and international factors. MRCs need to be informed and updated on a regular basis to ensure that the information they provide is relevant, updated and correct. While the national partners of SaMi currently provide this backstopping, a more regular and consistent backstopping is desirable, preferably from a single source. The establishment of a National Migrant Resource Centre could play a central role in coordinating the information flow.

The “local partner-model” of MRC implementation is efficient: SaMi experimented with both a local service provider-run and government-run model of MRC operation. Experience and evidence have shown that the local partner model can mobilise available competencies and ensures flexibility and rapid adaptation.

For its sustainability the MRC needs to be integrated and recognised as part of the (local) institutional landscape: The 2017 Local Government Act mandates local governments for awareness and information delivery regarding safer foreign employment, data collection, the provision of financial literacy and skills trainings, and in promoting measures for social reintegration of returnee migrants and the use of their skills and knowledge. The management of MRCs is now part of the mandate of local governments. It is important that MRCs are well connected and articulated within the municipal administration and services.

The physical location and environment for counselling is crucial: The physical location of the MRCs and the overall environment of the counselling sessions matter. Locating MRCs within the compound of the authority that provides passports is strategic to ensure direct reach to potential migrants. It is crucial to create a friendly, warm and open environment during the counselling sessions so that the potential migrant feels confident enough to share his/her personal situation, is receptive to the information provided, and feels comfortable to seek additional information and clarification s/he needs.

Use of local language makes a difference: Providing information and counselling in the local language and using local examples makes a difference. Thus, the counsellors should use local languages and refer to local examples when counselling.



A potential migrant worker submits his details for registration at the Migrant Resource Centre to get orientation on safer migration process



Potential migrant workers attend a skills development training in Kathmandu

2.2 Pre-departure Skills Training

The records at the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) for the year 2013-14 show that nearly 75 percent of all migrant workers were low skilled. The absence of specific professional skills has implications such as lower salaries, limited prospects of promotion and often entails more dangerous working conditions. In response, SaMi has been providing free-of-cost skills training to potential and interested migrant workers in different trades. These trainings are offered in addition to the compulsory 3-day pre-departure orientation training provided by the Department of Foreign Employment.

Skills trainings have been provided in six trades: garment, masonry, shuttering carpentry, plumbing, electrician, and scaffolding. This model comprises a one- month long training. SaMi has developed curricula in these trades with support from curriculum development experts from the Gulf and Nepal and tried to base it on foreign employers' requirements. Each curriculum also includes modules on life skills and health so as to prepare potential migrants for their living conditions and work environment abroad.

A key challenge relates to the recognition of the skills required by the employers in the destination countries. Important challenges to secure the benefits of skills development schemes in countries of origin, therefore, include matching the skills training provided with the demand in the destination countries and developing certification processes that are recognised in both country of origin and destination.

In order to support the safer migration of women, SaMi's strategy is to promote employment opportunities for women in safer countries and sectors and to ensure that no recruitment fee is charged. Out of a total of 1,943 female trainees supported by SaMi, 1,847 have been trained as garment machine operators for employment in Jordan.

Better Earnings after Getting Skilled

"I earn 2,400 dirhams (654 USD), including overtime. I really like it here," said a happy Saroj Koirala from Khotang to the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) on the phone. Saroj is currently working in Dubai as an electrician's helper.

Saroj had left for Dubai in April 2016 after taking a one-month long training for electricians given by SaMi. Saroj had first heard about the safer migration project on the radio. While applying for his passport at the District Administration Office he visited the MRC to better understand the safe process for foreign employment. It was here where he learnt about skills trainings and decided he would go only after obtaining a skill.

Immediately after the training, Saroj got a job that paid him 1,200 dirham (327 USD) basic salary plus 300 Dirham (82 USD) for food. Within two months he was able to earn the 2,195 dirhams (600 USD) he had borrowed to pay the manpower agent.

Saroj sends some money home every month and saves the remaining for himself. He also said that there was still a lot to learn in his field of work. In the future, he plans to come home with experience and money to start his own business.

2.2.1 Key Results

The project experience shows that migrant workers who received skills training through SaMi have managed to get better employment opportunities in their destination country. Their earnings and chances of upward mobility are higher. Having acquired skills for the trade in which they work also contributes to increased safety at work. Further, these trainings have encouraged them to plan to establish their small enterprises upon returning to Nepal.

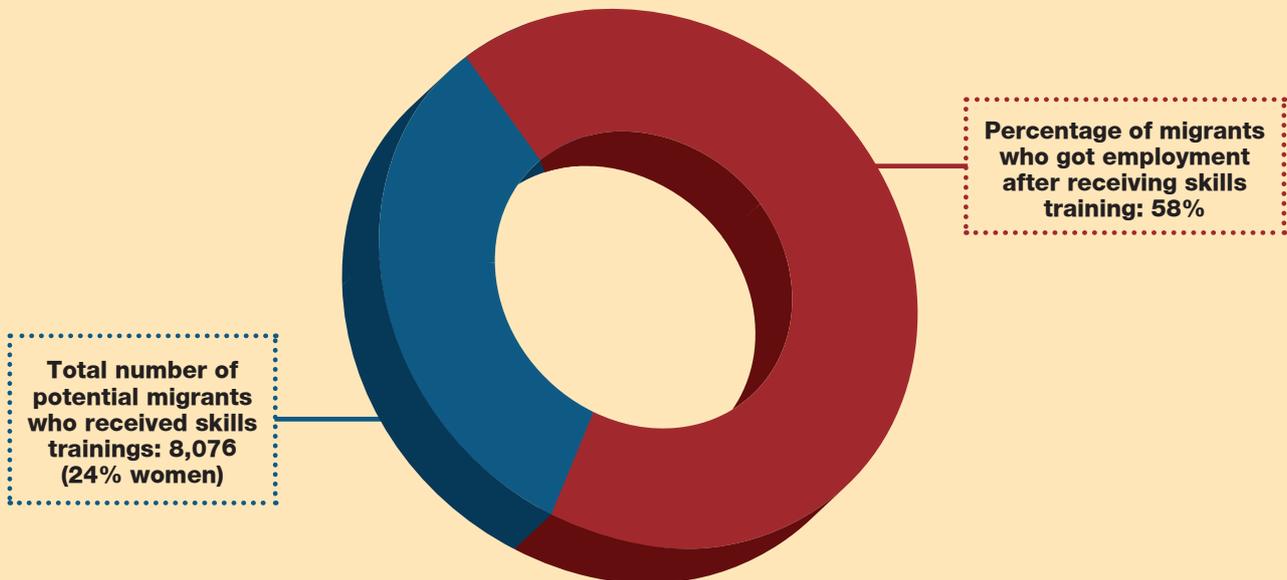
A total of about 8,076 potential migrant workers received skills training, of which 24 percent were women. Among the trained 8,076 potential migrant workers, 58 percent were successful in finding employment, out of which 82 percent were women who were trained mainly for the garment industry.

Potential Migrant Workers Receiving Skills Training and Migrant Workers Employed in Countries of Destination

Year	Total Trained Males	Total Trained Females	Total Trained Number	Total Employed	Percentage Employed
2013/14	755	35	790	596	75
2014/15	845	156	1,001	622	62
2015/16	1,723	630	2,353	1,341	57
2016/17	2,316	745	3,061	1,198	39
2017/18	494	377	871	61	Employment Ongoing
Total	6,133	1,943	8,076	3,818	

Skills Training

Key Achievement figures
(July 2013 till June 2018)



Skilled Migration - A Viable Strategy for Better Pay and Safer Foreign Employment **Suraj Rai, Dandagaun, Rupakot, Majhuwagadhi Municipality, Ward 2**

1) How did you come to know about the training and how did you actually go for the training?

At first, I did not know anything about skills training. I learned through the Halesi local FM radio station that SaMi provides skills trainings to potential migrant workers. I also met with the project social mobilizer from my village. He gave me more information about the training and told me to visit the Migrant Resource Centre in Diktel. I visited the Centre twice. I was shown a book about various trades in demand in the destination countries and I chose scaffolding. Then I was referred to F-Skill in Kathmandu for the training. Someone came to receive me in Kathmandu. I took the training in Susan Training Centre in Sokedhara.

2) What did you learn at the training?

I took the training in scaffolding. I learnt various aspects of scaffolding work, including making a fixed tower and how to level the towers.

3) Which country did you go to?

I went to Qatar. I was interviewed by an Indian national. The selection result came almost immediately. I was asked to sign the agreement within three days. I worked there for one year.

4) What are the benefits of having a skill before going abroad?

If one is not skilled, s/he will have to start in a lower position, as unskilled labourer. The salary scale for unskilled labour is less than that of a skilled worker such as a scaffolder. An unskilled labourer is discriminated against and ill-treated. If one goes with some skill, s/he can get further training there. An unskilled labourer has no opportunity for getting additional trainings, neither does s/he get the safety kits. A skilled trained worker such as a scaffolder gets a safety kit including glasses, helmet, harness, and belt, as well as a measuring tape and boots.

2.2.2 Major Learnings

Linking skills training with employment:

The ultimate goal of skills training is to improve employability and working conditions in the destination country. Skills trainings must be connected to the demand. In its initial years, the project played an active role in linking trainings with job placement. This led to a stable and high rate of employment directly after the training. This modality however requires the project to take a proactive role and relies on a pool of fair recruiters and employers, promoting decent work standards. SaMi also tested a model where trainees were encouraged to find employment on their own. This experience was marked by lower rates of gainful employment following the trainings. Strategies to better connect skills trainings to the demand in the migrant countries need to be further explored. This requires regular dialogue with the employers on the demand for skills as well as mechanisms for ensuring the recognition and quality of trainings.

Certification of skills: Linking skills development to employment also means that the training provided be recognised by the employers' in the destination countries. This includes working on a certification system accepted at both ends of the migration corridor.

While there is a government body (the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT)) developing skills testing and certification through a National Skill Testing Board, there is no certification system tailored to foreign employment. In the absence of common standards, SaMi has sought the support of internationally recognised human resource institutes to pilot a model for certifying the acquired skills according to the requirements of destination countries. The initial observations showed an improvement and standardization in the quality of the trainings. The merits of such models and certification systems must be increasingly communicated to recruiters and employers.

Skills trainings at the door step: Currently potential migrant workers are being referred for trainings through the MRC at district level. The skills trainings are then provided centrally in Kathmandu. The costs for the training, food and accommodation are currently borne by the SaMi Project. Participants travel to and stay in Kathmandu for the length of the training (usually a month). A decentralised model of training could facilitate access of more participants and reduce the costs of the system. Further reflections in this context are necessary to ensure a standard quality of decentralised skills trainings.

Financing skills training: Currently, SaMi is covering the cost of the trainings. According to its National Action Plan, Nepal is committed to facilitating the training of 50,000 migrant workers per year. In addition to occupational skills, the skills training programme should include soft skills such as interpersonal and communications skills, decision-making and problem-solving skills for personal development.

Expansion of the scope of skills training: The vocational training currently provided by SaMi takes into consideration overseas job-related skills. Training is provided for nine different occupations: steel fixer, shuttering carpenter, scaffolder, plumber, electrician, mason, aluminium fabricator, welder, and garment fabricator (only for women). Scaffolding has the highest enrolment, with electrician and garment fabricator following in the second and third place. As per the data of the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), during the fiscal year 2013-2014, only 12 percent of migrant workers were 'semi-skilled', 14 percent 'skilled', and less than one percent 'highly skilled or professional'. This indicates that there is a significant potential for an increase in skills and a need for awareness raising on the benefits of skilled migration.



Skills training in the garment sector

2.3 Legal Support and Access to Justice

Migrant workers may become victims of fraud, deception and exploitation at every stage of the migration cycle. This can start early on at the time of recruitment. Malpractice by informal agents and recruiting agencies may range from charging exorbitant recruitment fees; providing inaccurate information about the actual work they will be required to do or the salary they will receive; use of false documents, and/or withholding the documents or money of migrants. Once in the destination countries migrants are vulnerable to further exploitation such as the placement in companies or jobs other than that specified in the contract; prolonged working hours; forced labour, and low or unpaid jobs. Women migrant workers are at risk from violence including physical and/or sexual exploitation at the hands of the employers. Most of these victims do not have the knowledge and financial resources to initiate legal proceedings and are thereby deprived from justice and reparation.

SaMi supports victims of such practices in getting access to justice and reparation. Legal aid is provided through a partner, the “People Forum for Human Rights”. This legal support informs migrants about their rights and options, helps them in tracking down fraudulent recruitment agencies and claiming compensation. SaMi’s partner supports the victims in filing a case at the Department of Foreign Employment and also pleads on behalf of the victims. Migrant Resource Centres play central role in referring cases to the People Forum.

Alongside, another partner organisation, the “Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee” (PNCC), provides support to migrant workers in difficult situations in destination countries. The cases at stake may include death of a migrant worker, undocumented employment, health problems, imprisonment or other contractual difficulties. Cases are forwarded to the PNCC by the Migrant Resource Centres, national partners or directly by the migrant workers and their families. The PNCC coordinates and seeks the support of the Nepali diplomatic missions in the destination countries, whose labour attachés are trained by the SaMi Project. The success of PNCC’s mission is largely dependent on the network it has established with other human rights related organisations present in destination countries. To increase access to migrants, PNCC has deployed outreach officers in Qatar and Malaysia.

Migrant Worker and His Father Rescued by a Fellow Nepali from a Life of Bonded Labour: A Result of SaMi and PNCC Partnership Coordination

On 13 April, 2014, Nabin Kumar Dash, 25 years old, from Saptari District went to Malaysia to work for the Chroma International Private Company. After two years, Nabin left the company and joined another company in Malaysia as an undocumented worker. He was caught by the local police and was jailed for eight months. After two months in prison he informed his family about his situation.

On 15 May, 2018 the Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC) received Nabin’s case from the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Saptari. The case was forwarded to the PNCC outreach officer in Malaysia. After coordinating with the Nepal Embassy there, the company concerned and other related actors, Navin was informed that he would be released from jail on 11 June, 2018.

The PNCC informed the MRC in Saptari and his family that Nabin would be released on 11 June, and the family needed to send him a ticket to fly him back to Nepal. However, the family could not afford the NPR. 30,000 to buy the ticket so the release date was postponed to 27 June, 2018. In a desperate bid, Nabin’s aged and blind father went to the local moneylender who demanded collateral which the family could not provide. The moneylender then gave the loan on condition that when Nabin returned both father and son would work for him as bonded labourers. Seeing no alternative, Nabin’s father agreed to these conditions.

When PNCC heard about the situation, they published the story on the “Online Khabara” web portal. The news was published at the time when Narayan Aryal from Butwal was planning to celebrate his daughter’s fifth birthday. The budget of the birthday celebration was about the same amount as the ticket for Nabin to return home. When Narayan read the article he contacted PNCC and used his daughter’s birthday celebration budget to buy ticket for Nabin instead. This prevented Navin and his father to signing the exploitative contract.

PNCC informed Nabin’s family and forwarded the ticket to their outreach officer in Malaysia. The officer helped Nabin prepare all travel documents. Nabin was able to return home to Nepal on 27 June, 2018.



Women counselling at the Migrant Resource Centre in Sarlahi

Solving foreign-employment related cases locally through mediation: Nepal has a long tradition of settling disputes through the facilitation of elders and community leaders and without resorting to formal legal procedures. Pursuing a formal legal recourse requires proper evidence, documentation and travelling to Kathmandu, for submission of the case to the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE). In cases where both of the involved parties live in the same locality/ district, mediation can be a cheaper and faster option. In such cases, the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) can suggest that both parties discuss the issue in the presence of a mediator. The MRC coaches the victim (migrant worker) in this discussion and negotiation.

Community mediators support compensation for victims of foreign employment malpractices

Santosh Shah and Saddam Hussain of Malangwa in Sarlahi District were sent to Malaysia by an agent to work as helpers to electricians. The agent had promised that they would work eight hours a day and would be paid a monthly salary of 1,200 Qatari riyal. The agent charged NPR. 100,000 each as a recruitment charge. There was no documentation and evidence of the transaction. However, upon arrival at the country of destination, the two men were sent to work as assistant mechanics in a garage for a lower salary and longer working hours. When the case reached the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Sarlahi in November 2014, the MRC counsellor investigated the situation and contacted the agent. The agent agreed to bring Santosh and Saddam back within five days and did so.

Upon return, the issue of compensation for the two victims was brought up and it was decided that the case would be mediated by civil society members. Santosh and Saddam's families claimed a compensation of Rupees 185,000 each. The agent wanted a detailed breakdown of the costs incurred. The two returnees showed that NPR. 100,000 each had been paid to the agent. An additional NPR. 20,000 each was sent by the respective families when the hiring company refused to pay for their food. The remaining amount was spent on obtaining passports and buying clothes. All parties in the end agreed for a settlement amount of NPR. 125,000 each as compensation.

Access to Justice for Migrant Workers

Access to justice in the destination countries remains limited: There is often no mechanism in place to seek justice when facing difficulties or rights violations. The situation is particularly difficult in the Gulf Council Countries (GCC) where the Kafala system is in place which severely limits migrant workers' chances of accessing justice and filing a complaint against an employer.

Support offered by Nepali diplomatic missions: There are Nepali diplomatic missions in many destination countries and they provide support to migrant workers in distress through their labour attachés. For migrant workers employed in countries which strictly follow the Kafala system, getting the support of the embassy is difficult, as their legal documents, including their passports, are retained by the employers, limiting even their free movement. Furthermore, the embassies are often under-staffed and under-resourced to support migrant workers in an effective and efficient manner.

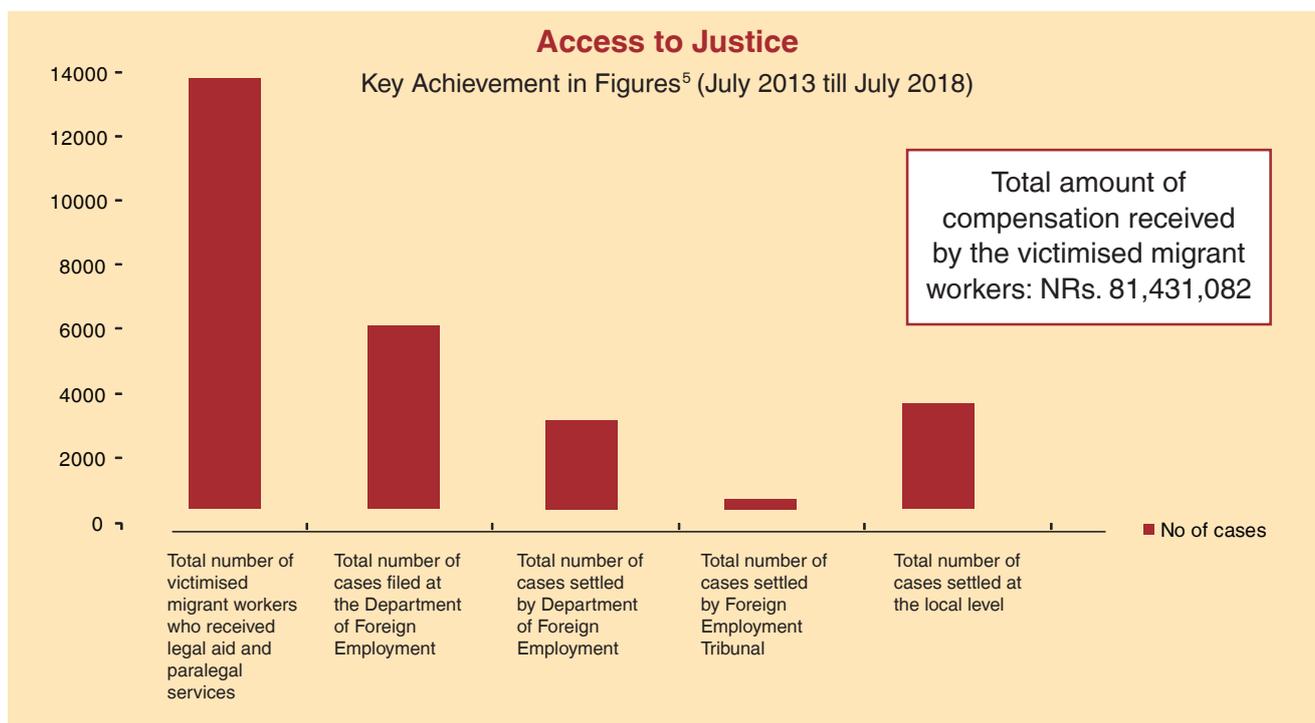
SaMi's support for victimised migrants – filling a Gap: In the context of SaMi, distressed migrants in the destination countries can contact the Migrant Resource Centres in their districts directly or through their relatives or contact SaMi's partner Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC) and request support and/or rescue. PNCC coordinates with a range of actors in the destination countries, including the network of migrant or non-resident Nepalese, the Nepali embassy, and/ or non-governmental organisations working in the destination countries. In a few countries such as Qatar and Malaysia, PNCC has its own outreach offices that work to support and rescue distressed migrants.

Filing cases at the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE): In case the migrant workers have been cheated or exploited, they can file a case at the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) in Kathmandu against the recruitment agency. The Department forwards serious cases to the Foreign Employment Tribunal (FET).

SaMi's partner organisation, People Forum, supports the victimised migrant to file a case, verifies that they have enough evidence and the case is filed correctly so that the chance of the victimised migrant worker getting justice is increased.

2.3.1 Key Results

SaMi has been successful in supporting thousands of victimized migrant workers get justice and compensation. Below is a summary in figures, of the main achievements:



2.3.2 Major Learnings

Decentralisation/ de-concentration of services: Though migrant workers come from across the country, government agencies and authorities that can adjudicate on a case are located in Kathmandu. Cases can be referred by the MRCs but alleged victims so far have had to travel to Kathmandu to file a complaint. In many cases the compensation amount would be too small to even cover their travel costs. Access to justice needs to be re-thought in order to facilitate easier access, with possibly some procedures available online or at provincial or local level. The launch of the Foreign Employment Information Management System (FEIMS) is expected to address the issue to some extent. The possibility to file a complaint online will imply that migrant workers will not have to travel to Kathmandu to initiate legal proceedings. The federalisation process and the process of “deconcentration” of the DoFE at provincial level offers interesting perspectives to increase access to justice.

Access to justice in destination countries: The possibilities for victimised migrant workers to have a legal remedy in their destination country remain limited despite the fact that embassies and consular services offer support when possible. The embassies are often the only accessible point of contact for migrant workers in distress abroad. It is important to continue strengthening diplomatic missions for a robust support scheme. Formal mechanisms and access to justice can also be further promoted by the Government of Nepal in its bilateral and regional policy dialogue. In the recent past, the majority of the cases were received from Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Qatar. According to project data, the percentage of case resolution is higher in Qatar (more than 50%). This underlines the critical role played by SaMi staff deployed in Qatar in identifying, documenting and supporting migrant workers there. The modalities for increasing the number of such outreach officers should be explored, either through the integration of such tasks within the role of the labour attachés of the embassies or through direct support to civil society organisations in exercising this role.

Working on the prevention side: Preventive measures are imperative and complementary to strengthening support to victimised migrant workers. All actors concerned must work in a concerted manner to decrease the chances of fraudulent activities including cheating, exploitation and unfair treatment. This begins at an early stage. Potential migrant

⁵ Safer Migration Project Annual reports

workers must be well informed about the various risks they may face and about the available recourses including how to access them. It is also important to maintain interactions and communication with recruitment agencies which arrange the recruitment process for prospective migrants.

2.4 Psychosocial Support

Although foreign employment financially supports many individual families, there can be significant social costs for the migrants in the destination countries and the families left behind. The workload of the wives left behind significantly increases in the absence of the husband. In many cases, the women have to take on the role of parenting and running the household single-handedly. In addition, there are also cases of women being stigmatised by society with many being accused of adultery and being spendthrift. Many families also disintegrate. The migrant workers on their end, particularly female workers, face hardship, violence, abuse, and exploitation.

To counter this psychological and social stress, SaMi started implementing psychosocial interventions in November 2013. This component introduced direct support to individual and families at village-level.

SaMi's psychosocial counsellors deliver counselling services in two ways. Home visits allow for individual counselling which is complemented by group counselling sessions organised along a seven-step module over a period of six to seven weeks. This psychosocial component was implemented over the past five years in a total of 10 districts.

From Depression to Rescuing Her Son

Sarita Biswakarma (name changed), belongs to the Dalit caste, and lives in Sarlahi District. She is 46 years old and earns a living by making cement blocks for construction. She has two sons and one daughter.

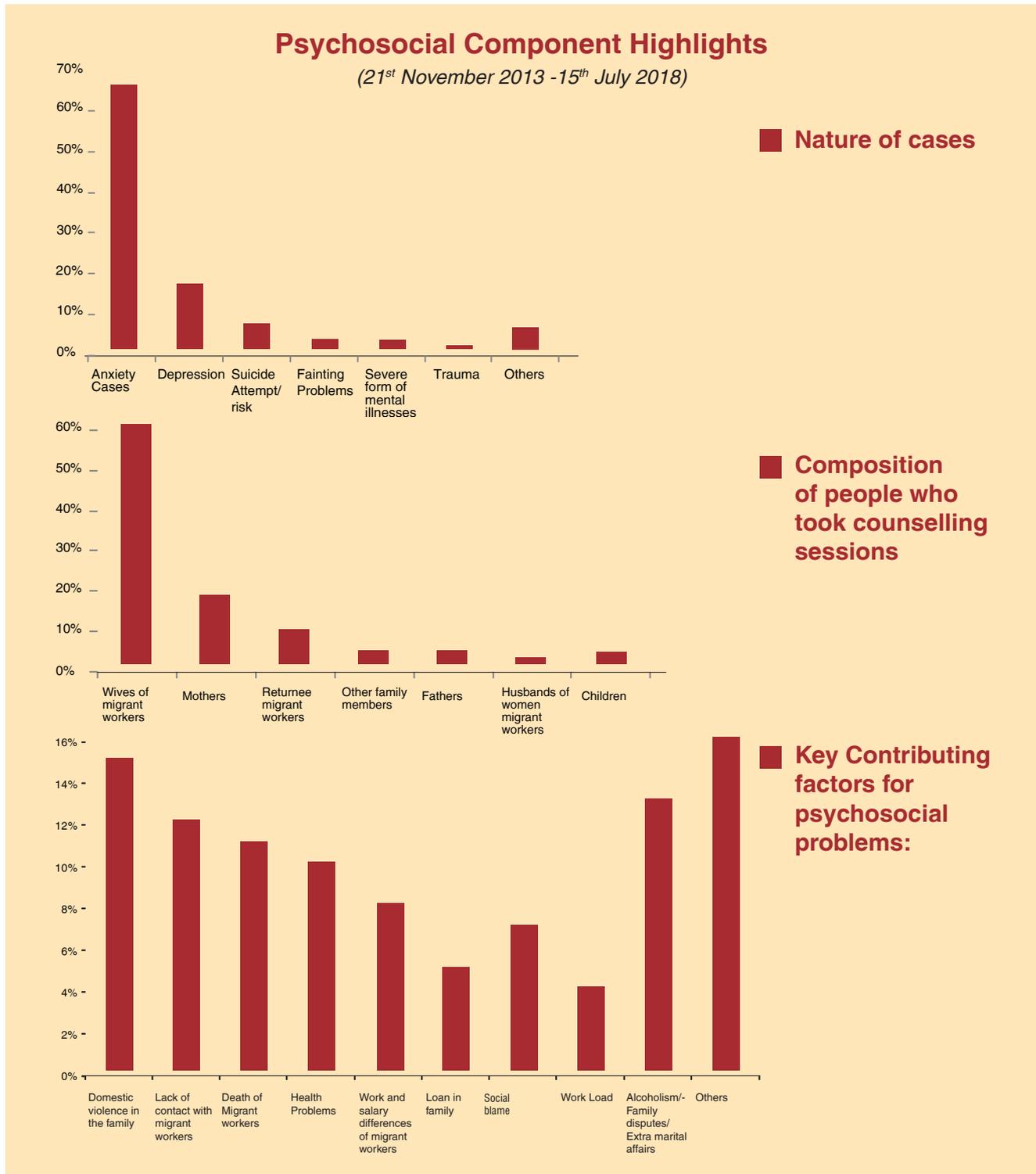
Sarita's eldest son went to Malaysia as a migrant worker. Barely three months into the job he started being ill-treated at work. He fled from his workplace and wandered around in the jungle for a few days before finally showing up at a relative's workplace. Soon after, as an undocumented migrant worker, he was arrested and sent to jail. When Sarita received the news of her son's imprisonment, she went into depression. Hopeless about getting help for her son's release from jail, Sarita's mental condition worsened. She would absent-mindedly walk out of the house even during the night. Despairing about her son's situation she even thought of committing suicide.

Sarita was encouraged to attend the psychosocial group sessions with the new women's group formed by a returnee volunteer. She was taught breathing exercises and other tips to deal with crises. This helped her recuperate and maintain her mental and emotional well-being. The psychosocial counsellor offered her individual counselling at home and over the telephone. Even Sarita's desperate midnight calls were received with a soothing and encouraging response.

Sarita recalls the turning point for her recovery. The psychosocial counsellor asked her whom she loved the most. She replied, "My son in Malaysia". Her instinctive reply opened her eyes to the futility of her thoughts of solving her problem by ending her life. She knew she had to take action to get her son back to Nepal.

With the help of a returnee volunteer and the Migrant Resource Centre, her son was finally repatriated to Nepal. Upon his return, her son also had to undergo psychosocial counselling services as he had stopped talking and kept things to himself. Through the support, he slowly began to open up and articulate the trauma he experienced at his job and in prison. Through this support he also learned more about his rights and duties as a migrant worker. He realised that leaving the job during the contract period meant losing the benefits of his work. He also learned about the institutions that he can approach in case he is ill-treated at the workplace again. Sarita has now moved past her traumatic experience and happy to see her son regain confidence. He will perhaps go again for foreign employment.

2.4.1 Key Results



Psychosocial counselling has brought significant changes and contributed to restoring the emotional stability of anxious and depressed clients. As a result of the counselling they received, the beneficiaries are able to resume their regular household responsibilities, economic and social activities and often restore relationship with relatives. Furthermore, women who received support showed increased confidence to deal with the social stigma often attached to women left behind. The support also improved the mental health conditions of those who were highly distressed and suffering from severe forms of depression sometimes translating in suicidal attempts and psychosis. When identified, serious cases are also referred to the district hospitals.

2.4.2 Major Learnings

A more holistic and broad-based approach to address social costs: The social costs of migration cannot be addressed solely through psychosocial counselling. A more holistic approach is required starting with information and media campaigns not only to raise awareness on the social costs but also to tackle the social stigma related to migration, especially with regard to preconceived ideas of regarding extra marital affairs, squandering her husband's money, and on returnee women being sexually abused in the destination country.

Establishing trust with clients: Individuals in need of psychosocial counselling are usually in a fragile mental state. This apart, they might be cautious about sharing their feelings and pain with someone else given the stigma attached and the Nepali culture of silence. Therefore, establishing trust with the client is a key precondition to make psychosocial counselling possible and effective.

Need for better coordination: Coordination with other agencies is essential as psychosocial problems are complex issues, which cross-cut many other aspects of life and spread across sectors. Access to other forms of medical and mental health services are facilitated for complex cases. In the longer run, state level psychological and health structures should be equipped to deal with cases related to foreign employment.

Lack of trained psychosocial counsellors: There is a shortage of well-trained counsellors who can provide psychosocial counselling services to migrants and their families experiencing complex psychosocial and mental health problems.

Female counsellors for female clients: All information and counselling centres have a separate counselling room for female visitors and at least one female counsellor. The mobilisation of female psychosocial counsellors proved effective in addressing the psychosocial problems of those in distress who prefer sharing their trauma with a woman.



A group session of psycho-social counselling

2.5 Shelter House for Returnee Female Migrants

Female migrant workers are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation in the countries of destination. Many of them return traumatised and are not in a position to return to their families after they arrive in Nepal. SaMi operated an emergency shelter house between September 2011 and July 2017, in partnership with Pourakhi Nepal, for victimised women.

The shelter house provided support to returnee women in distress, in order that they could regain confidence and prepare to return to their families. Once in the shelter house, the victimised women were provided food and accommodation, medical support (if required), psychosocial counselling, and family counselling. When ready, they were provided with travel support to return to their families. A total of 1,359 returnee women were supported through the emergency shelter house during this period. The women came from 64 districts, primarily from Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Nawalparasi (east + west), Rupandehi, and Sindhupalchowk.

The assistance provided by the shelter house proved instrumental in supporting the victims at a critical time in their lives. The basic needs of the women were taken care of. At the same time, they were given guidance and encouragement to cope and recuperate from traumatic experiences. There were noticeable improvements in the mental and physical health conditions of the clients. They were reunited and re-integrated with their families.

2.6 Financial Literacy

In 2016 to 2017, the total volume of remittances sent home by migrant workers amounted to NPR. 699 billion or USD.6 billion, which is equivalent to over a quarter of the country's GDP. Remittances constitute a substantial source of revenue for many households and for taking care of their daily expenses.

More than 56 percent of Nepali households regularly receive remittances, but many of them remain ill-equipped to make an informed choice about its proper utilization. Many households lack the knowledge and tools necessary to plan a family budget, to keep records of revenues and expenses, or to make savings on a regular basis. Remittance management is rarely discussed properly prior to migration. This can become a central source of tension and suspicion within the family, most commonly between the spouse who has gone for foreign employment and the partner who stays home to take care of the household.

SaMi developed a financial literacy training course in collaboration with the Nepal Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperative Unions Limited (NEFSCUN). These trainings are provided directly at village level in small group sessions. They target remittance receiving households, in particular, women family members, and support them in the better management of their remittances and in making informed financial decisions.

This component of the project was developed in 2014 as a pilot and was initially implemented in six districts⁶. The training comprises 28 modules which are organized over a period of eight months and cover the following main issues: financial management principles and objectives; household/ family budgets and expenditures; remittance management; savings; types and services of financial institutions; entrepreneurship; business plans; loans; risk management, and insurance. The trainings are conducted directly in the villages by a web of specialized local NGOs partners. The approach includes group sessions followed by individual support (demand-based). The training sessions are followed-up with regular visits by the facilitators as an integral part of the process in order to habituate the participants in the activities they received training in.

⁶ Khotang, Sunsari, Ramechep, Sarlahi, Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta East, and Kailali

2.6.1 Key Results⁷

The full curriculum was taught to a total of 5,073 beneficiaries until July 2018. An assessment organised twelve months after the training showed impressive results.

Better household financial management: Findings show that about 74 percent of the participants kept household records after taking the training and 67 percent have prepared household budgets.

Substantial increases in savings: Prior to the training only 13 percent of the households were reported to be saving regularly. This ratio increased to 63 percent after the programme intervention. An assessment of these activities showed an average increase of 25 percent in monthly savings per household, an average increase from NPR. 637 to NPR. 810. A short survey conducted 12 months after the training confirmed the stability of the increase.

Increment in Saving, Targeted Saving and Saving Amount

Saving Type	Pre	Post	Increment (%)
Regular Saving (%)	12.52	66.92	54.4
Child Saving (%) ⁸	10.01	25.01	15
Average Saving Amount (NPR)	637.6	810.76	27.15

Source: Monitoring Data, 2015-17

Access and use of formal/ semi-formal financial institutions: Most training participants are reported to have opened accounts in banks, microfinance institutions (MFI) or cooperatives. The use of MFI, for instance, increased from 12 to 57 percent within the group of trainees.

The table below shows the increment in keeping household expense records (in %, n=2142) in the six districts⁹ before and after taking financial literacy classes.

Changes brought by Financial Literacy Classes – Percentage of households keeping records of expenses:

Districts	Pre- FL training	Post-FL training	% Increment
Kailali	6.22	95.98	89.6
Khotang	6.47	76.92	70.45
Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta East	12.58	86.75	74.17
Ramechhap	13.97	93.01	79.04
Sarlahi	28.08	72.35	44.27
Sunsari	45.04	75.94	30.9

⁷ The data used in this section is from the Safer Migration Project, An Assessment of the Financial Literacy Programme, October 2017.

⁸ Child saving means they saved a certain amount earmarked for their children in fixed intervals such as monthly, weekly or even daily.

⁹ An Assessment of the Financial Literacy Programme, 2017

Women empowerment: Increased capacities in financial management strengthen the role of women within the household in making decisions and reduced their dependency for daily expenses. Additionally, social recognition and empowerment of women has improved. Having their own savings through budget planning and better management of financial resources has increased their sense of security and they are less dependent on their family members, especially their husbands for household and personal expenses.

Improved family relationships: Regular in-house consultations and discussions regarding the best use of money have improved mutual trust among family members at home and the migrants abroad and promoted participatory decision-making. In particular, the wives of migrant workers have been able to present the details of household income and expenditure to their husbands working abroad in a transparent manner, thereby increasing trust and understanding between them.

Increased awareness on safer labour migration: The trainings are also used as an opportunity to provide information on the implications of foreign employment and modalities for formal migration. It has improved participants' access to information on important migration related documents. Thus, families with migrant workers are seen to increasingly adopt safer migration practices, such as keeping or requesting copies of important documents from their family members who have gone for foreign employment.

The table below shows trends in keeping photocopies of important documents related to the migrant workers by their families before and after taking the financial literacy class in the six districts (in %, n=2787).¹⁰

The contribution of financial literacy classes to safe migration practices - Percentage of households keeping photocopies of key documents

Districts	Pre- FL training	Post-FL training	% Increment
Kailali	24.66	56.06	31.4
Khotang	1.61	42.91	41.3
Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta East	11.72	68.07	56.35
Ramechhap	38.76	71.01	32.25
Sarlahi	20.00	60.44	40.44
Sunsari	52.62	86.44	33.82

Initiation of income generating activities: Increased planning capacities and savings have led many participants to invest in new activities such as farming for home consumption and for commercial purposes. Women who used to depend on their husbands' remittances for household expenses are motivated to earn on their own so that the remittances can be saved for the future. Through small businesses and enterprises such as vegetable farming, goat and chicken rearing, 44 percent of women who took the financial literacy classes are currently generating income on their own, enough to cover household expenses.

Reduction in communication costs: Participants were taught about low cost and efficient communication technologies, specifically for contacting their relatives abroad. A significant outcome is that previously the participants communicated through expensive direct phone calls, but now they know and use budget calls and other low-cost information technology. Prior to the programme intervention, around 63 percent of the participants used only mobile phones. This has significantly reduced to about 15 percent and the use of internet-based calls has increased from 26 percent to about 64 percent.

¹⁰ An Assessment of the Financial Literacy Programme, 2017

Successful Entrepreneur Wife Inspires Migrant Worker to Give Up Foreign Employment

Until recently Mina Basnet, 31 years old and resident of Rupakot, in the Municipality of Majhuwagadhi, was immersed in household chores. Her husband Khadka Bahadur Basnet, 35, had been working in Malaysia for ten months. He sent NPR. 40,000 every month, enough for her family's needs. Life for the Basnet family was not bad even though Mina missed her husband.

Two months after her husband left as a migrant worker, Mina attended the financial literacy class run in her village by SaMi. In the class, she learned ways to manage the family finances, how to plan a budget, and how to run a small business. As a result of the seven months course, she realised that she could earn money herself and not be solely dependent on the remittances sent by her husband for daily expenses.

She began vegetable farming on the family owned land and started to rear chickens. Today Mina grows a variety of vegetables and sells vegetables worth NPR. 10,000 to 15,000 a month. She also sells chickens worth NPR. 25,000 to 30,000 a year. Currently she has 28 chickens. As a result, her income from the vegetable farming and chicken raising is enough to cover all family expenses.

In the classes, she also learnt how to cut or minimise redundant expenses, which she put into practice. Prior to doing business Mina cultivated the habit of saving some of the money sent by her husband. Now she saves all the monthly remittances sent by her husband in a bank account and other places.

Mina's success story was published in the online portal of SaMi's media partner Ujyalo Online. Her husband was pleasantly surprised to read about his wife's success. A confident Mina told her husband that if he returned home, they could scale-up the vegetable farming and chicken rearing together and that they could earn as much as he was earning presently through foreign employment. Khadka Bahadur was convinced by his wife and agreed to return two months later after completing one year of employment in Malaysia.

A spirited Mina says, "if we work hard and consistently for a few years, I'm sure we can earn more than he is earning there. More importantly, our family will be together. I'm eagerly looking forward to him coming back to us."

2.6.2 Major Learnings

The pilots on financial literacy have proved very beneficial for households' financial capacity building. In addition, it has contributed to reducing possible tensions and conflicts linked with remittance management. For its replication in the future, the following aspects need to be taken into account:

An intense training model brings lasting results: The training model promoted by SaMi comprises 28 modules conducted during a period of five to seven months. This length of training is necessary for building confidence and giving participants enough time to learn, internalise, test and apply the learnings with the support of the facilitators.

Group classes to be combined with individual sessions: The high dropout in the initial phase of the training alerted the SaMi team to review their approach. The team then learned that the heterogeneous nature of participants in groups meant that each participant had his/her own rhythm of learning. As a result, SaMi decided to combine group sessions with individual support through home visits to those requiring special coaching.

The involvement of the head of the household and remittance receiver is important: The project also conducts family orientation sessions to ensure the understanding and commitment of the entire household to financial literacy. Family orientation sessions ensure that participants, upon completion of the training, get the support of the family to implement the learnings and use the tools acquired. It is crucial to involve the head of the household for the learnings in the classes to be effective.

Women facilitators as primary trainers: Gender plays an important role in how the classes are conducted and often shapes the relationship of the facilitator with the client. The project hired women facilitators as primary trainers given the fact that women participants open up more comfortably with women counsellors. Further, parents and

communities are more accommodating of training programmes attended by the daughters-in-law if they know that the trainers are women.

Linking with other support services: The human and financial capacities developed through the training may lead participants to request other types of support, such as skills for initiating income generating activities. Though income generation is not a component of the financial literacy training, it is possible to explore bridges with other existing programmes.

2.7 Strengthening the System of the Nepal Government

The Safer Migration project is aligned with the policies of the Government of Nepal and directly supports the government system, actors and civil society in making foreign employment a safer and more beneficial experience for Nepali men and women. Involving the government and civil society jointly is at the heart of the SaMi project. It is a condition for the sustainability and replication of the good practices and approaches developed by the programme.

Capacity building support to the Government of Nepal: The provision of trainings and workshops for the officials at the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security have helped build their capacity for improved service delivery. SaMi adopted a dual implementation approach during Phase II. While the Project Management Unit (PMU) led by the team leader was responsible for the overall management of the project, a separate unit called the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) was established and was hosted directly inside the Ministry to ensure a greater coordination with MoLESS. Both the units provided capacity building trainings to relevant government officials at national and district levels.

Support to improve instruments and policies: SaMi supported the MoLESS in improving policies relating to the protection of migrant workers. Expert support and recommendations from SaMi were submitted as inputs in the process of amending the Foreign Employment Act. Technical support, for example, was provided for automating the services of the Department of Foreign Employment. The project is very strongly anchored at the community level and it ensured that the learnings and experiences from the field informed the government and policy dialogue.

Support to civil society in coordinating with government officials: SaMi is partner with a variety of civil society actors. It is also a member of the National Network for Safer Migration (NNSM). Civil society partners are supported to coordinate in order to inform government actors, policies and services on safer migration. For years the NNSM has acted a hub to support and advocate for concrete measures to support the effective implementation of the Foreign Employment Act (FEA) and for a governance of foreign employment that makes it safer and more beneficial. SaMi also supports migrants' rights networks at sub-national level in their establishment and capacities.

Government of Nepal
MINISTRY OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT
Kathmandu, Nepal

कार्यनवीर समाचार विज्ञापन सम्पर्क

हाम्रो बारेमा सम्बन्धित निकाय श्रोतहरू प्रगति विवरण सार्वजनिक तालिकाहरू

पुर्व स्वीकृति खोजी (Pre-permission)
Lt.no. eg[5555]
खोजी

श्रम स्वीकृति खोजी (Labour Approval)
Passport No
Sticker No
खोजी

वैदेशिक रोजगार सूचना व्यवस्थापन प्रणाली (FEIMS) वैदेशिक रोजगारीको खोजी

The Foreign Employment Information and Management System - FEIMS - www.dofe.gov.np

Support for the smooth functioning of the Foreign Employment Information Management System (FEIMS):

SaMi supported the human resources involved in the functioning of the FEIMS. The system is functioning well and is connected to the various agencies dealing with foreign employment. The Department of Passport; Department of Immigration; Department of Consular Services; recruitment agencies; medical examination institutions; pre-departure orientation training providers; insurance companies, and banks have been connected to the system. SaMi was involved in regular capacity building of the staff at DoFE who are responsible for the smooth functioning of the FEIMS system. SaMi also engaged in raising the awareness of the general public on this new system.

2.7.1 Key Results

A Foreign Employment Information Management System (FEIMS) has been established at the Department of Foreign Employment. The system allows for the digital management and recording of labour approvals, institutional and individual re-entry, online insurance, pre-departure records, issuance of medical certificate, and the deposit to the Migrant Welfare Fund through online banking. It also coordinates the registration system of recruitment agencies. The FEIMS constitutes a significant improvement for migrant workers and a more fluid management of foreign employment. Migrant workers do not need to travel back to Nepal for the renewal of their labour approval. The process is also largely automated, reduces the amount of human interaction and minimises the opportunities for corruption. The system ensures proper documentation and all documents of foreign employment are saved digitally. In the future, the system will also allow for the online registration of complaints. This is a critical development to improve access to justice.

The Foreign Employment Act must be reformed if victims of labour migration are to get efficient and effective justice. The case proceedings must be speedier and less costly. Capacity building of justice related agencies is also a felt need. SaMi has therefore accompanied the amendment process of the Act with financial support and thematic expertise. In 2018, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) formed a task force for the amendment of the FEA. The adaptation of the system to the new federal state structure will also imply the decentralisation and de-concentration of certain services.

SaMi's experience was also mobilised to ensure the inclusion of foreign employment in the preparation of the Local Government Operational Act. The new law grants a lead role to local governments on foreign employment including the transfers of the following responsibilities: establishment and management of information centres; provision of vocational skills and financial literacy trainings; data collection of employed; unemployed youths and migrants, and reintegration of returnee migrants. Local governments will need to acquire adequate capacities and appropriate financial resources to effectively accomplish these new tasks. Support to the federalisation of foreign employment competencies will be a major endeavour in the next phase of SaMi.

2.7.2 Major Learnings

Embedding support: The establishment of a Project Coordination Unit (PCU) directly within MoLESS proved useful for the development of competences and ownership. The preservation of a Project Management Unit (as a more conventional project implementation modality) proved complementary and useful for testing and developing approaches in a more flexible manner.

Federalisation: The federalisation process implies that a range of responsibilities are transferred to local governments, including in relation to foreign employment. This has an important impact on foreign employment governance and the roles of the different levels of government. SaMi will support each level to adapt to the new state structure and take up their responsibilities in relation to labour migration.

De-concentration and decentralisation of services and institutions: The decentralisation of services and deconcentration of agencies related to foreign employment becomes more urgent in view of a federalised Nepal. SaMi will support this process as well as the linkages and good collaboration between all levels.

2.8 Policy Dialogue

SaMi is actively engaged in sharing its experience to inform policies and actors at local, national, and international levels.

At the local level, SaMi informs and support all local actors. This includes support to civil society actors such as the networks of returnee migrants. These networks play an active role in raising awareness of local governments on emerging issues relating to migration and in promoting the inclusion of foreign employment in local level discussions and planning processes. SaMi has so far been supporting ten returnee migrant networks through organisational capacity-building, networking and facilitating interactions with private and institutional actors. Consequently, they have been able to express their priorities and voice demands on issues ranging from fair recruitment to decentralisation of services and have advocated at the central and local levels for policy changes. Similarly, these networks are also in contact with actors in the recruitment sector, monitoring and lobbying them for the full implementation of government policies such as the “free visa, free ticket” policy.

At the national level, SaMi supports its partner organisations to engage in exchange and policy dialogue with the government and recruitment agencies. SaMi is an active partner of the National Network for Safe Migration (NNSM) which gathers all national level civil society actors working on the topic. The NNSM is an important platform for coordination and information exchange on migration governance.

At the international and regional level, SaMi has participated in various international and regional forums such as the Global Forum on Migration and Development. These events constitute opportunities to share the learnings of the project. The project also contributed to bring its field experience into Nepali consultations on migration related aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in the preparation of other international discussions on migration and development.

2.8.1 Key Results

SaMi's efforts on evidence-based policy dialogue have yielded results at both local and national levels. Nationally, the government has decided to allocate NPR. 40 million for its work on migration by expanding the SaMi implementation from 19 to 39 districts in the coming four years (2018-2022). This is an important recognition of SaMi's relevance and achievement in proposing successful approaches. The local governments in various SaMi districts have begun to prioritise work on safer migration. Altogether they have earmarked a total of NPR. 28,652,000 for safer migration in the coming years. This budget will be spent on informing and raising awareness about safer migration and also on supporting families of victimised migrant workers.

2.8.2 Major Learnings

Given its important field presence, SaMi can contribute to evidence-based policymaking and implementation. It works at an important scale which allows for the identification of good practices and concrete needs directly from ground level. It will continue networking with relevant civil society organisations within the broader region to exchange and contrast experiences and possibly coordinate activities and/or messages. The formation and mobilisation of networks of returnee migrants to advocate for the rights of migrants and the proper implementation of policies is a useful and complementary approach for sustainable change and good governance in the migration sector. It is also important that SaMi explores potential linkages within the broader region in order to gain improved access to the demand-side of foreign employment. In the same vein, SaMi generates information and evidence that can be useful for other countries in the South Asia Region.

The federalisation process creates opportunities for improved policies on foreign employment and SaMi will be an active partner of the Government of Nepal at all levels (federal, provincial and local).



Mother of a migrant that left to Qatar - the remittances received allowed the purchase of a piece of land

3. WAY FORWARD

SaMi will continue its programmes in Nepal in the coming years with the major objective of supporting the government, private sector and civil society in the establishment of a well-functioning migration governance system. This will include supporting policies and practises that support a safer and more beneficial migration for migrants and their families, as well as for the country as a whole.

Phase III (2018-2022) of SaMi will in particular support local governments in all seven provinces to regulate and facilitate safer migration cycles for thousands of migrant workers. The 2017 Local Government Operation Act has transferred significant responsibilities to local governments linked to foreign employment. This includes the collection of information on labour migrants, the establishment and operation of employment information centres, the provision of financial literacy and skills training to migrants, and the reintegration of returnees.

The Government of Nepal is committed to protecting the rights of Nepali migrant workers and to ensure the different levels the federal structure contribute to make the migration cycle safer and more beneficial for Nepalese women and men. To ensure its long-term sustainability, the project needs to be scaled-up and fully owned by the Government. The project should in this respect support the capacities of the different levels of government to gradually expand the coverage of SaMi services to the entire country.

SaMi will continue to document and share its experience at national and regional level. Nepal's migration scenarios are dependent on a range of factors, including regional trends. It is critical to continue sharing the project's positive and negative experiences through all available forums to influence regional and global policy dialogue for improved migration governance and the protection of the rights of migrant workers and their families.



A passport applicant at the district administration office in Malangawa in Sarlahi

ABOUT SAMI

The Safer Migration (SaMi) Project was launched in 2011 as a bilateral initiative of the Government of Nepal and the Government of Switzerland. The Phase II of the project was implemented between July 2013 and September 2018 through a partnership between the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal.

The overall goal of the project is to contribute to safer and more beneficial migration for Nepali women and men. This objective is pursued through the provision of information and support services through the entire migration cycle. The project also supports the government structures in regulating the foreign employment sector and setting up the necessary policies and support services for migrants.

The SaMi Project is not established to promote nor discourage migration. It considers migration as a current socioeconomic reality in Nepal and recognises it as a possible livelihood strategy for households.

Since September 2018, SaMi started its third phase of implementation. This new phase builds on the achievements of phase II. It is implemented by and through the government system with a view of institutionalizing the approaches and support Nepal's federalisation process. In this respect, Helvetas offers technical support to the Government of Nepal at federal, provincial and local levels.

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