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Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security



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## Migrant Resource Centre

A Tested Model for Information Provision and Linking Migrants to Safe Migration Services

Lessons Learned through Safer Migration (SaMi) Project, Nepal



**HELVETAS**  
Swiss Intercooperation

**NEPAL**

This publication sheds light on the learnings and experiences of the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC), and the author of this document is Ms. Roni Pradhan Dhaubhadel, Senior Programme Officer, Safer Migration project. She has worked with constant guidance from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. She received substantial inputs from Ms. Barbara Weyermann, former Program Manager Migration, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and worked with constant technical guidance and support from Mr Pascal Fendrich, Senior Advisor Migration and Governance, at Helvetas headquarters, who provides advisory support to selected migration programs. Further elaboration was made by Ms. Monica Upadhyay, Information and Knowledge Management Officer, at SaMi/Helvetas with technical support from Helvetas Nepal Knowledge Management Unit and editing support from Ms. Kesang Renchen. We would like to thank all those named in the text who provided their insights and opinions. We would also like to thank the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security for their valuable support, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Nepal for the funds to implement MRCs and to publish this document. Finally, special thanks go to all the migrant workers who visited the MRCs and the MRC staff, whether specifically named or not, have contributed to this publication through the sharing of their experiences.

The Safer Migration (SaMi) project is a bilateral initiative of the Governments of Nepal and Switzerland and is being implemented together with the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security in 20 districts of Nepal. Access to information, justice, skills, financial literacy and psychosocial supports are the key components of the project which SaMi is implementing through the 21 Migrant Resource Centers (MRCs) operational across the country.

Detailed information about the work of SaMi in Nepal can be found at:

<https://www.sami.org.np>

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Cover photo: Inside a counselling centre in Malangawa in Sarlahi district.

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# Abbreviations

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DAO	District Administration Office
DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment
FEPB	Foreign Employment Promotion Board
FET	Foreign Employment Tribunal
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICC	Safer Migration Information and Counseling Center
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
MoLESS	Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security
MRC	Migrant Resource Center
NGO	Non-Government Organization
RV	Returnee Volunteer
SaMi	Safer Migration Project
UAE	United Arab Emirates

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# Contents

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<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Why a Migrant Resource Centre?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. What is the MRC?</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. What does the MRC do?</b>	<b>7</b>
4.1 Outreach and Awareness Raising	7
4.2 Information and Counselling at the MRCs	8
4.3 Support Services from MRCs	9
4.4 Work Force Diversity	11
<b>5. Where is the MRC?</b>	<b>13</b>
5.1 At Local Level	13
5.2 At Federal Level	13
<b>6. Who Runs the MRC?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>7. Regular Monitoring of MRC Intervention/Results</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>8. Coordination and Inter-institutional Collaborations</b>	<b>19</b>
8.1 Planning and mobilisation of implementation partners	19
8.2 Local government actors	19
8.3 The local civil society and the media	19
8.4 Migrants' rights networks	19
8.5 Representatives of the recruitment sector	19
8.6 National level institutions	19
<b>9. Key Lessons Learned</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Case Studies</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>25</b>

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Wife of a returnee migrant worker preparing panipuri for customers. She opened the panipuri shop after attending the SaMi run financial literacy training in her village.



# 1. Introduction

This publication shares the experience of the Safer Migration Nepal Project (SaMi) in supporting the establishment and services of Migrant Resource Centre (MRC). The MRC was developed as a central component of a broader system supporting Nepali men and women engaged in or willing to engage in foreign employment. An MRC serves both as a point of information and for linking migrants and their families to the necessary support services prior to migration and throughout the migration cycle.

## Box 1: MRC Services (16<sup>th</sup> July, 2013 to 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018)

- Information provided to 475,851 persons (17% women)
- Free skills training trainees: 8,077 (24% women)
- Legal aid and associated services: 13,448 persons
- Psychosocial counselling to individuals: 2,930 (86% women)
- Psychosocial group sessions: 7,292 (all women)
- Financial literacy orientations: 5,073 (98% women)

This publication presents the concept, the role and constitutive elements of an MRC. It also outlines the conditions to be considered for its effectiveness. It is meant to promote the MRC model and experiences in Nepal in the context of the federalisation process, which gives the “local level” (municipalities/rural municipalities) key functions in the field of foreign employment, and notably the responsibility for information delivery on safe migration and for addressing the effects of foreign employment.

It is also meant to be shared at regional level and used as a source of inspiration for countries experiencing similar migration patterns and issues.



Orientation programme for local mediators.





A young mother with her five-year old son. Her husband, who migrated to Dubai for foreign migration is supporting their son's education.



## 2. Why a Migrant Resource Centre?

Foreign employment today constitutes an important livelihood strategy for many households in Nepal. In the past consecutive fiscal years<sup>1</sup> 2015/16 and 2016/17, the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) issued 786,564 permits for foreign employment<sup>2</sup>. In addition, it is estimated that 1,200 to 1,500 individuals per day converge to Kathmandu airport for embarking on overseas employment mainly to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Qatar or Malaysia. These figures need to be added to the number of irregular Nepalese migrating, in particular through India which is an important country of destination and transit. Reliable estimates of the number of individuals using this migration corridor are lacking.

In Nepal, approximately 56% of all households presently receive remittances, representing an annual volume of more than 30% of Nepal's gross domestic product (GDP). These statistics illustrate that in Nepal, as is the case for several countries of South Asia, migration is a central societal dynamic, conceived as an opportunity by many Nepali youth. Foreign employment will continue to play a central role in absorbing part of the youth reaching working age in the foreseeable future.



In Nepal, the migration process is in great part organised by a web of recruiting agencies and sub-agents working as their intermediaries at the local level. Many migrants often significantly or solely rely on the information given by these agents and family relatives to decide and plan migration. The individual and social costs attached to migration remain high for many. Evidence shows that many migrants embark on a migration process with only partial information, false promises, many preconceived ideas and without sufficient preparation for the trade or country in which they will be employed. They often pay recruitment fees that are too high. There are also many cases where, seemingly favourable contracts

are used to lure migrants. However, once migrants arrive in the country of destination, they can find themselves with a work, working conditions and/or remuneration that do not fulfil the conditions they signed for. Migrants facing difficulties in the countries of destination need to know whom to approach when seeking help. In this context, the MRC has been established with the objective to provide crucial and accurate information to (potential) migrants on safe migration and link them to relevant support services.

### Box 2: What are the Objectives of an MRC?

- Ensure men and women migrants access proper pre-departure information on safe migration and are aware of the administrative requirements to be fulfilled for this purpose.
- Facilitate access to pre-departure related services such as skills training.
- Link migrants and families to support services such as legal and associated services aid for victims of migration related fraud and exploitation
- Provide psychosocial counselling support for migrants and their families in need.
- Provide financial literacy trainings to increase the benefits of labour migration.

<sup>1</sup> Nepali fiscal year starts from 16<sup>th</sup> July and ends at 15<sup>th</sup> July of the next year

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Labor and Employment. 2018. Labor Migration for Employment: A Status Report for Nepal: 2015/16 – 2016/17, Nepal





Families of migrant workers receiving psychosocial counselling.



## 3. What is the MRC?

### 3.1 A Central Point for Information, Orientation and Access to Support Services

An MRC is conceived as a central point for information and orientation to key services. It acts as a hub for the coordination of all awareness raising activities. It links (potential) migrants, returnees and their families to a range of services relating to safe migration, such as (free) skills training, legal aid and associated support, psychosocial counselling and financial literacy classes. These services are generally available at the district level or at the national level. An effective MRC is therefore more than an information centre.

### 3.2 How does an MRC Look like?

The MRC should be easy to access and attractive to visitors. Key messages and pictures illustrating safe migration services and procedures (e.g. pictures of skills trainings or photos of important documents like contracts, insurance documents, etc.) are displayed on the walls of the counselling rooms. The displays are limited to prioritised information and not overcrowded.



Men whose family members migrated for foreign employment attend an orientation programme.





A returnee volunteer performing a street drama for awareness on foreign migration.



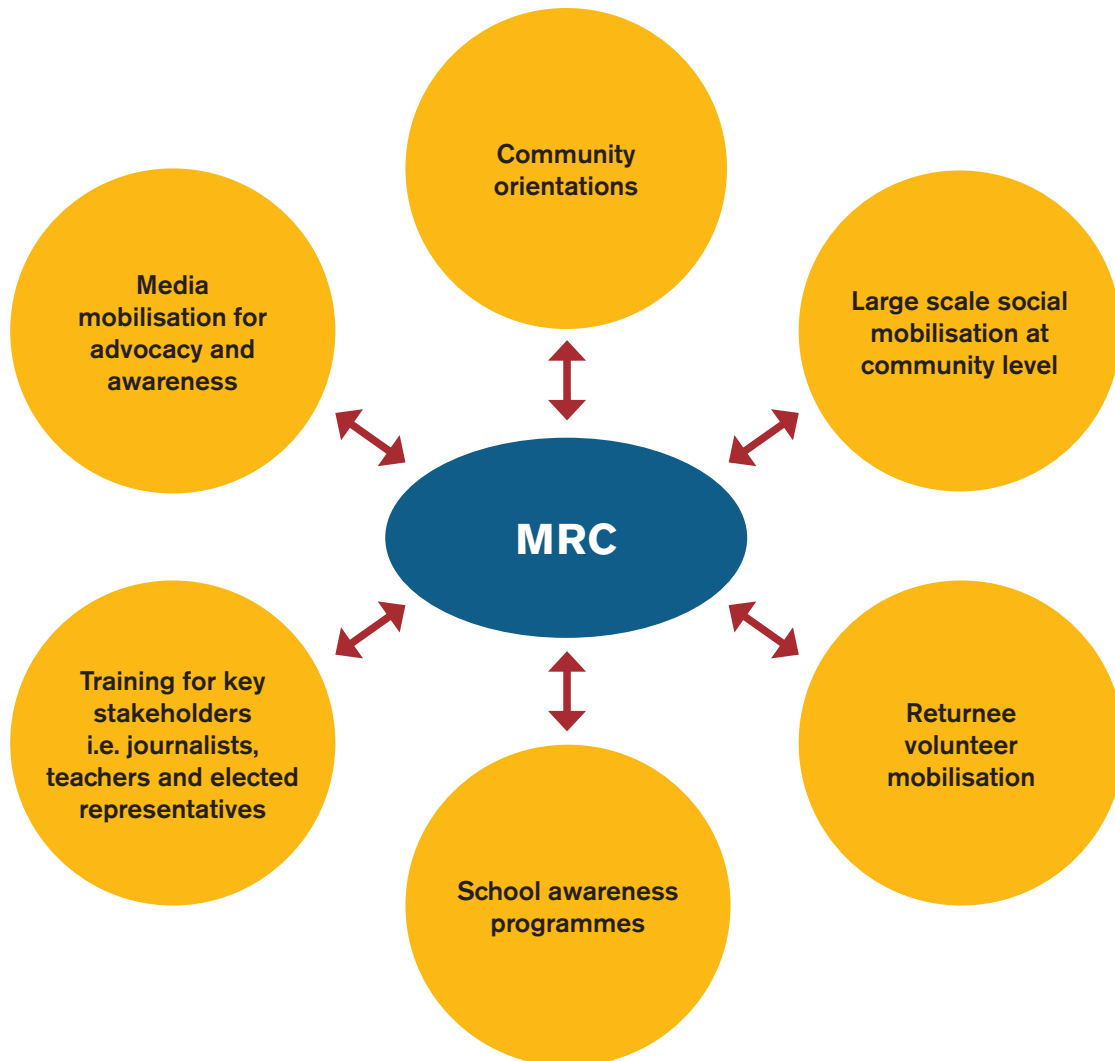
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## 4. What does the MRC do?

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### 4.1 Outreach and Awareness Raising

In order to raise awareness on safe and orderly labour migration and about the MRC as a place to seek advice and support, a range of information activities are promoted and coordinated by the MRC. In the case of MRC, a diverse set of communication channels and methodologies are tested. Rather than creating parallel channels, the MRC invests in existing institutional and community structures and actors. The choice of information channels and their combination are adapted to the context.



#### 4.1.1 Mass Awareness Campaigns

Various programmes are supported including talk shows on radio programmes, information videos and short/flash informative announcements. MRCs also organise awareness programmes through mobile information camps and stalls in public events. MRCs disseminate key messages on foreign employment through cultural events and productions such as street theatre and traditional songs.

#### 4.1.2 Community Outreach through Social Mobilisers

Social mobilisers visit villages for community presentations and discussions on migration. They disseminate messages through sessions organised either with the entire local community or specific groups such as women and youth, without specifically targeting potential migrant candidates at this stage.

#### 4.1.3 Returnee Volunteers (RVs) for Community Outreach

Returnee residents are the initial source of information for aspirant migrants. Therefore, MRC actively involves them in its intervention strategy. There are specifically designed training packages for the RVs and the training are conducted in Kathmandu. The learning in the training are reinforced by MRCs once the RVs return to their villages. MRCs follow up with regular on-the-job coaching and organise capacity development programmes at district level.

The RVs are trained to provide key information on safer migration and carry out door-to-door visits. They furthermore play a critical role in identifying potential migrants and people in need of assistance and referring them to the MRCs for advice or support.

#### 4.1.4 School Programmes

Schools programmes are used as forums for discussing foreign employment with senior school students (grades 8-10 and occasionally 11) to help distinguish between safe and unsafe processes of migration. This is an ideal time for raising awareness among students who are often considering the option of foreign employment after finishing high school. These students can also share this learning within their household or with relatives already in migration.

#### 4.1.5 Sensitising Local Leaders and Concerned Stakeholders

At the same time the programme invests in informing and sensitising local influential individuals, such as local representatives, journalists, social study teachers and social mobilisers. Activities include interaction programmes, advocacy and submitting demands on behalf of migrant workers.

#### 4.1.6 Disseminating Key Messages

Following the identification of lessons learned from experience key messages are disseminated through diverse means of communication. Mass awareness campaigns are designed with opportunities for community/group exchange. Bilateral dialogues are encouraged in an environment of trust.

### 4.2. Information and Counselling at the MRCs

The MRC counsellors offer individual and group counselling to potential migrant workers, returnees and their families. It should be underlined that the role of MRCs is neither to promote migration nor to discourage people from foreign employment. Instead the MRCs provide accurate information and counselling to potential migrants, returnees and their families so that they can make informed decisions.

The initial briefing of visitors with MRC counsellors lasts around 10-15 minutes and focuses on a set of **priority messages**:

- **Proper process of labour migration:** The first step to ensure protection and access to assistance is to follow all required administrative steps. To get a labour permit following documents are required: medical certificate, proof of insurance, contract, visa, passport copy, certificate of orientation on foreign employment and a receipt of the contribution to the migrant welfare fund. It is crucial to go through government accredited institutions.
- **Importance of skills training:** Pre-departure skills trainings contribute to safety and higher salaries. The MRCs refer applicants to skills training institutes and in the case of the SaMi Project, training is provided free of charge.
- **Recruitment costs:** Counsellors provide information to migrants about the charges/fees applicable for various destination countries as regulated by the Government of Nepal.
- **Document all transactions:** Obtaining receipts for all payments is necessary as proofs if required later.



- **Copies of documents:** It is crucial to leave copies of all important documents (passport, visa, insurance paper, labour approval, medical certificate, receipts of payment and contract) at home with family members or a reliable person. In addition, visitors are also made aware of the importance of taking photos of these documents and send them to the families as these documents are often given at the last moment.
- **Emergency numbers:** Migrants and family members must have contact numbers of government and non-governmental institutions that can be contacted for support in Nepal or in the country of destination (e.g. Nepalese diplomatic missions)
- **Risks and Frauds:** Counsellors inform visitors on the various risks of fraud and ways to reduce the chances of being cheated.
- **More information can be available:** Individual sessions and orientations are provided on request (for instance to discuss skills or the situation in a particular country of destination).

During the first visit, it is important that MRC counsellors create an atmosphere of reliability and trust and encourage the person to visit again or call again regarding queries or problem related to foreign employment. In addition, visitors are invited for in-depth orientation. Leaflets with key information are made available on site. Posters are displayed on the MRC walls. Informative videos are used as a way of illustrating the migration process and share testimonies of migrants.

### 4.3 Support Services from MRCs

MRCs also play a central role in referring migrants, returnees and their families to pre-departure and/or support services.

**4.3.1 Pre-departure skills trainings:** MRCs are responsible for referring qualified aspirant migrants for short term practical skills trainings conducted free of cost. At the same time, MRCs are connected with the employment related services at local level.

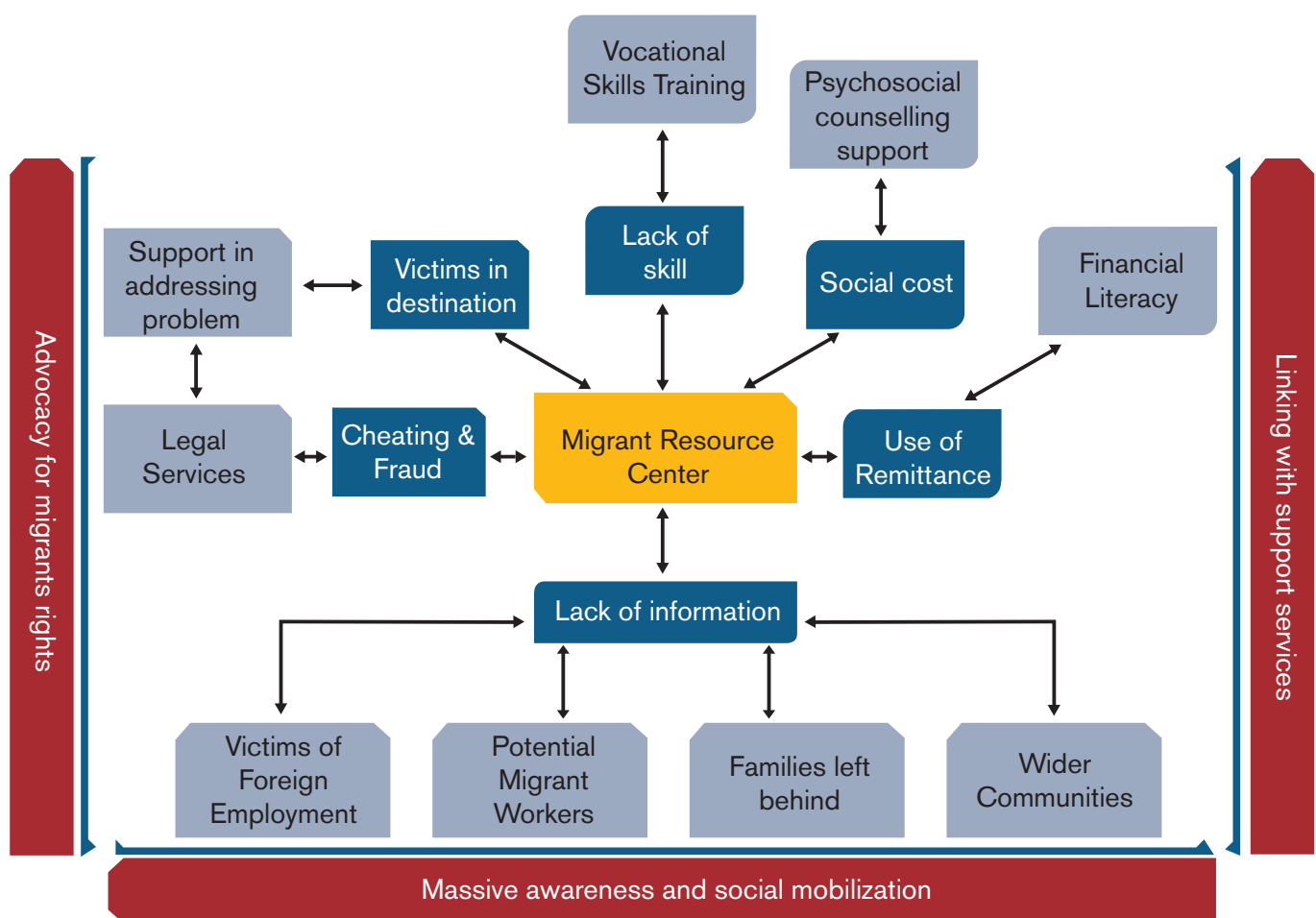
**4.3.2 Legal aid and associated support and linkages:** MRCs refer migrants in difficulties in destination countries to partners for assistance and repatriation if necessary in close coordination with the Nepalese diplomatic mission in the destination country, the Foreign Employment Promotion Board and insurance companies. A variety of cases are reported to MRCs including cases of missing migrants, deaths and issues of body repatriation, medical emergencies of in-service migrants, non-application of contract provision, passport, confiscation, imprisonment and deportation. MRC works with specialised partner organisations able to provide direct support to migrants experiencing such difficulties. MRCs coordinate and refer workers and/or their families to relevant government and non-government organisations for support. Migrants that are victims of fraud can further be supported in filing claims at the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE).

**4.3.3 Financial literacy:** A complete training curriculum is made available to remittance receiving families. The objective of this service is to support migrants' families to become more effective in the management of the remittances. These trainings help families plan their income, expenditures and the savings which they have already received or anticipate. The documentation of the households' incomes and expenditures have contributed to reduce conflicts within families and increase the level of trust.

**4.3.4 Psycho-social counselling:** The potential challenges posed by foreign employment (including contract defraud, injury or death of the migrant worker, debts and family break-up) to migrants and their families throughout the migration process may have severe consequences on the psychosocial health of migrants' families and/or returnees. The programme offers individual and group psychosocial counselling to help deal with the stress or trauma linked with migration.

The MRCs relies on the expertise of a myriad of specialised national service providers for the on-site provision of these services.

### 4.3.5 How MRC functions?



#### Box 3: A Communication that Makes a Difference

The experience of MRC underlines the importance of the environment and the way key messages are communicated to visitors.

MRC counsellors need good inter-personal skills, an ability to communicate in simple language and illustrate their advice with examples and pictures. It is not simply about “what” is important but also “why” it is important. Counsellors with local knowledge and the local language(s) are preferred.

Effective orientation is not simply about making a presentation on important facts but rather about establishing a two-way communication. Counsellors also need to pay attention to the reactions of their interlocutors, verify their level of understanding and give them space for questions. For this purpose, exchange with small groups is encouraged.

A user friendly and welcoming environment is necessary. Information materials need to be easily accessible and available in local languages. It is important to understand that the level of information should be adapted to the target audience and thus differ between men and women or between people who are migrating for the first time and individuals that are migrating for a second or third time. The interaction aims at creating a climate of trust, following which the visitors feel at ease about asking questions and contact the MRC again if necessary.



#### Box 4: Gender Dimension

##### *Adjusting MRC Operation Modalities for Effective Counselling for Women*

In the case of Nepal, specific regulations apply for women migration. At the time of writing, the Government has established a total ban on migration for women domestic workers to the Gulf countries. The MRCs not only have to be aware and inform women about these regulations but also need to anticipate and prepare for the possible behaviours such regulations may trigger. For instance, counsellors would have to consider possibilities of an increase in irregular migrant workers, travelling through India and/or falsely declaring occupation other than domestic work. The counsellors need to integrate these elements in their counselling.

Another common example is that women are often accompanied by a recruiting (sub) agent, who may not be in favour of the visit to the MRC.

The above underlines that MRCs need to integrate and adapt to the specificities of women migration. As a rule, the MRCs are required to at least apply the following practices:

- **Respect the decision of aspiring migrants.** Communicate that MRC is available to support the aspiring women migrant workers in safe migration.
- **A woman counsellor for women migrants.** A woman counsellor must be present in every MRC, as women feel more comfortable interacting with other women.
- **A separate room for women counselling** should be available in order to guarantee confidentiality.
- **IEC materials to integrate the specificities of women migration**, including specific regulations that are applicable and identified risks.
- **Counselling the family members is also crucial** in case aspiring women migrants are planning to go to Gulf countries as domestic workers. Usually women are accompanied by their family members therefore it is crucial to counsel them as well. In cases when women do not inform their family members about their decision to take up foreign employment, counsellors should respect their decision. In such cases of course, family counselling will not be possible
- **Constant follow up** (through field visits or phone discussions) is required for women migrants who are planning to leave for domestic work.
- **The difference between company work and domestic work should be properly explained** so that the aspiring women migrants understand the risks associated with domestic work and make informed decision.
- **The MRCs should gain the trust of the aspiring women migrants.** It is not about “forbidding” women to migrate but making sure they feel at ease to contact the MRCs for support.
- **Gender sensitive and women rights sensitive MRC staff team** is a must.

#### 4.4 Work Force Diversity

Respecting and implementing the principles of work force diversity is important for achieving the MRC results. During staff selection, it is one of the core principles followed leading towards inclusive team representing gender, caste, geographical and language diversity. For example, having one compulsory women counselor, having women returnee volunteers in the communities with higher women migration, having staff from the marginalised communities, men psychosocial counselors for dealing men's cases and women psychosocial counselors for dealing cases of women. In addition, the MRCs analyses the diversity in the target beneficiaries.



Families of migrant workers listen attentively to the counsellor during a counselling session.



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## 5. Where is the MRC?

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The MRC is located at the local and the federal level. At the local level, it is placed within the premises of the District Administration Office, while at the federal level it is housed inside the Department of Passport as well as inside Tribhuvan International Airport.

### 5.1 At Local Level

**5.1.2 District Administration Office:** The MRCs target potential migrants who come to apply for a passport at the District Administration Office (DAO)/Illaka (Area) Administration Office. Therefore, it is important that the MRCs are established inside the DAO. If this is not possible the MRCs should be established as close as possible to the DAO and ensure people have easy access. In the case of Nepal, most migrant candidates have not travelled abroad before. The application of a passport is generally the first step towards foreign employment.



In the majority of its districts of intervention, MRC has agreed with the DAO that a visit to the MRC constitutes a mandatory step in the passport application process. The MRC stamps the document of the passport applicants to certify the visit.

During SaMi phase II (16<sup>th</sup> July, 2013 – 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2018), 21<sup>3</sup> MRCs (previously named Information and Counselling Centre/ICC) in its 20 working districts are functioning.

In addition, information desks<sup>4</sup> were opened at Illaka Administration Offices. Illaka offices constitute branches of the central administration and issue citizenship certificates, register passport applications and distribute them. One staff is positioned to provide information and distribute related materials. Visitors are also referred to the MRC for more detailed orientation and support services.

### 5.2 At Federal Level

**5.2.1 The Department of Passport, Kathmandu:** Passport applications can either be submitted in the districts of origin of the applicant or at the Department of Passport in Kathmandu for all applicants. Applications are faster in Kathmandu but cost double the price. Every day, an estimated 900 to 1,100 people come to Kathmandu to submit their applications making it a critical site for an MRC. In this case, it is a joint venture of the Department of Passport, the Foreign Employment Promotion Board and the SaMi.



**5.2.2 The Airport Information Desk:** The Tribhuvan International Airport of Kathmandu is logically an important en route point for migrants which prompted SaMi supporting the establishment of an information desk. It is not conceived as an MRC but presence is ensured to provide last moment critical information to the individuals departing for foreign employment. When necessary the information desk can also refer returning migrants and families to relevant support structures such as shelter house for immediate protection and referral for legal support.

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3 Khotang, Sarlahi, Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta East, Kailali, Dhanusha, Dhading, Sunsari, Saptari, Ramechhap, Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta West, Udaypur, Sindhuli, Kaski, Dang, Mahottari, Nuwakot, Jhapa, Siraha, Sindhupalchowk and Kathmandu.

4 The information desks were opened at Khotang (Khotang bazaar), Sarlahi (Barahathwa), Nawalparasi Bardaghat Susta West (Semari), Kailali (Tikapur), Dhanusha (Yadukuwa), and Saptari (Kanchanpur).





Wife of a migrant worker proudly displays a passbook she uses for easy recordkeeping of all her savings and withdrawals.



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## 6. Who Runs the MRC?

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Several approaches were tested. In half of the working districts of intervention, the Project contracted local service provider for the management of the entire MRC system. In the other half, the MRC was integrated into the district government structure, with project staff running the MRCs. In both models, specialised staff then needed to be recruited for providing the specific services attached to the MRC such as returnee volunteers, financial literacy and psycho-social support.



Participants of a shuttering carpentry training program.

The experience showed advantages in favour of the MRCs implemented by local service provider. The local service provider can be contracted by local government. This gives space to search for a competent partner and rely on its consolidated experience in working on information dissemination and capacity building at community level. Some of the partners have already worked on foreign employment or connected working fields and issues and benefit from an already existing network at local and national level. This model showed flexibility for rapid adaptation to contextual changes, intervention strategies or staff changes and renewal.

### Box 5: MRC Guidelines for the Counsellors

Supportive guideline for the MRC counsellors on effective counselling guides the counsellors through the different stages of their work and their interactions with visitors. It gives details on how to introduce a session; how to interact and structure a counselling session; provides procedures to follow for women counselling; tips on how to develop trust and make the visitor feel comfortable to ask questions. The use of case studies and illustrations is also emphasised. MRC counsellors are provided in-depth training on safe migration, counselling and communication skills.





A returnee migrant worker who returned home with a serious leg injury looks forward to a new beginning.



## 7. Regular Monitoring of MRC Intervention/Results

It is important to keep a rigorous record of the number of visitors at the MRC, their contact details and other key information including if they already have a precise migration plan. All data are entered into an integrated database accessible for all MRCs as part of the Project monitoring system. Such an integrated web based digital system should in the longer run be institutionalised under the umbrella of the FEPB. Specific checklists have been developed for accurate, regular and uniform monitoring of the information and counselling processes and their results.

MRCs are responsible for conducting a detailed phone follow-up on at least 10% of the visitors. Phone interviews are organised six months after their visit to verify their situation, whether they migrated or not and under what conditions.

### Box 6: Monitoring of MRCs

Quality of services and counselling	The MRC Coordinator and the District Project Coordinator observe and report on the quality of MRC services on a monthly basis.
Results/application of knowledge and messages by visitors	Phone follow-up of at least 10% of randomly selected MRC visitors and RVs; randomly visit households of visitors who were contacted by phone to verify application of messages (e.g. copies of documents left at home and receipts for money paid)
Level of satisfaction of MRC visitors	MRC Coordinator interviews at least 25 randomly selected MRC visitors per month. District Project Coordinator interviews at least 10 randomly selected MRC visitors on a quarterly basis. Source: SaMi/HELVETAS Monitoring Guideline, 2017

### Box 7: MRC Key Results in Figures (16<sup>th</sup> July, 2013 – 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2018)

- A phone follow-up was carried out among **10% of the 475,851 MRC visitors**, which shows that:
    - 72% of the visitors have applied the information provided by the MRCs.
    - 22% of the visitors left for foreign employment.
    - 22% of the migrants successfully negotiated and reduced pre-departure cost which amounts to NPR. 49,112,900/-.
  - 13,448 persons received legal aid and associated services. Out of which, 6,299 complaints were settled, and people received financial compensations from various institutions including the FEPB, DoFE, FET, insurance companies and local level amounting to a total sum of NPR. 813,431,082/-.
  - Out of the 2,930 individual psychosocial clients, 66% have improved their well being
  - Out of a total of 8,077 graduates of skills trainings, 58% were placed in gainful employment
  - Out of a total of 5,073 beneficiaries of financial literacy support, 38% have started income generating activities, 64% kept records of their expenses and incomes and 59% have increased savings.
- Source:** SaMi/HELVETAS progress reports

### Box 8: Information Desk at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) Kathmandu

(16<sup>th</sup> July, 2013 – 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016)

Some key figures:

- **113,832, including 11,215 women**, informed through direct exchange on site.
  - **669 cases, including 20 women**, received assistance following death of migrant in the course of foreign employment.
  - **1,118 persons, including 141 women**, informed about labour permit renewal.
  - **373 women** referred to shelters
  - **82 men** referred for legal support
  - **2,037, including 303 women**, supported for last minute photocopy of important documents.
- Source:** TIA Assessment Report, 2017



Participant of a community orientation programme.



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## 8. Coordination and Inter-institutional Collaborations

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The MRC needs to collaborate with a wide range of institutional actors. It also needs to be recognised as part of the system and as a source of expertise and support for safe foreign employment.

**8.1 Planning and mobilisation of implementation partners:** The MRC Programme Coordinator and his/her team are responsible for ensuring proper planning and coordination of all awareness and information activities in the field. The annual plan and budget are shared and endorsed by the local government. There are also regular visits from the government representatives to monitor and provide feedbacks on the ongoing programmes. The annual work plan integrates training needs and capacity building activities for the staff and direct stakeholders (e.g. elected representatives, teachers and journalists).

**8.2 Local government actors:** In parallel, the MRCs need to be integrated as part of the local institutions and their role recognised. Local authorities/municipalities need to be fully involved from the start in order to promote their ownership on the issue, as they will be the ones financing and managing the system in the longer run.

The collaboration of the local administration and passport authority is also critical for effective MRCs. For instance, authorities are requested to allocate an office space for MRCs close to the passport authority and to make MRC visit mandatory in the passport application process. The police also need to be involved and sensitised on the topic in order to be able to refer cases when necessary but also possibly contribute to the mediation of cases directly at local level. All these elements underline the importance for MRCs to be connected and integrated into the **local institutional landscape**.

**8.3 The local civil society and the media:** Both must be sensitised on the issue and informed on the role of the MRCs in order to support possible collaborations on awareness raising and advocacy. The support of the media and the local civil society is important in terms of information dissemination, advocacy and case resolution.

**8.4 Migrants' rights networks:** In order to strengthen migrants' voices at local, state and national levels, MRC works with migrants' organisations. At present, there are ten migrants' rights networks, which are constituted from networks of returnees and members of families. They engage in advocacy at local and national levels.

**8.5 Representatives of the recruitment sector** (formal or informal, agents/sub-agents) also need to be approached for sensitisation and orientation. They also often lack a full understanding of the requirements of formal migration, of applicable legislation and available options for pre-departure preparation.

**8.6 National level institutions:** The MRCs need to work in coordination with national level actors and information circuits. The connection with ministries/departments in charge of foreign employment regulation, management and oversight are particularly important in order to be regularly updated on migration dynamics, applicable legislation and policies, trends regarding countries of destination and approved recruitment agencies. The MRCs connect national level institutions to the grass root realities.

In addition, the **FEPB** which is established under the Foreign Employment Act 2007 is the mandated government body under the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security to ensure access to information, access to vocational skills trainings and compensation for workers who are injured or died while working abroad. The FEPB is responsible for producing guidelines, standardised information documents and updates on policies and migration trends.

The establishment of a **National Migrant Resources Centre** will be a concrete modality to ensure coordination between the national and local levels, standardised messages and approaches.

### Box 9: Nepal Federalisation Process and Foreign Employment

At the time of writing, Nepal is engaged in a federalisation process. This has a significant impact as it concerns the role of local governments in foreign employment. The Local Governance Operational Act 2017 states that local governments are responsible for awareness and information delivery regarding safe foreign employment and data collection. In this framework they are also responsible for the provision of financial literacy and skills trainings, while promoting measures for the social reintegration of returnee migrants and the use of their skills and knowledge. The setting-up and management of an MRC and its related services are now within the mandate of the local government.

The MRCs has adapted its intervention strategy in order to support the new state structure. This implies a shift from the district to the municipal level as municipalities become the main partners of the Project. The logic of “localisation” of MRCs remains however similar, targeting the main crossing points of potential migrants, in particular the passport distribution authority. MRCs are required to cover several municipalities and be managed and financed through inter-municipal collaboration.

### Box 10: Elements for an Effective MRC

What?	Requirements for an Effective MRC
Accessibility of location	The optimal location is at important crossing points for migration candidates. The tested option is to have the MRC inside or as close as possible to the passport distribution authority and be visible to applicants.
Size and number of rooms for the MRCs	A minimum of three rooms: one room for men counselling and one room for women counselling (which can be closed to guarantee confidentiality if needed). A third larger room to be used as a meeting hall where in depth orientation can be provided to the interested persons.
Minimum human resources for information	At least 2 counsellors, including a woman [estimated on the basis of approximately 500 visitors per month]
Minimum human resources for psychosocial counselling	3 counsellors, majority of whom should be women [1 counsellor covers approximately 30 individual clients and 4 groups comprising 10-15 clients/per year]
Minimum human resources for financial literacy	3 facilitators – a majority or all should be women [one facilitator covers approximately 100 persons from five groups]
Other Human Resources	Project Coordinator: Responsible for the overall coordination of all MRC activities and relations with other institutional actors. Program Officer: Supports and monitors the activities; provides school and community level trainings. Finance and Administration Officer: financial management and accounting of the MRC. Social mobiliser: Awareness raising / outreach at community level [1 to cover 1-2 municipalities–approximately 10,000 to 15,000 inhabitants] Returnee Volunteers: at least 3-5 RVs per municipality [= approx. population of 10,000 to 15,000 inhabitants]
Minimum equipment	2 Laptops, 1 printer, 1 photocopy machine, 1 scanner, 1 projector, 1 speaker, internet facility, line telephone, 8 office tables, 20 chairs for MRC visitors, 3 cupboards, 1 meeting table, 1 notice board, 1 fan, and 3 white boards.



IEC materials	IEC materials on the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Booklets with key messages on safe migration</li> <li>• Women specific IEC material</li> </ul>
Data Management	Access to online data management system Time needs to be allocated for this task during the day Ensure follow-up through phone interviews with at least 10% of the MRC visitors
In case of staff leave, sickness or maternity leave	Provisions to be made (both budget as well as management) for hiring temporary replacements in case of long leave, sick leave and maternity leave for staff
Trainings, regular supervision and monitoring of Human Resources	All human resources need training before starting their work. Regular refresher trainings necessary on safer migration, gender sensitivity, social inclusion/targeting, effective communication and counselling, result monitoring and report writing is essential for effective services.
Team spirit and team work	A good team spirit is essential for the effective functioning of the MRC. Staff members must cooperate and support each other. This needs to be considered in the recruitment process.

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## 9. Key Lessons Learned

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- **At the initial stage, vast information campaigns using a variety of channels are necessary** to make the public aware of the MRCs' presence, related services and locations.
- **MRCs need constant backstopping and updated information** (on migration trends, applicable regulations, registered or black listed recruitment agencies and changing conditions in countries of destination). The context of foreign employment can rapidly evolve and MRCs need to be able to adapt and disseminate updated information. In the case of Nepal, a regular coordination with the FEPB should ensure frequent mutual updates. All relevant news and articles relating to labour migration are shared with all MRCs on a daily basis.
- **MRCs are more than information centres.** MRCs offer a wide range of services, including orientation. The combination of services can vary depending on the context and resources, but a minimum set-up including legal support services, is necessary to make the system successful.
- **MRCs need to be integrated and recognised as part of the (local) institutional landscape to be fully successful.** Other local actors need to be aware of the MRCs to refer possible visitors. MRCs should be capable of referring cases to concerned governmental agencies, non-governmental or private sector actors.
- **Regular coordination with the government agencies is necessary.** Both levels need to interact regularly for mutual updates, coordination and monitoring.
- **The MRC implemented by local service provider is efficient.** It can mobilise available competencies and ensures rapid adaptation. The local service provider can be contracted directly by a local government.
- **Location matters:** MRCs need to be easily identifiable and located at crossing points of most migrants. It should be located inside or very close to the premises of the passport authority and be visible to applicants.
- **MRC counsellors must focus on a limited number of messages for first-time visitors.** The first interaction between MRC counsellors and visitors is short and need to focus on a limited set of priority messages. A relation of trust needs to be established so that visitors come back for questions if necessary.
- **The context and format of information delivery matters as much as the content of the message.** The counsellors need to be recruited also on the basis of their communication and interpersonal skills. They need to be able to adapt to their audience and deliver clear messages and illustrate them. The organisation of the MRCs also matters, including its space, number of rooms, posters on the walls, etc.
- **Training matters:** In addition to recent migration related information, counsellors, social mobilisers and RVs need to be trained in how to interact with visitors and communities in order to disseminate messages and detect possible issues effectively.
- **RVs as trusted outreach actors:** Given their experience, RVs are seen as legitimate and credible sources of information on foreign employment. They constitute central players for disseminating information in the field and referring individuals in need of support to the MRCs.
- **MRC staff/counsellors need to reflect the visitors' diversity.** Counsellors need to know the local context and languages. Information and counselling in the local language using local examples of cases is very important. In particular women counsellors need to be recruited for women counselling.
- **A separate room to preserve the confidentiality of discussions.** Some MRC visitors may come in search of support. Some issues may be sensitive and cannot be shared in public. Counsellors are required to pro-actively ask visitors whether they require a confidential interview.
- **IEC material:** Readymade information, videos and leaflets need to be made available. Material on women specific issues linked with migration also need to be prepared and distributed. The preparation/adaptation of videos in the local languages are to be taken into consideration.



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## Case Studies

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### ***Story 1: The Advantage of Pre-Departure Skills Training for Migrant Workers***

Gyan Bahadur Bishwa Karma is from Halesi Tuwachung Municipality, Khotang District. He has been working in Qatar for the past five years.

Gyan Bahadur visited the MRC located in the district headquarter, Diktel, during the passport application process. He was provided with safer migration information and counselling services by the MRC. One of the main information was on importance of skills training and the possibility to enrol in a free skills training. As a result, before going to Qatar, Gyan enrolled in a training for electricians offered by the SaMi Project to potential migrant workers. As soon as he finished the training, he took some loan from his relatives and flew to Qatar. Prior to his departure, he had a verbal agreement with a manpower agency that he would be offered a job with a monthly pay of 1000 riyal in Qatar.

In Qatar, Gyan was in for some unexpected turn of things. Even though he was employed as an electrician he learned that he and his friends would be earning only 800 riyals a month - 200 riyals less than the amount agreed upon in Kathmandu. With great reluctance Gyan started working, only to find out that the group would be paid at the end of three months, Gyan and his friends were paid a total of 2,400 riyals each. They worked for another three months without pay, soon after which the company went bankrupt and closed down. Gyan and his friends were left jobless and were not paid a penny for the last three months of hard work.

After he lost his job, Gyan struggled for a couple of months to get his release paper, and then started looking for a job. Thanks to the electrician training that Gyan had taken while in Nepal and the good impression that his certificate made, he got a job in a company. He was offered a basic pay of 1000 riyal and an extra 300 riyals for food. "If I had not enrolled in this training, or received a certificate, I would not have been qualified for the job. It was only when I was jobless that I realised the value of the training and the certificate," he told the MRC staff when visiting Nepal on a short vacation.

Gyan currently draws a monthly income of 1,800 riyals. He has paid off his debt and bought a plot of land from his savings. Recently, his immediate supervisor recommended him for the job of a lead electrician. "My supervisor has asked the company to raise my pay-scale. I think the company will finish the paper work soon." Gyan is thankful to MRC for providing certified training opportunities to hundreds of aspiring migrant workers like him, and thereby increasing their chances of a decent job and a good working environment abroad.

### ***Story 2: The Benefit of Involving Varied Stakeholders in Orientation on Labour Migration***

30-year-old Dilip Raj Magar, from Dhading District, decided to go to Qatar for work in the hope of earning more than what he used to earn from farming in Pravasi Nepali. After consulting his family members, he flew to Qatar on the 3rd April 2011 through a recruitment agency whom he had paid NPR 110,000. His contract stated that he was to work as heavy vehicle driver and receive a monthly salary of 1,800 riyal. He got the job as per the agreement and completed his contract and returned to Nepal after 2 years. He renewed his labour approval on 13th August 2013 and left again. On 5th September, 2014 the family received news that Dilip had died in a road accident.

The deceased's widow, Amrita, who was a client of the Everest Bank in Dhading, was informed by one of the officers at the bank, that she should visit the local MRC as the family was eligible for compensations and scholarship for her daughter. MRC had conducted an orientation session on labour migration with bank officers in Dhading.

On 24th October 2015 the case was referred at SaMi partner organisation, Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), through the MRC of Dhading for compensation from the destination country. The family

had already received compensation from the insurance company in Nepal and FEPB. The MRC assisted the family for the preparation of all documents necessary for the compensation claim and was further assisted by PNCC to submit all required documents to the destination country. Along with this, the case was shared with the Nepal Embassy in Qatar. After a long wait and continued follow-up, on 2nd June 2016, the family received a compensation amount of 200,000 riyal from Qatar. MRC Dhading also linked her daughter to the scholarship from FEPB.

### ***Story 3: Crucial Role Played by MRC in dispute resolution at the local level***

Chiranjivi Kumar Pal, Bijay Kumar Mahato, Ashok Kumar Mahato and Lalu Prasad Pal from Siraha District went to Malaysia paying NPR 151,000. All of them did not get the jobs and salaries according to their contracts. They complained to the recruitment agency and the local agent. However, even after four months of hardship, the recruitment agency and the agent in Nepal were unable to solve their problem. They all returned to Nepal.

Upon arrival in Nepal, they persistently followed up with the recruitment agency and agent but were ignored. From the radio jingle broadcasted by MRC, Chiranjivi learned about the services of MRC in Dhanusha and approached the MRC with his problem. During a meeting between the local agent and the complainants, the local agent blamed the recruitment agency for the problem. The MRC suggested that they file a complaint against the recruitment agency at the Department of Foreign Employment. They filed the complaints, but their cases were considered too weak due to the lack of evidences. In the meanwhile, the local agent also could not be contacted. Through its network the MRC tracked the agent down and set up a meeting. The MRC explained that as per the Foreign Employment Act 2007, agents must be registered with DoFE and listed out the penalties he would have to face. The agent accepted his fault and agreed to compensate the complainants with NPR 100,000 each. Soon after this case, he left the job as local recruitment agent. The returnee migrants thanked the MRC for the guidance and support in helping them to get compensation. In this way, the MRC Dhanusha has been active in dispute resolution at local level.



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The Safer Migration Project (SaMi) is a bilateral initiative of the Governments of Nepal and Switzerland. Starting with a pilot phase in 2011, the Project is implemented through a partnership between Helvetas Nepal and the Ministry of Labour and Employment (now: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security). The overall goal of the Project is safer and more beneficial migration for women and men. The Project supports the Government of Nepal in setting-up appropriate policies and support services on foreign employment.

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