



Government of Nepal  
Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC  
स्वीस सरकार विकास सहयोग एसडीसी



## Foreign Labour Migration from Nepal: Characteristics of Current and Returnee Migrants



**HELVETAS**  
NEPAL

**SaMi**  
Safer Migration Programme

Publisher: **Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme**

The SaMi Programme is a bilateral initiative between the Government of Nepal and the Government of Switzerland. It is implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) and 156 participating local governments. Helvetas Nepal provides technical assistance to the programme on behalf of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

This report is prepared by Dr Arjun Kharel based on the migration profiles developed by the selected local governments. The information presented here may be used for non-commercial purposes with proper acknowledgement of and attribution to the source.

For Citation: Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme, Foreign Labour Migration from Nepal: Characteristics of Current and Returnee Migrants (Kathmandu: SaMi, 2024).

© Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme, 2024

Cover Photo: Dissemination of the migration profile in Ghorahi Sub-Metropolitan City.

Photo Credit: SaMi/Helvetas Nepal

# Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
Acronyms	vii
Executive Summary	ix
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Study Objectives	2
1.3 Methodology	3
1.4 Limitations of the Study	3
<b>2 Characteristics of Migrants</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Migrants' Sex	5
2.2 Migrants' Age	5
2.3 Migrants' Caste/Ethnicity	6
2.4 Migrants' Marital Status	7
2.5 Destination Countries	8
2.6 Stint of Overseas Employment of Current Migrants	9
2.7 Status of Family Problems in the Households of Current Migrants	10
2.8 Prevalence of Second Marriage among Current Migrants	11
2.9 Migrant Households' Engagement in Agriculture	11
2.10 Current Migrants with Elderly Parents Living on Their Own	12
2.11 Current Migrants Sending Children to Private Schools Away from Home	12
<b>3 Current Migrants' Pre-Departure and Travel Experiences</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 Access to Pre-Departure Information by Current Migrants	14
3.2 Skills Learnt Prior to Migration	14
3.3 Status of Migrants' Documents with Family Members	15
3.4 Mode of Migration	16
3.5 Routes of Migration	16
3.6 Cost of Migration	17
3.7 Sources of Finance	18
3.8 Sources of Loans and Interest Rates	19

<b>4</b>	<b>Current Migrants' Experience in Destination Country</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1	Employment Sector	20
4.2	Employment-Related Issues	21
4.3	Frequency of Contact with Family Members	22
4.4	Covid-19-Related Problems	23
<b>5</b>	<b>Remittance Transfers and Investments by Current Migrants</b>	<b>24</b>
5.1	Remittance Transfers by Current Migrants	24
5.2	Methods of Money Transfer	24
5.3	Remitted Amount	25
5.4	Remittance Investment	25
5.5	Investment on Land and Plan of Internal Migration for Settlement	27
<b>6</b>	<b>Post-Return Experiences of Returnee Migrants</b>	<b>29</b>
6.1	Reason of Return	29
6.2	Investment of Earnings from Labour Migration	29
6.3	Re-Migration Plan and Employment Status of Returnee Migrants in Nepal	30
6.4	Entrepreneurship Engagement of Returnee Migrants	31
6.5	Status of Support for Business Promotion	32
6.6	Migrants Considering Engaging in Entrepreneurship	33
6.7	Expectation of Support for Entrepreneurship	34
6.8	Challenges in Starting or Conducting Business	34
6.9	Skill Training Obtained Prior to Migration or During Employment	35
6.10	Awareness of Skill Testing Availability	36
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion and Policy Recommendations</b>	<b>37</b>
	<b>Annex: Caste and Ethnic Groupings in Nepal</b>	<b>40</b>

# List of Tables

Table 1: Selected municipalities and sample size by province	3
Table 2: Current and returnee migrants' number and sex	5
Table 3: Age of current and returnee migrants (%)	6
Table 4: Caste/ethnicity of current migrants (%)	6
Table 5: Caste and ethnicity of returnee migrants (%)	7
Table 6: Marital status of current and returnee migrants (%)	7
Table 7: Last country of employment of current migrants (%)	8
Table 8: Last country of employment of returnee migrants (%)	9
Table 9: Stint of migration of current migrants (%)	9
Table 10: Current migrants that did not have problems in the family (%)	10
Table 11: Major problems in the families of current migrants (%)	10
Table 12: Second marriage by male migrants or their spouses	11
Table 13: Current migrants' families engaged in agriculture (%)	11
Table 14: Food sufficient months of migrant households engaged in agriculture (%)	12
Table 15: Migrants whose parents over 60 years of age living on their own (%)	12
Table 16: Migrants sending children to a private school in a faraway city (%)	13
Table 17: Current migrants who did not have access to pre-departure information (%)	14
Table 18: Current migrants obtaining skill training prior to migration (%)	14
Table 19: Types of skill training obtained by migrants prior to departure (%)	15
Table 20: Migrant workers that left copies of travel documents with family (%)	16
Table 21: Modes of migration used (%)	16
Table 22: Routes of migration used (%)	17
Table 23: Migration costs for GCC (%)	17
Table 24: Migration costs for Malaysia (%)	18
Table 25: Sources of finance used by migrants to pay for migration (%)	18
Table 26: Sources of loans borrowed to pay for migration (%)	19
Table 27: Per annum interest rates on loans by migrants' sex (%)	19
Table 28: Men's employment sectors in destinations (%)	20
Table 29: Women migrants' employment sectors (%)	21

Table 30: Migrants with employment-related issues (%)	21
Table 31: Issues of women migrant workers in foreign countries	22
Table 32: Issues of male migrant workers in foreign countries	22
Table 33: Migrants' frequency of contact with family members (%)	22
Table 34: Migrants' frequency of contact according to destination countries (%)	23
Table 35: COVID-19-related problems experienced by male migrant workers	23
Table 36: Migrants that sent remittances to their family in the last one year (%)	24
Table 37: Current migrants' methods of money transfers (%)	24
Table 38: Average amount transferred in a year from major labour destinations (NPR)	25
Table 39: Sectors of remittance use by migrants and families (%)	26
Table 40: Percentage of remittance spent in each sector (%)	26
Table 41: Remittance investment sectors by average amount invested (NPR)	27
Table 42: Current migrants using remittances to purchase land (%)	27
Table 43: Migrant households considering migrating internally for settlement (%)	28
Table 44: Migrants' reasons of return (%)	29
Table 45: Investment of earnings by returnee migrant workers (%)	30
Table 46: Returnee migrants who had initiated the re-migration process (%)	30
Table 47: Employment status of returnee migrants (%)	31
Table 48: Returnee migrants considering re-migrating in the future (%)	31
Table 49: Entrepreneurship engagement of returnee migrants (%)	32
Table 50: Migrants receiving support for business promotion (%)	32
Table 51: Returnee migrants considering engaging in entrepreneurship (%)	33
Table 52: Entrepreneurship plans of returnee migrants (%)	33
Table 53: Returnee migrants expecting support to start a business (%)	34
Table 54: Types of support sought by returnee migrants (%)	34
Table 55: Challenges in starting or conducting business (%)	35
Table 56: Returnee migrant workers who had obtained skill training	36
Table 57: Returnee migrants' awareness of skill testing availability (%)	36

# Acronyms

COVID	Coronavirus disease 2019
DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment
FY	Financial year
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
G-to-G	Government-to-government
LGs	Local governments
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
N	Number
NPR	Nepali Rupee
PDOT	Pre-departure Orientation Training
SaMi	Safer Migration Programme
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USD	United States Dollars





# Executive Summary

This study was conducted to understand the characteristics of Nepali migrant workers and migrant households (both current and returnee) at the province and national levels and inform the policies and programmes of the provincial and federal governments, as well as of Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme. It also aimed to generate evidence on the conditions of Nepali migrant workers, by using a large-scale data and providing disaggregation at province and national levels.

The study used survey data collected by the municipalities in five provinces of Nepal, namely Bagmati, Gandaki, Koshi, Lumbini, and Madhesh, with technical support from the SaMi Programme, over a span of three years, from November 2020 to December 2023. The final dataset used for analysis contained a sample of 95,253 current migrant workers and 41,659 returnee migrant workers.

The study finds that while migration from Nepal is still dominated by men, an increasing number of women are participating in it, as reflected in women's significantly higher share among current migrants (11.2%) in comparison to returnee migrants (3.6%). Most of the migrants from Nepal are youths and even returnee migrants are not much older than the current migrants. Nepali youths are migrating in the contexts of lack of meaningful employment in the local labour market and need of cash to meet diverse family needs. However, the costs of migration and the burden of debt have been significant among migrant households. The study finds most of the migrants paying over NPR 100,000 for migration to major labour destinations, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Malaysia, and the rates were comparable across provinces. The high cost of migration also means that migrants use a significant portion of their remittances for debt repayment for a long period of time, which is also evident in the analysis of data on remittance use. The debt burden prevents migrants from further investing in economic activities that can lead to capital growth.

Nepali migrant workers are employed in the jobs presumed to require “low skills” and that pay low wages. For instance, general labour was the top-ranking employment sector of Nepali workers, offering employment to one-third of migrant workers. The employment of most migrants in low-wage and low-skill jobs also means a higher degree of vulnerability among Nepali migrant workers and low remittance transfers to their families.

The employment-related problems do exist among Nepali workers. The study finds that many Nepali workers are still duped in the migration process, and the recruitment agencies and other labour intermediaries do not provide correct information to the migrants. Furthermore, the employer companies often do not abide by the contract. Indeed, the top-ranking problem of migrant workers was the gap between the real working conditions and the contract, followed by non-payment of salary.

Over half of the migrant workers had not obtained pre-departure information on migration although pre-departure orientation training (PDOT) is mandatory for Nepali migrant workers traveling to countries besides India. This is a concerning issue as studies suggest that access to right information in the pre-departure phase can help improve migrants' overall migration experience.

The study also finds that Nepal does not offer a favourable economic environment to the migrants who have returned after working in foreign countries. A large number of returnee migrants are struggling to find a job or engage in entrepreneurship. In the absence of necessary capital and prevalence of unfavourable business environment, most of the returnee migrants in the study sample were already considering re-migration. Nevertheless, some returnee migrants are able to find employment or engage in entrepreneurship in Nepal upon their return. The major sectors of entrepreneurship are hotels and business, livestock, and vegetable and fruit farming.



Shesh Kant Poudel, Chief Administrative Officer of Madi Municipality, speaks to participants during an orientation on data collection for the migration profile.

Following recommendations are proposed to policy-makers and relevant stakeholders based on the study findings:

- Several years have passed since Nepal's adoption of "free-visa, free-ticket" policy in 2015. However, Nepali migrant workers are still paying an exorbitant amount in recruitment fees. A strong implementation of this policy is necessary to stop the workers' exploitation in the migration process. The migration organisations and civil society will need to continue pressuring the government of Nepal in the implementation of the policy. It is important to establish help desks like Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) around the country to provide migration-related information, hear migrant workers' issues, and file complaints on behalf of the defrauded migrant workers. For this, the government of Nepal can expand the MRCs currently operating in Nepal to all district and area administration offices, and even further down to local governments, and provide these centres with additional responsibilities as necessary.
- The governments of Nepal and labour host countries should work together to hold employer companies accountable for various things related to workers' welfare, including control of recruitment costs and enforcement of labour contracts. The companies should make sure that migrant workers have paid no fees in the recruitment process. They should cover all the recruitment-related expenses and be held accountable if any workers are charged unauthorised fees by the recruitment agencies.
- The study finds that most migrants do not have access to pre-departure information although PDOT is mandatory for Nepali migrant workers traveling to countries besides India. This finding suggests that the PDOT centres in Nepal provide PDOT completion certificates to migrant workers, without

providing them with the pre-departure information as required by the law. It is essential to effectively monitor the PDOT centres to ensure the quality of the training. Although pre-departure information does not necessarily solve every migration-related problem, it can help improve migrants' overall migration experience.

- Provision of quality skill training to potential migrant workers, aligning with the job demand in labour destinations, can strengthen Nepali migrants' job prospects in the changing global labour markets and can also diversify Nepali migrant workers' job sectors.
- While migrant workers and their families use remittances for several activities, such as loan repayment, daily household expenses, children's education, and health services, the overall investment has been very low in the economic activities that lead to capital growth. The study finds that loan repayment is the main sector of remittance investment for a quarter of migrant workers. Migrants also invest substantial proportions of their income to access health services and for children's education. The findings, thus, suggest that a significant reduction in migration cost and access to quality health services at low or no cost are necessary to divert the investment of remittances to other sectors. Furthermore, targeted programmes can be designed to encourage and facilitate the investments of migrants' savings in economic sectors that are viable in specific regions.
- Most returnee migrants are struggling after their return to Nepal. All three levels of governments – federal, provincial, and local – might need to provide financial, training, and other indirect support for reintegration of the returnee migrants into the local labour markets. The governments can identify the priority economic sectors – viable economic sectors with comparative advantage – and incentivise investments in them targeting returnee migrants. The governments and development agencies can work together to create favourable environments for entrepreneurship development and its sustainability, such as access to inputs, technology, and market.
- The study finds that migration leads to changes in social structure, such as independent living of migrants' parents (over 60 years of age) and children. As labour migration from Nepal is likely to continue in the foreseeable future, initiatives are necessary to provide support for child and elderly care for the migrant families undergoing through care deficit. The first step in this regard can be the formulation of policies and programmes for the development of institutionalised care for children and elderly in local communities.
- Despite the occasional sensational news reports in the media about the infidelity of male migrant workers' wives, second marriage was almost non-existent (less than half a percentage point) among migrant workers' wives. This type of media coverage and presumption about the sexuality of migrants' wives affect migrants, their spouses, and their families. An important step in this regard would be the training of journalists on the reporting of sensitive topics related to labour migration. Similarly, awareness-raising programmes, by use of mass media, can also be useful in breaking the stereotype and changing the social perception. Such programmes can contribute to improving the social environments for migrants and their families, and help enhance their mental health and overall wellbeing.
- The study finds many migrants experiencing difficulties in destination countries, including not getting benefits as per the contract, non-payment of salary, and food and accommodation issues. It might be necessary to enhance the capacity of Nepali missions in the respective countries to resolve migrants' issues through diplomatic channels and ensure migrants' access to justice abroad.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Nepal is an important labour source country in the global labour market, and particularly for Malaysia and the countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) issued 4.7 million “new entry”<sup>1</sup> labour permits to Nepali workers for overseas employment, excluding India, in about one and a half decades from financial year (FY) 2008/09 to FY 2021/22, and most of these workers travelled to Malaysia and three GCC countries — Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>2</sup> Over 300,000 Nepali workers were estimated to be working in Malaysia in 2023<sup>3</sup> and even a higher number of Nepali workers are estimated to be working in Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>4</sup> Most workers from Nepal are employed in jobs considered to require “low-skills”, such as labourers, assembly-line workers, and helpers, among others. They account for over 85% of total labour migrants from Nepal.<sup>5</sup>

Nepal's economy heavily relies on the remittances sent by migrant workers. It has consistently received remittances equivalent to around a quarter of its gross domestic product since 2012 and it received an all-time high of USD 9.2 billion in 2022.<sup>6</sup> The remittances have been the major source of foreign currency for Nepal, which needs a reliable source of foreign exchange (forex) to pay for its soaring imports. A sustained growth in the earning of foreign currency through remittances has swelled the country's forex reserve, and it has relieved the country from fear of forex crunch resulting from a massive trade deficit.<sup>7</sup>

Labour migration sector in Nepal is fraught with several problems despite the growing significance of labour migration in Nepal's macro economy as well as the livelihood of many households. The migrant workers from Nepal experience various problems in the migration process and during their employment abroad.<sup>8</sup> Nepali workers have continuously experienced wage deception, exorbitant recruitment fees, and non-payment of wages, and at an increased rate during crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Many workers experienced massive layoffs and non-payment of wages as well as higher levels of discrimination, forced return, food insecurity, and reduction of wages during the pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

1 DoFE data classifies the labor permits into “new entry” and “re-entry” categories. “New entry” permits are issued to those workers travelling to work for the given employer company for the first time while “re-entry” permits are issued to those migrant workers returning to the same job on a renewed contract after they are in Nepal on home leave.

2 Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, 2022, Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022, Kathmandu.

3 Embassy of Malaysia, Kathmandu. “Nepali Employees Make Significant Contribution to Our Economy”, 16 August 2023, accessed on 28 March 2023, [https://www.kln.gov.my/web/npl\\_kathmandu/news-from-mission/-/blogs/nepali-employees-make-significant-contributions-to-our-economy](https://www.kln.gov.my/web/npl_kathmandu/news-from-mission/-/blogs/nepali-employees-make-significant-contributions-to-our-economy).

4 Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, 2022, Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022, Kathmandu.

5 Ibid.

6 World Bank, “Personal Remittances, Received (% of GDP) – Nepal”, accessed on 13 March 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=NP>.

7 The Kathmandu Post, “Worry’ as Nepal's Forex Reserves Soar to Record Rs1.84 trillion”, 11 March 2024, <https://kathmandupost.com/money/2024/03/11/worry-as-nepal-s-forex-reserves-soar-to-record-rs1-84-trillion>.

8 Arjun Kharel, Sadikshya Bhattarai, and Dogendra Tumsa, 2023, “Recruitment Cost, Fraud and Redressal in Foreign Labour Migration from Nepal”, Policy Brief 9, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility, Kathmandu.

9 National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, Nepali Migrant Workers' Rights during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Research Report, 2020; International Labour Organization, Protecting Migrant Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Recommendations for Policy-makers and Constituents (Geneva, 2020), available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms\\_743268.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_743268.pdf).

While a number of studies have been conducted on Nepali migrant workers, they are usually based on a small sample or the secondary data available from online data portals of government bodies, such as the DoFE and Foreign Employment Board, which provide information on a very limited number of variables. Furthermore, available studies on returnee migrant workers indicate that the existing government programmes are usually out of reach of migrants and migrant households.<sup>10</sup> Yet, a large-scale data on returnee migrant workers, with disaggregation at province or local level, is not available although the programme on reintegration of returnee migrant workers has gained prominence in the last few years.

It is in this backdrop that the Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme has been working with the local governments (LGs) in Nepal to collect comprehensive data on both current and returnee migrant workers and their households, and prepare a municipal migration profile for each local government SaMi is operating in. SaMi Programme is supporting the LGs to exercise their frontline role mandated by the Local Government Operation Act 2017 through strategic planning. With the realisation that the proper profiling of the community is a pre-condition while planning for safer migration initiatives and delivering migration-related services at the local level, several LGs have developed or are in the process of developing municipal migration profiles. More specifically, at the time of the study, 122 LGs had completed these profiles and many of these municipalities had already included migration as a dimension in their multi-year strategic plans. Such plans set the objectives to increase access to information, skills, financial literacy, and legal support for migrant households and accordingly include specific activities to achieve them.

This study, thus, uses data collected by various municipalities to explain the general patterns of migration and characteristics of migrants at the province and national levels. Unlike the other studies, this report is based on the analysis of survey data of a robust sample of nearly 100,000 current migrants and over 40,000 returnee migrants (see Table 1).<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 Study objectives

The overall objective of this study is to understand the characteristics of Nepali migrants and migrant households (both current and returnee) at the province and national levels and inform the policies and programmes of the provincial and federal governments, as well as of SaMi Programme. Following are the specific objectives of the study:

- Understand the socio-economic characteristics of current and returnee migrants.
- Get insights into the remittance investments and spending behaviours of migrants and their families.
- Examine migrants' access to information on safe migration and existing support to migrants and their family.
- Understand returnee migrants' status of employment, engagement in entrepreneurship, and future career plans.

---

10 Sadikshya Bhattarai, Arjun Kharel and Dogendra Tumsa, "Returnee Migrant Workers in Nepal: Status of Employment, Skills and Access to Government Programmes", Policy Brief 8, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility, Kathmandu.

11 In this study, the term "current migrants" is used to refer to those individuals who were employed in foreign countries at the time of the survey while "returnee migrants" refers to those who had returned to Nepal after participating in foreign employment. Similarly, unless stated otherwise, the term "migrants" refers to foreign labor migrants and includes both current and returnee migrants.



## 1.3 Methodology

The study uses data from selected municipalities in five provinces of Nepal, namely Bagmati, Gandaki, Koshi, Lumbini, and Madhesh (Table 1). The survey data necessary for the preparation of municipal migration profiles was collected by the LGs, with technical support from the SaMi Programme, over a span of three years, from November 2020 to December 2023. The survey was administered by all municipalities using Kobo Toolbox, a toolkit for collecting and managing data. The LGs mobilised enumerators for data collection through home visits of the current and returnee migrant workers. The SaMi Programme supported the LGs in capacity development of the enumerators involved in data collection and monitoring of the collected data.

**Table 1: Selected municipalities and sample size by province**

Province	Local governments	Current migrants (N)	Returnee migrants (N)
Koshi	Bhokraha Municipality, Ilam Municipality, Inaruwa Municipality, Kanepokhari Rural Municipality, and Katari Municipality	6,125	3,939
Madhesh	Arnama Rural Municipality, Birgunj Metropolitan City, Kanchanrup Municipality, Parsagadhi Municipality, and Rajbiraj Municipality	8,410	7,451
Bagmati	Neelakantha Municipality, Hariharpurgadhi Rural Municipality, Kamalamai Municipality, Madi Municipality, Roshi Rural Municipality, Thaha Municipality, and Tinpatan Rural Municipality	13,249	13,010
Gandaki	Bhanu Municipality, Gorkha Municipality, Madhyabindu Municipality, Myagde Rural Municipality, and Vyas Municipality	21,227	6,424
Lumbini	Banganga Municipality, Bardaghat Municipality, Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City, Sunwal Municipality, Tilottama Municipality, and Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan City	46,242	10,835
<b>Total (N)</b>		<b>95,253</b>	<b>41,659</b>

The raw data provided by the municipalities was cleaned for analysis. The data-cleaning process involved removal of the cases that lacked sex-disaggregation and recoding of some of the variables. The final dataset contained a sample of 95,253 current migrants and 41,659 returnee migrants. It is also to be noted that the number of cases available for each variable is different due to some methodological differences in data collection and availability of information on the specific variable.

## 1.4 Limitations of the study

This study relies on the data collected by municipalities, with technical assistance from SaMi. The analysis is, thus, limited to the variables the data was collected on by the municipalities included in the study.

While the study is based on the analysis of data from a robust sample of 95,253 current migrants and 41,659 returnee migrants, the study does not claim to be statistically representative of the provinces covered in the study as well as at the national level. The selection of the municipalities for the study was based on a combination of factors, such as the quality of data including the variables covered, migration scenario, availability of raw data files, and willingness of the municipalities to share the raw data. Despite some limitations, the study still provides a good understanding of different aspects of migration at both the province and national levels.



Enumerators pose for a photo after receiving orientation on data collection for the development of migration profile in Kapilvastu Municipality.



# 2 Characteristics of Migrants

This chapter discusses the characteristics of both current and returnee migrant workers in the five provinces covered in the study.

## 2.1 Migrants' sex

Most of the current migrants (88.8%) in the sample were men, but women still made a substantial share (11.2%) of total migrants. Among the returnees, women made a smaller percentage (3.6%) of the total returnee migrants (Table 2).

**Table 2: Current and returnee migrants' number and sex**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	(%)
<b>Current migrants</b>												
Male	5,627	91.9	8,336	99.1	11,241	84.8	19,297	90.9	40,122	86.7	84,623	88.8
Female	498	8.1	74	0.9	2,008	15.2	1,930	9.1	6,120	13.2	10,630	11.2
Total	6,125	100.0	8,410	100.0	13,249	100.0	21,227	100.0	46,242	100.0	95,253	100.0
<b>Returnee migrants</b>												
Male	3,824	97.1	7,423	99.6	12,446	95.7	6,237	97.1	10,231	94.4	40,161	96.4
Female	115	2.9	28	0.4	564	4.3	187	2.9	604	5.6	1,498	3.6
Total	3,939	100.0	7,451	100.0	13,010	100.0	6,424	100.0	10,835	100.0	41,659	100.0

In terms of province, the share of female migrants among both current and returnee migrants was lowest in Madhesh (less than one per cent). Bagmati and Lumbini had the highest proportion of current female migrants, 15.2% and 13.2% respectively, and the same provinces also had the highest proportion of returnee female migrants, with Lumbini (5.6%) ranking above Bagmati (4.3%).

## 2.2 Migrants' age

As expected, most of the migrants, both women and men, were youths across all provinces, with the age group 21-40 years making three-quarters of both current and returnee migrants, and for both men and women. A few current migrants were below 20 years of age, and women migrants had a higher proportion in this age category than the male migrants in all provinces (Table 3).

**Table 3: Age of current and returnee migrants (%)**

Age (years)	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
<b>Current migrants</b>													
20 or less	1.8	2.6	2.6	4.1	2.8	5.0	1.3	3.7	1.5	2.4	1.8	3.2	1.9
21-30	46.6	55.0	51.2	50.0	47.7	64.2	38.8	57.1	36.7	47.2	40.7	52.6	42.0
31-40	40.0	33.1	35.2	39.2	37.5	25.4	42.5	29.5	42.3	38.2	40.9	34.0	40.1
41-50	10.7	8.0	9.9	6.8	10.6	4.5	15.0	7.5	16.7	10.7	14.5	8.8	13.8
Above 50	0.9	1.2	1.1	0.0	1.4	0.8	2.4	2.1	2.7	1.5	2.2	1.4	2.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Returnee migrants</b>													
20 or less	0.4	0.9	1.0	0.0	0.6	1.6	0.2	2.1	0.4	0.8	0.5	1.3	0.6
21-30	35.4	30.4	41.4	60.7	28.5	37.6	26.6	34.8	27.4	24.8	31.0	32.0	31.0
31-40	46.1	45.2	39.9	32.1	45.2	41.3	45.1	44.4	46.2	44.0	44.5	42.9	44.5
41-50	16.7	15.7	14.8	3.6	20.2	14.5	23.0	15.5	20.9	25.2	19.5	18.8	19.5
Above 50	1.3	7.8	3.0	3.6	5.5	5.0	5.1	3.2	5.1	5.1	4.5	5.0	4.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The returnee migrants, on average, were slightly older than the current migrants, with a higher rate of migrants featuring consistently from the upper age brackets. Nevertheless, most of the returnees as well as current migrants were from the same age group of 21 to 40 years. A small number of returnees were 20 or less years of age, suggesting that they had participated in migration in their teens.

## 2.3 Migrants' caste/ethnicity

Most of the current migrants, both men and women, in the study sample belonged to Hill Caste and Mountain and Hill Janajati groups. However, there were some variations across provinces. In Madhesh, most migrants in the sample were from Muslim and Tarai Caste, followed by Tarai Dalit (Table 4).

**Table 4: Caste/ethnicity of current migrants (%)<sup>12</sup>**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Hill Caste	24.2	35.3	3.6	25.4	23.7	25.3	30.7	42.0	45.7	46.0	33.2	40.4	34.1
Mountain and Hill Janajati	29.7	43.4	1.1	9.5	55.2	62.6	35.4	35.1	24.7	29.9	29.8	38.0	30.8
Hill Dalit	4.4	6.6	0.6	1.6	11.4	7.6	15.0	9.3	12.7	14.7	11.2	11.8	11.3
Tarai Janajati	7.6	4.2	11.8	14.3	7.5	2.7	13.8	10.8	11.1	5.2	11.0	5.7	10.4
Muslim	27.4	7.4	40.1	17.5	2.1	1.7	5.0	2.5	2.2	1.4	8.4	2.1	7.7
Tarai Caste	4.3	2.2	28.0	22.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	2.9	1.9	4.3	1.4	4.0
Tarai Dalit	2.3	0.8	14.7	9.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.8	1.9	0.6	1.8
Others	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>12</sup> See Annex for explanation of the caste-ethnic classifications used in this study.

Similar trends in ethnic-caste composition were also observed among returnee migrants although Mountain and Hill Janajati ranked higher than Hill Caste in terms of the populations of returnee migrants (Table 5). The migrant populations in caste-ethnic groups varied by provinces, resembling the general demographic composition of the country.

**Table 5: Caste and ethnicity of returnee migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Mountain and Hill Janajati	28.4	40.9	0.9	14.3	55.9	61.0	33.8	39.6	21.6	26.7	31.0	42.1	31.4
Hill Caste	26.4	33.0	1.1	7.1	24.2	21.8	28.1	23.5	40.6	37.9	24.9	29.1	25.1
Hill Dalit	4.0	10.4	0.2	3.6	10.8	14.0	16.5	18.7	11.4	20.9	9.3	16.9	9.5
Tarai Janajati	5.2	9.6	11.9	3.6	7.7	1.6	17.2	13.9	6.8	5.0	9.5	5.1	9.3
Tarai Dalit	2.1	1.7	17.6	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.5	3.7	0.6	3.6
Tarai Caste	4.3	0.9	37.6	32.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.5	7.5	11.6	3.7	11.3
Muslim	15.7	0.9	23.4	3.6	0.1	0.0	1.6	0.5	0.8	0.0	6.3	0.2	6.1
Others	13.9	2.6	7.2	21.4	1.1	1.6	2.7	3.7	1.3	1.7	3.8	2.3	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 2.4 Migrants' marital status

Most of the current migrants, both men and women, were married, but the rate was about 10% higher for men in comparison to women. It is noteworthy that 3.1% of women migrants were “single” – separated, divorced, or widowed – while the rate was significantly lower, less than half a percentage point, for men (Table 6).

**Table 6: Marital status of current and returnee migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
<b>Current migrants</b>													
Married	74.9	60.2	81.6	67.6	76.7	60.3	80.6	66.3	80.5	74.1	79.8	69.4	78.6
Unmarried	24.6	36.7	18.2	28.4	23.0	38.9	19.1	31.8	19.0	21.9	19.9	27.6	20.8
Single*	0.4	1.0	0.3	4.1	0.3	0.8	0.4	1.9	0.4	4.0	0.3	3.1	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Returnee migrants</b>													
Married	87.2	78.3	92.9	96.4	91.9	80.3	90.3	77.5	89.2	80.1	90.7	80.0	90.3
Unmarried	12.0	17.4	6.8	3.6	7.8	17.7	9.2	11.8	10.2	9.8	8.8	13.5	9.0
Single*	0.7	4.3	0.4	0.0	0.3	2.0	0.5	10.7	0.6	10.1	0.5	6.5	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
*Separated, divorced, or widowed													

A higher proportion of returnee migrants were married, 90.7% of men and 80% of women, and the rates were somewhat identical across provinces (Table 6). The returnee migrants had a higher percentage of population with “single” status in comparison to current migrants, and at a significantly higher rate for women (6.5%) than for men (0.5%). While the rate of single men among male returnees was less than one per cent in all provinces there was a great variation in the rate of single returnee women across provinces, with Gandaki at the top (10.7%) and Madhesh at the bottom (zero per cent).

## 2.5 Destination countries

GCC region was the most popular destination of migrant workers, both current and returnee and men and women. The other popular destinations were Malaysia, Japan, India, and European countries (Table 7). More than half of the male migrants were employed in GCC countries at the time of the survey, while just over one-thirds of the women migrant workers were employed in this region.

**Table 7: Last country of employment of current migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Saudi Arabia	20.0	4.4	21.7	6.8	19.8	2.8	19.3	2.3	14.6	2.2	17.5	2.5	15.8
UAE	14.7	16.9	10.7	16.2	16.9	18.8	21.9	14.8	19.5	16.3	18.5	16.5	18.3
Qatar	21.2	6.6	35.7	14.9	11.1	3.4	14.8	3.0	12.3	3.0	15.6	3.3	14.2
Bahrain	1.5	1.2	0.5	0.0	0.8	0.5	1.5	0.8	0.8	0.6	1.0	0.6	0.9
Oman	0.6	1.8	0.4	4.1	0.7	1.6	1.5	3.3	0.9	3.3	1.0	2.9	1.2
Kuwait	3.4	9.4	2.3	8.1	3.1	9.2	3.0	4.7	3.3	13.8	3.1	11.0	4.0
<b>GCC (sub-total)</b>	<b>61.4</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>71.3</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>52.4</b>	<b>36.3</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>28.9</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>39.2</b>	<b>56.7</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>54.4</b>
Malaysia	24.0	6.2	24.6	14.9	19.0	6.5	6.8	1.4	13.0	1.8	14.3	2.9	13.0
South Korea	1.0	0.4	0.1	1.4	1.9	1.5	1.3	0.9	2.7	1.0	1.9	1.0	1.8
Japan	1.3	6.2	0.2	2.7	3.9	16.5	2.6	16.5	3.5	12.9	2.9	13.8	4.1
Jordan	0.1	1.6	0.1	0.0	0.1	1.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.1
Europe*	2.0	9.0	0.3	5.4	4.5	6.9	4.1	10.4	4.0	9.3	3.6	9.0	4.2
India	2.5	6.6	0.4	0.0	10.7	6.0	14.2	6.9	11.8	7.6	10.4	7.1	10.0
North America**	1.8	9.4	0.4	12.2	2.0	6.4	2.4	10.7	2.5	5.0	2.2	6.5	2.7
Australia	1.3	7.8	0.2	6.8	2.7	8.2	2.7	15.5	1.1	3.5	1.6	6.8	2.2
<b>Others***</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>7.6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Includes all the European countries.  
\*\* USA and Canada  
\*\*\*Includes all other countries not listed above.

The rates of migrants, both men and women, employed in the GCC countries were even higher among returnees. The other important countries of last employment of both male and female returnee migrants were Malaysia and India. The analysis of data on migration destinations of current and returnee migrants indicates a gradual shift in the migration destinations of Nepali workers: while GCC, Malaysia, and India are

still prominent destinations, Nepali workers are exploring new destinations and are increasingly traveling to various countries around the world (Table 7 and Table 8).

**Table 8: Last country of employment of returnee migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Saudi Arabia	19.1	6.1	16.6	7.1	21.6	7.4	24.7	6.4	19.5	6.6	20.4	6.9	19.9
UAE	14.0	16.5	7.6	21.4	13.3	17.6	20.7	19.3	22.8	19.4	15.9	18.5	16.0
Qatar	30.7	8.7	29.7	3.6	16.4	2.8	19.5	1.6	18.3	4.1	21.2	3.7	20.6
Bahrain	1.0	0.9	0.4	3.6	1.0	1.6	1.7	0.5	1.3	0.7	1.1	1.1	1.1
Oman	0.3	6.1	0.2	0.0	0.5	3.5	1.6	3.7	1.0	5.6	0.7	4.5	0.9
Kuwait	2.7	25.2	1.9	7.1	2.1	18.6	3.7	22.5	3.8	26.8	2.8	22.7	3.5
<b>GCC (sub-total)</b>	<b>67.8</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>56.4</b>	<b>42.8</b>	<b>54.9</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>72.0</b>	<b>54.0</b>	<b>66.7</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>62.1</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>61.9</b>
Malaysia	27.8	15.7	41.8	32.1	33.5	14.2	14.7	5.9	17.3	4.1	27.4	9.5	26.8
South Korea	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.7	0.9	1.5	0.5	3.3	1.5	1.3	1.0	1.3
Japan	0.1	1.7	0.0	0.0	0.5	3.0	0.8	10.7	1.3	11.8	0.6	7.3	0.9
Jordan	0.2	2.6	0.3	3.6	0.1	4.3	0.1	4.3	0.0	0.8	0.1	2.7	0.2
Europe	0.3	1.7	0.0	7.1	0.4	2.0	1.1	3.7	0.8	2.8	0.5	2.6	0.6
India	1.6	3.5	0.3	0.0	7.7	9.9	6.6	5.9	6.4	4.6	5.3	6.6	5.3
North America	0.0	0.9	0.1	3.6	0.1	2.3	0.3	2.1	0.2	0.8	0.1	1.6	0.2
Australia	0.1	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.4	0.1	2.7	0.1	0.3	0.1	1.1	0.1
<b>Others</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 2.6 Stint of overseas employment of current migrants

Most of the current migrants (over two-thirds) were participating in labour migration for the first or second time. A majority of the female migrants across all provinces were taking part in labour migration for the first time at the time of the survey (Table 9).

**Table 9: Stint of migration of current migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
First	45.1	71.3	48.7	64.9	43.2	71.4	30.5	57.0	39.7	56.6	39.3	60.3	41.6
Second	34.4	20.9	31.4	23.0	28.7	18.7	22.5	20.1	26.0	22.0	26.7	20.9	26.0
Third	13.1	4.0	13.0	10.8	14.9	6.3	16.9	10.7	14.3	10.9	14.8	9.6	14.2
Fourth	3.9	1.6	3.7	1.4	5.0	1.3	8.8	4.2	6.7	4.3	6.5	3.5	6.1
Fifth or more	3.4	2.2	3.2	0.0	8.3	2.2	21.4	7.9	13.3	6.3	12.8	5.5	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A substantial number (nearly one-third) of male migrants were participating in foreign employment for the third or more times at the time of the survey, while one-fifth of the women migrants were also doing the same.

## 2.7 Status of family problems in the households of current migrants

Only a small number of migrants (1.9%) had problems in their families. Approximately equal proportion of families of male (98.1%) and female (97.9%) migrant workers reported that they did not have any problems in the family, and the rates were identical across all provinces (Table 10).

**Table 10: Current migrants that did not have problems in the family (%)**

Province	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	98.0	97.4	97.9
Madhesh	97.2	95.9	97.2
Bagmati	97.2	97.6	97.3
Gandaki	98.4	98.1	98.4
Lumbini	98.5	97.9	98.4
Overall	98.1	97.9	98.1

Among the 1.9% of migrants who had problems in the family, the major issues in the overall population were: only elderly parents at home, migrants going contactless, and severe anxiety or fainting of a family member. However, the issues varied in the families of male and female migrant workers and across provinces (Table 11).

**Table 11: Major problems in the families of current migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Only elderly parents at home	23.9	27.3	5.7	0.0	21.4	23.3	26.4	43.3	24.8	31.1	21.9	30.6	23.1
Contactless with family	13.0	18.2	6.4	0.0	18.5	14.0	23.3	13.3	29.8	16.0	22.1	15.0	21.1
Severe anxiety or fainting	23.9	0.0	52.9	33.3	11.7	7.0	15.0	0.0	16.0	10.4	20.3	7.8	18.6
Migrant not sending money home	13.0	0.0	20.4	0.0	18.1	4.7	18.1	3.3	19.0	0.9	18.4	2.1	16.2
Children are alone	15.2	54.5	6.4	33.3	25.8	46.5	6.6	20.0	8.0	38.7	11.7	38.3	15.3
Domestic violence	8.7	0.0	6.4	0.0	4.0	2.3	10.1	20.0	1.8	1.9	4.9	4.7	4.9
Accusations-related incidents	2.2	0.0	1.9	33.3	0.4	2.3	0.4	0.0	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.6	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The top four problems in the families of female migrant workers were children being alone, only elderly parents at home, migrants' lack of contact with family, and family members' severe anxiety or fainting. In the

families of male migrant workers, the top-ranking problems were migrants not remaining in contact with family, only elderly parents at home, severe anxiety or fainting of family members, and migrant not sending money home (Table 11).

## 2.8 Prevalence of second marriage among current migrants

An overwhelming majority of male migrants and their spouses were married only once, and thus there was no second marriage in the family. The rate was 96% or higher in all provinces except in Madhesh (87.9%) (Table 12).

**Table 12: Second marriage by male migrants or their spouses**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male migrant married another woman	152	2.7	997	12.0	359	3.2	303	1.6	317	0.8	2,128	2.5
Migrant's wife married another man	34	0.6	14	0.2	88	0.8	77	0.4	114	0.3	327	0.4
No second marriage in the family	5,441	96.7	7,325	87.9	10,794	96.0	18,917	98.0	39,691	98.9	82,168	97.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,627</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>8,336</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11,241</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>19,297</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>40,122</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>84,623</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A small number of male migrants or their spouses had married for the second time. In all provinces except Madhesh, less than four per cent of male migrants were married to a second woman (although it could not be verified whether they had both spouses). In Madhesh, this rate was significantly higher, at 12%. The second marriage existed among the spouses of less than half a percentage point (i.e., 327 out of 84,623) of total male migrants in the sample (Table 12), and it could not be identified if the instances of second marriage had any relation with husbands' participation in labour migration.

## 2.9 Migrant households' engagement in agriculture

The families of most current migrants, both men and women, were engaged in agriculture (Table 13). The rates were different across provinces. While Bagmati had the highest percentage of migrant families engaged in agriculture (83.7% families of male migrants and 79.6% families of female migrants), Lumbini had the lowest rates for both men (53.8%) and women (40.5%).

**Table 13: Current migrants' families engaged in agriculture (%)**

Province	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	65.2	62.5	65.0
Madhesh	65.8	54.1	65.7
Bagmati	83.7	79.6	83.1
Gandaki	59.8	48.5	58.8
Lumbini	53.8	40.5	52.1
Overall	61.0	50.3	59.8

Among the migrant families engaged in agriculture, most (56.6%) produced foods enough to last for as high as nine months to an entire year, and the rates were similar in the households of male and female migrant workers (Table 14).

**Table 14: Food sufficient months of migrant households engaged in agriculture (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
3-6 months	29.6	36.2	19.8	15.9	26.9	27.3	30.1	23.8	15.5	18.1	22.2	22.5	22.2
6-9 months	19.8	13.0	21.6	25.0	33.5	33.6	21.2	16.9	15.5	19.7	21.0	23.3	21.2
9-12 months	50.6	50.8	58.5	59.1	39.6	39.1	48.6	59.3	69.1	62.3	56.8	54.2	56.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Among the provinces, Lumbini had the highest and Bagmati had the lowest rates in terms of migrant households producing foods sufficient to last for 9 to 12 months. The foods produced by about one-fifth of the farming migrant households lasted for only three to six months (Table 14).

## 2.10 Current migrants with elderly parents living on their own

The elderly parents (over 60 years of age) of 10% of current migrants were living on their own. In the total sample, the rate was 2.2 percentage points higher among parents of female migrants than for the parents of male migrants (Table 15).

**Table 15: Migrants whose parents over 60 years of age living on their own (%)**

Province	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	9.2	12.5	9.5
Madhesh	22.5	24.3	22.6
Bagmati	8.6	10.6	8.9
Gandaki	11.1	13.8	11.4
Lumbini	6.7	11.5	7.3
Overall	9.7	11.9	9.9

In terms of province, the rates were highest in Madhesh for parents of both male (22.5%) and female (24.3%) migrants while they were lowest in Lumbini and in Bagmati, respectively, for the families of male migrants (6.7%) and female migrants (11.5%).

## 2.11 Current migrants sending children to private schools away from home

While children of most current migrants attended a school close to home, some migrants were sending one or more of their children to a private school in a faraway city – district headquarters or other cities (Table 16). Overall, less than one-fifth (17.5%) of migrants in the sample sent their children to a faraway school, with a higher rate observed among the children of male migrants (18.2%) compared to female migrants (11.3%).



**Table 16: Migrants sending children to a private school in a faraway city (%)**

Province	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	23.5	17.7	23.0
Madhesh	43.6	28.2	43.5
Bagmati	20.7	15.3	19.9
Gandaki	19.6	10.7	18.7
Lumbini	11.2	9.7	11.0
Overall	18.2	11.3	17.5

In terms of province, Madhesh had the highest and Lumbini had the lowest rates of migrants with children attending a school in district headquarters or a different city. In Madhesh, the children of 43.6% of male migrants and 28.2% of female migrants attended a school in a city away from home while the rates were 11.2% among children of male migrants and 9.7% among children of female migrants in Lumbini (Table 16).



Bimala Aryal, the Mayor of Sunwal Municipality (middle), officially launches the migration profile.

# 3 Current migrants' pre-departure and travel experiences

This chapter discusses pre-departure and travel experiences of Nepali migrant workers while participating in foreign employment. The chapter sheds light on migrants' access to information in the pre-departure phase, route(s) of migration, cost of migration, and methods used for financing labour migration.

## 3.1 Access to pre-departure information by current migrants

The study finds that over half of the male migrants (52.5%) and over two-fifths of the female migrants (44%) did not obtain any information in the pre-departure phase (Table 17).

**Table 17: Current migrants who did not have access to pre-departure information (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	48.6	44.6	48.3
Madhesh	70.6	54.1	70.5
Bagmati	38.3	35.9	38.0
Gandaki	59.3	52.1	58.7
Lumbini	49.6	44.0	48.8
Overall	52.5	44.0	51.5

Madhesh had the highest rates of those not obtaining information in the pre-departure phase for both men (70.6%) and women (54.1%) while the rates were lowest in Bagmati, 38.3% for men and 35.9% for women (Table 17).

## 3.2 Skills learnt prior to migration

Less than a quarter (23.3%) of the current migrant workers had travelled abroad after obtaining some skill training, the rate was consistent across all provinces (Table 18). This means most (76.7%) of the current migrants travelled abroad without obtaining any skill training.

**Table 18: Current migrants obtaining skill training prior to migration (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	23.3	24.1	23.4
Madhesh	23.4	18.9	23.4
Bagmati	22.6	17.4	21.9
Gandaki	24.6	16.1	23.9
Lumbini	24.1	19.7	23.5
Overall	23.9	18.8	23.3

The rate for women current migrants obtaining skills before travelling abroad was even lower consistently across all provinces, except for Koshi. In Koshi, nearly a quarter of women migrants (24.1%) had obtained a skill training prior to migration and this rate was slightly higher than that of the male migrants (23.3%) from the same province (Table 18).

**Table 19: Types of skill training obtained by migrants prior to departure (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Driver	28.0	2.9	26.6
Cook	22.4	10.7	21.7
Security guard	8.3	1.9	7.9
Electrician	7.9	3.1	7.6
Waiter/waitress	5.2	10.8	5.5
Mason	4.6	3.4	4.6
Factory worker	3.4	5.3	3.5
Carpenter	3.1	1.7	3.0
Domestic worker	0.8	28.8	2.4
Garment worker	2.2	5.6	2.4
Salesperson	2.2	5.1	2.4
Plumber	2.5	0.5	2.4
Agricultural worker	1.6	2.2	1.7
Scaffolder	1.6	1.1	1.6
Cleaner	1.2	7.1	1.5
Welder	1.5	0.1	1.4
Painter	1.5	0.2	1.4
Housekeeping	0.6	8.6	1.0
Aluminium fabricator	0.7	0.4	0.7
Steel fixer	0.6	0.0	0.6
Kitchen helper	0.1	0.5	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The migrant workers had obtained training for jobs, such as driver, cook, security guard, electrician, waiter, etc. Among women, the most popular sectors of training were domestic work, waitress, cook, housekeeping, and garment work (Table 19).

### 3.3 Status of migrants' documents with family members

Only about one-fifth of migrants had left the copies of one or more of their travel documents, such as passport, visa, insurance, and labour permit, with their families in Nepal, and the rates were identical for men and women (Table 20).

**Table 20: Migrant workers that left copies of travel documents with family (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	18.2	14.1	17.9
Madhesh	33.3	36.5	33.3
Bagmati	28.7	35.5	29.7
Gandaki	24.2	23.8	24.2
Lumbini	11.9	12.1	11.9
Overall	20.3	19.4	20.2

In terms of provinces, Madhesh seems to be doing relatively better than other provinces, among both male and female migrants, as one-third of migrants had left copies of one or more of their documents with their family in Nepal. The rates are lowest in Lumbini among both male (11.9%) and female (12.1%) migrants (Table 20).

### 3.4 Mode of migration

The migration of most of the migrants, both men and women, was facilitated by recruitment agencies in all provinces. Many migrants had used agents in this process, and this rate was highest in Madhesh for both male (27.2%) and female migrants (17.4%) (Table 21).

**Table 21: Modes of migration used (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Recruitment agencies	77.9	65.5	66.1	59.4	87.0	72.2	81.8	54.8	66.8	48.3	73.4	54.6	71.3
Agents	15.1	4.6	27.2	17.4	1.0	.2	6.4	5.3	14.6	10.0	12.4	7.2	11.8
Oneself and relatives	3.1	5.0	6.1	8.7	4.9	6.3	4.9	13.8	9.8	26.1	7.2	19.5	8.6
Consultancy firms	3.3	21.5	.3	14.5	3.2	10.6	4.9	21.2	5.6	13.5	4.4	14.5	5.5
G-to-G	0.7	3.4	0.3	0.0	3.9	10.6	2.1	4.8	2.6	1.6	2.3	3.9	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Some migrants had engaged in overseas employment by oneself and through relatives and this rate was significantly higher for women (19.5%) than for men (7.2%). A small percentage of workers had migrated through government-to-government (G-to-G) scheme, and the rates were highest for Bagmati and lowest for Madhesh, for both men and women (Table 21).

### 3.5 Routes of migration

An overwhelming majority of migrants, both men and women, travelled to the destinations from the Kathmandu airport while 5.5% of male migrants and 4.3% of female migrants travelled via India (Table 22).

**Table 22: Routes of migration used (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Kathmandu	96.9	91.6	99.2	100.0	89.1	93.0	85.1	91.1	98.0	97.3	93.7	95.0	93.9
India	2.7	8.2	0.4	0.0	10.5	6.8	14.2	7.7	0.8	2.0	5.5	4.3	5.4
Other countries	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.8	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.4
Don't know	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.9	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In terms of provinces, the rates of migrants, both men and women, traveling via India were highest in Gandaki and Bagmati, and lowest in Madhesh and Lumbini (Table 22).

### 3.6 Cost of migration

Most of the migrants employed in GCC countries and Malaysia paid exceptionally high amounts, between NPR 100,000 to 300,000, in recruitment costs. The migration costs remained consistently the same for both male and female migrants in these destinations (Table 23 and Table 24).

**Table 23: Migration costs for GCC (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Zero cost	2.5	7.0	1.8	8.1	1.0	6.3	4.5	14.6	3.5	14.7	3.1	12.7	3.9
Up to 50,000	3.4	4.0	2.9	5.4	1.4	2.7	2.8	5.1	3.5	4.9	3.0	4.5	3.2
50,001-100,000	11.7	14.9	8.6	8.1	8.1	9.2	19.3	15.9	9.8	9.4	11.8	10.5	11.7
100,001-150,000	32.3	39.8	25.8	21.6	25.7	26.9	30.7	24.8	22.6	20.9	26.0	23.5	25.8
150,001-200,000	27.9	22.4	33.0	32.4	30.3	27.6	20.4	18.9	26.7	21.2	26.6	22.2	26.2
200,001-300,000	22.2	11.9	26.4	16.2	33.5	27.3	22.2	20.8	34.0	29.0	29.3	26.6	29.1
Above 300,000	0.0	0.0	1.5	8.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>



Enumerators attend a two-day orientation on data collection for the migration profile development in Kepilasgadhi Rural Municipality.



**Table 24: Migration costs for Malaysia (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Zero cost	1.7	0.0	2.0	0.0	3.5	3.9	3.0	0.0	4.3	6.4	3.3	3.9	3.3
Up to 50,000	2.2	3.2	0.8	0.0	1.9	1.6	1.3	4.2	1.9	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.7
50,001-100,000	8.0	16.1	5.9	0.0	7.5	10.2	15.3	20.8	7.0	9.1	7.8	10.9	7.9
100,001-150,000	33.6	35.5	23.4	0.0	18.9	14.1	32.7	16.7	17.8	19.1	22.2	17.8	22.1
150,001-200,000	26.5	19.4	27.9	18.2	23.3	25.8	24.3	25.0	24.0	20.9	24.9	23.0	24.8
200,001-300,000	28.0	25.8	32.6	63.6	44.9	44.5	23.3	33.3	45.1	42.7	38.8	41.8	38.9
Above 300,000	0.0	0.0	7.5	18.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	0.7	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A quarter of both male and female migrants had paid over NPR 200,000 for migration to GCC countries, and this rate was even higher for Malaysia. It is noteworthy that only a small percentage of migrant workers went to these countries at zero cost, despite the adoption of a zero-cost migration policy, commonly known as “free-visa, free-ticket” policy, in these corridors since 2015.

### 3.7 Sources of finance

Most migrants, both men and women, used loans to pay for migration. While the rates varied across provinces, over two-thirds of male migrant workers and over half of the female migrant workers, relied on loans to cover their migration costs (Table 25).

**Table 25: Sources of finance used by migrants to pay for migration (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Loan	76.0	63.4	81.2	67.6	80.1	70.9	67.3	50.4	68.5	50.1	71.7	55.0	69.8
Personal savings	21.4	33.2	14.4	24.3	17.1	23.0	21.3	34.2	26.2	41.2	22.2	35.9	23.8
Selling of land	1.5	1.3	1.8	5.4	0.7	1.3	1.4	2.0	1.9	2.4	1.6	2.1	1.7
Other sources	1.1	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.1	4.8	10.0	13.4	3.4	6.3	4.4	7.1	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Another major financial source was the personal savings, while some migrant workers (1.6% of men and 2.1% of women) sold their land to pay for migration. The rates of those selling land for paying for migration were higher in Madhesh and Lumbini for both male and female migrants (Table 25).

### 3.8 Sources of loans and interest rates

The migrants, both men and women, usually took loans from friends and relatives in all provinces while some obtained loans from formal financial institutions, such as bank or co-operatives. A significant number of migrants took loans from moneylenders and this rate was as high as 66.5% among male migrants and 35.1% among female migrants in Madhesh (Table 26).

**Table 26: Sources of loans borrowed to pay for migration (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Friends and relatives	51.6	47.4	19.0	29.8	59.5	57.8	59.7	52.3	67.7	62.3	57.3	58.2	57.4
Bank	9.0	19.7	10.6	28.1	7.9	16.2	8.5	20.9	15.2	22.9	11.6	20.7	12.4
Moneylenders	28.8	23.5	66.5	35.1	24.6	20.9	16.2	10.0	3.1	2.5	19.2	10.1	18.4
Co-operatives	6.3	4.4	2.6	3.5	3.9	3.0	6.8	7.8	9.7	9.6	7.1	7.3	7.1
Saving groups	4.3	5.0	1.3	3.5	4.2	2.1	8.8	8.9	4.3	2.6	4.8	3.8	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 27: Per annum interest rates on loans by migrants' sex (%)**

Annual interest rates	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
No interest	19.9	34.5	16.9	29.7	23.6	30.1	39.3	49.8	5.5	6.8	20.4	26.3	20.9
12% or less	20.7	14.1	11.1	10.8	13.2	13.1	10.4	11.0	16.8	19.8	14.1	15.3	14.2
13 to 18%	23.1	24.5	7.2	13.5	19.4	19.2	20.9	19.1	31.9	36.8	23.1	26.5	23.5
19 to 24%	12.9	12.4	7.6	16.2	27.0	24.2	24.7	17.3	27.6	24.1	23.1	21.5	22.9
25 to 36%	23.1	14.5	43.9	17.6	15.5	12.3	4.5	2.6	17.7	12.1	17.2	9.9	16.5
Above 36%	0.4	0.0	13.3	12.2	1.3	1.1	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.3	2.1	0.5	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

While one-fifth of male migrants and a quarter of female migrants did not pay any interest on the loans, a majority of migrants paid an interest rate of 12 to 24% per annum. Many migrants paid 25% or higher rates of interest (Table 27).

# 4 Current migrants' experience in destination country

This chapter discusses migrants' employment sector and overall experience in destination countries. The findings are based on the data of Nepali workers engaged in foreign employment at the time of the survey.

## 4.1 Employment sector

A majority of male migrants from Nepal work as general labour, cook, driver, or security guard while abroad. The other major employment sectors of men are waiter, salesperson, and factory workers. There was some variation across provinces in terms of the employment sectors. For instance, half of the total male migrants from Koshi and Madhesh were working as labour and the rate was lowest, less than a quarter, in Lumbini. Lumbini had a much higher percentage of men working in hospitality sector, as cook (16.9%) and waiter (8.3%), in comparison to other provinces (Table 28).

**Table 28: Men's employment sectors in destinations (%)**

	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Overall
General labour	55.8	53.6	42.8	34.4	22.3	33.1
Cook	4.7	1.4	12.6	12.1	16.9	12.9
Driver	7.3	4.6	11.1	11.6	9.5	9.5
Security guard	8.3	2.8	6.7	12.6	8.4	8.6
Waiter	1.9	1.6	5.6	5.9	8.3	6.3
Salesperson	2.4	2.3	2.0	7.7	6.3	5.3
Factory workers	0.0	6.7	3.9	2.1	5.3	4.2
Electrician	3.8	5.9	2.6	2.1	2.8	3.0
Mason	5.3	4.4	3.7	1.1	2.3	2.6
Cleaner	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	4.5	2.2
Agricultural workers	1.8	0.5	1.2	1.5	2.9	2.1
Domestic workers	1.1	1.2	0.7	1.2	1.7	1.4
Carpenter	1.4	4.0	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.3
Scaffolder	1.1	1.1	1.3	2.0	1.0	1.3
Garment	1.0	3.8	0.5	0.7	1.0	1.1
Plumber	1.2	1.4	0.6	0.9	1.4	1.1
Housekeeper	1.1	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.0
Welder	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.9	0.8
Aluminium fabricator	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.9	0.7
Painter	0.8	1.2	0.4	0.5	0.8	0.7
Steel fixer	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.6	0.5
Kitchen helper	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>



The major employment sectors of women migrants were domestic work, general labour, and cleaning/ housekeeping, while some women were also working as waitress, salesperson, and kitchen staff.

**Table 29: Women migrants' employment sectors (%)**

	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Overall
Domestic worker	32.4	0.0	22.3	28.3	37.4	33.1
General labour	32.4	58.3	38.8	25.5	14.9	21.5
Cleaner/housekeeper	13.0	12.5	9.1	11.5	24.5	19.4
Waitress	4.0	4.2	6.7	7.4	7.6	7.3
salesperson	5.3	0.0	4.2	11.9	3.9	5.1
Kitchen staff	6.1	0.0	6.7	4.3	4.1	4.7
Factory worker	0.0	12.5	4.6	3.4	3.8	3.8
Garment workers	3.2	8.3	3.8	1.5	1.4	1.9
Agricultural workers	1.2	4.2	2.2	1.1	1.9	1.8
Security guard	2.4	0.0	1.2	2.4	0.5	1.0
Beautician and hairdresser	0.0	0.0	0.5	2.7	0.0	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In terms of provinces, Madhesh had the highest percentage of workers employed as general labour (58.3%) while this rate was lowest among migrant workers from Lumbini (14.9%). The rate of women working as a cleaner or housekeeper was highest in Lumbini while Madhesh had the highest percentage of women workers employed as factory workers (12.5%) among the provinces covered in this study (Table 29).

## 4.2 Employment-related issues

Three and a half per cent of migrant workers were reported to have some problems in their employment abroad. While the rate was highest among migrants from Madhesh, it was lowest among those from Gandaki (Table 30).

**Table 30: Migrants with employment-related issues (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	4.9	2.4	4.7
Madhesh	7.0	2.7	7.0
Bagmati	4.7	2.8	4.4
Gandaki	2.6	1.6	2.5
Lumbini	3.2	1.8	3.0
Overall	3.7	2.0	3.5

The gender-disaggregated data shows the prevalence of employment-related problems among two per cent of women workers, which is nearly half the rate for male migrants (Table 30).

Among women and men migrants whose employment-related issues were known, not getting facilities and benefits as per the contract was the main issue for both, accounting for about four-fifths of cases (Table 31 and Table 32). The other major issues for women migrant workers were non-payment of wages, illegal status of migrants, and migrants gone missing (Table 31).

**Table 31: Issues of women migrant workers in foreign countries**

Issues	Number (n)	Per cent (%)
Not getting facility as per the contract	102	79.1
Non-payment of salary	11	8.5
Illegal status	6	4.7
Migrant gone missing	5	3.9
Food and accommodation issues	3	2.3
Migrant is stranded	2	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Among men, the other top-ranking issues, after not getting facilities and benefits as per the contract, were non-payment of salary, difficulty in food and accommodation, and illegal status (Table 32).

**Table 32: Issues of male migrant workers in foreign countries**

Issues	Number (n)	Per cent (%)
Not getting facility as per the contract	2,028	83.8
Non-payment of salary	194	8.0
Food and accommodation issues	66	2.7
Illegal status	64	2.6
Migrant gone missing	51	2.1
Migrant is stranded	9	0.4
Migrant is in jail/prison	7	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,419</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Fifty-one male migrant workers in the total sample (N=95,253) had gone missing and most of them were from Bagmati (37 persons) while a few were from Gandaki (nine persons) and Madhesh (five persons). Additionally, nine male migrant workers were stranded and seven were jailed in foreign countries (Table 32).

### 4.3 Frequency of contact with family members

Most of the men and women migrant workers across all provinces communicated with their family every day or once a week. However, a few men and women migrants (about one per cent) were not in touch with the family (Table 33).

**Table 33: Migrants' frequency of contact with family members (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Daily	75.5	61.6	82.3	63.2	57.2	49.6	81.3	71.7	90.5	83.6	85.2	78.3	85.5
Weekly	17.7	25.1	15.3	21.1	34.4	39.8	13.7	20.9	7.4	11.6	11.3	15.6	10.9
15 days	2.9	7.0	1.7	0.0	4.1	7.1	2.2	3.7	0.8	2.4	1.5	3.1	1.5
Monthly	3.1	4.2	0.3	5.3	3.2	3.1	1.9	3.0	0.8	1.5	1.4	2.0	1.4
Not at all	0.9	2.0	0.4	10.5	1.1	0.4	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The disaggregation of data by major labour destinations shows that Nepali workers based in India tend to communicate less frequently with their family in Nepal while those based in South Korea were more likely to communicate home on a very regular basis (Table 34).

**Table 34: Migrants' frequency of contact according to destination countries (%)**

	GCC Countries		Malaysia		South Korea		India	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Daily	87.6	81.6	83.1	76.9	92.0	93.9	68.0	49.0
Weekly	9.7	13.3	11.8	15.4	7.1	4.9	21.7	25.5
15 days	1.1	2.3	1.8	6.5	0.4	0.0	4.8	10.2
Monthly	1.0	1.3	2.0	0.6	0.4	0.0	3.6	12.7
No contact	0.5	1.4	1.3	0.6	0.1	1.2	1.9	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### 4.4 COVID-19-related problems

Most migrant workers (93.6% men and 94.1% women) did not experience any issues during the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic. Among 42 women migrant workers whose problem was known to the family, the issues were non-payment of salary (15 persons), salary deduction (14 persons), health issues (nine persons), and forceful termination of contract (four persons).

Among the men whose issues were known to the family, non-payment of salary accounted for one-third of total cases. The other important issues were contract termination and deduction in salary, which jointly accounted for over half of the total cases (Table 35).

**Table 35: COVID-19-related problems experienced by male migrant workers**

Issues	Number (n)	Per cent (%)
Non-payment of salary	428	33.2
Forceful termination of contract	400	31.0
Salary deduction	323	25.0
Health issue	134	10.4
Deaths	5	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,290</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As per the reporting of the families, five migrant workers had lost their lives in foreign countries due to COVID-19 (Table 35).

# 5 Remittance transfers and investments by current migrants

This chapter discusses remittance transfers made by current migrants within one year of the survey. It also covers remittance spending behaviours of migrants and their families in Nepal.

## 5.1 Remittance transfers by current migrants

An overwhelming majority of male migrants (81%) and a majority of female migrants (58%) had sent remittances to their family in Nepal within one year from the date of the survey (Table 36).

**Table 36: Migrants that sent remittances to their family in the last one year (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	83.2	64.3	81.6
Madhesh	82.6	54.1	82.3
Bagmati	80.8	61.5	77.9
Gandaki	86.3	60.4	84.0
Lumbini	77.8	55.7	74.9
Overall	81.0	58.0	78.4

There were some fluctuations in rates across the provinces among both men and women migrant workers. Over 86% of men from Gandaki had remitted home in the last one year, while this rate was 8.5 percentage points lower in Lumbini. Similarly, Koshi had the highest percentage of women (64.3%) sending money home within one year of the survey, while this rate was about 10% lower in Madhesh (Table 36).

## 5.2 Methods of money transfer

With an exception of about one per cent of migrants, everyone remitted money home through formal channels and the money was picked up by recipients at money transfer operators (commonly referred as IME), banks, and finance companies or co-operatives. A small number of migrants (one per cent) used hundi or friends and relatives to send money home across all provinces (Table 37).

**Table 37: Current migrants' methods of money transfers (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Money transfer operators	64.7	69.0	73.5	70.0	42.1	47.7	48.5	47.3	38.4	39.4	46.7	44.3	46.5
Banks and finance companies	34.6	30.7	25.6	30.0	56.6	52.1	50.6	51.7	60.4	59.1	52.2	54.7	52.4
Informal channels	0.7	0.3	0.9	0.0	1.3	0.3	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.5	1.1	1.1	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In terms of provinces, Madhesh had the highest percentage of migrant workers, both men and women, using money transfer operators for sending money home while Lumbini ranked at the bottom, with less than 40% of migrants using this method. Lumbini had the highest percentage of migrant workers (about two-fifths) using banks and finance companies for remittance transfers while the rates were also over 50% in both Gandaki and Bagmati. The rate of migrant workers using banks and finance companies for remittance transfers was lowest in Madhesh, 25.6% among men and 30% for women (Table 37).

### 5.3 Remitted amount

In terms of major labour destinations of Nepali workers, those employed in South Korea send home the highest amount in a year while workers based in India send the lowest, and at varying rates across provinces. Nepali migrant workers in South Korea sent home nearly NPR 900,000 in a year while those employed in GCC countries and Malaysia managed to send home less than half of that amount (Table 38).

**Table 38: Average amount transferred in a year from major labor destinations (NPR)**

	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Overall
GCC countries	329,524	301,942	312,989	379,050	412,896	372,785
Malaysia	265,602	291,510	260,085	345,410	337,899	307,619
South Korea	603,711	872,000	724,115	812,869	919,751	864,031
India	153,962	164,053	177,318	288,572	249,779	251,157

There were significant variations across provinces in terms of remittances transferred by migrant workers from these destinations. For instance, among migrant workers employed in GCC countries, those originating from Lumbini sent home the highest amount on average, over NPR 400,000 per year, while those from Madhesh remitted home the lowest, just over NPR 300,000 (Table 38). In the case of Malaysia, migrant workers originating from Gandaki sent home the highest amount on average, NPR 345,410, while those from Bagmati managed to remit home about NPR 85,000 less than that. The remittance size even more significantly varied across provinces in case of transfers from South Korea and India. Among migrant workers employed in South Korea, those from Lumbini on average sent home about one and half times higher than the amount remitted by their compatriots from Koshi. Similarly, among the migrant workers employed in India, those originating from Koshi remitted only little more than half the amount transferred by the migrant workers from Gandaki (Table 38).

### 5.4 Remittance investment

Migrant workers and their families use remittances for a number of things, such as paying for daily household expenses and children's education and for investment in other sectors like real estate and business. Over two-thirds of migrants (71.7%) had used their remittance for daily household expenses, and over 60% of migrants were using their remittances to repay the loan. The rates of those using remittances to repay the loan were highest in Lumbini while they were lowest in Gandaki (Table 39).

**Table 39: Sectors of remittance use by migrants and families (%)**

	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Overall
Daily household expenses	65.5	47.6	56.2	57.9	87.7	71.7
Health and treatment	59.2	57.7	44.2	45.2	77.6	62.8
Loan repayment	53.9	57.9	52.4	43.6	74.7	61.8
Education of children	40.7	35.8	34.3	34.6	70.4	52.4
Savings	36.5	28.5	25.8	30.7	61.8	45.3
Household durables	25.0	20.4	16.8	18.6	46.9	32.7
Building a house	15.4	15.9	13.0	16.0	39.9	27.1
Lending money	5.1	6.1	4.0	3.6	31.0	17.3
Buying land	5.6	4.7	3.4	3.5	29.8	16.5
Starting a business	1.9	1.6	3.2	2.2	28.9	15.2
Note: multiple responses						

Less than four per cent of migrant workers or their families were able to invest remittances in business; however, this rate was almost 29% in Lumbini (Table 39).

While remittances were used to pay for various expenses by migrant households, the proportion of amount spent greatly varied across sectors. Over a quarter of total remittances (28.5%) were spent on repaying the loan and the rate was highest in Bagmati (36.9%) and lowest in Koshi (21.6%). The other sectors to receive large shares of remittances were house construction, followed by daily household expenses and savings, while the lowest percentage of total remittances was invested in business (Table 40).

**Table 40: Percentage of remittance spent in each sector (%)**

	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Overall
Loan repayment	21.6	33.5	36.9	24.2	29.0	28.5
House construction	8.9	16.7	14.4	19.9	17.2	17.0
Daily household expenses	31.6	10.7	11.4	14.2	16.2	15.8
Savings	14.0	10.1	11.3	13.4	10.1	11.3
Health and treatment	7.7	9.6	7.7	7.3	8.4	8.1
Education of children	5.1	5.6	5.4	8.8	9.0	8.0
Buying land	5.6	6.9	7.1	5.2	3.4	4.7
Household durables	3.7	3.6	3.4	4.4	4.0	4.0
Lending money	1.2	2.6	1.5	1.6	1.9	1.8
Starting a business	0.4	0.7	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Among the migrants who spent remittances in specific sectors, the highest amount on average was spent on buying land (over NPR 450,000), followed by house construction (NPR 400,000) and loan repayment (nearly NPR 200,000). The remittance spent on children's education and health and treatment was over NPR 50,000 on average (Table 41).

**Table 41: Remittance investment sectors by average amount invested (NPR)**

Sectors	Average amount (NPR)
Buying land	456,239
House construction	399,894
Loan repayment	193,588
Savings	134,982
Lending money	141,979
Starting a business	122,203
Daily household expenses	89,635
Household durables	67,074
Education of children	67,265
Health and treatment	54,254

Even though most remittance-recipient households (71.7%) use remittances to pay for daily household expenses (Table 39), the average amount spent on household expenses in a year is less than half of what is spent on loan repayment (Table 40).

## 5.5 Investment on land and plan of internal migration for settlement

Some migrant workers and their families had invested remittances to purchase land. Overall, about six per cent of both male and female migrants had purchased land using remittances. The rates were highest in Bagmati and lowest in Lumbini, for both male and female migrants (Table 42).

**Table 42: Current migrants using remittances to purchase land (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	8.3	7.5	8.2
Madhesh	5.1	4.1	5.0
Bagmati	8.5	8.9	8.5
Gandaki	8.1	8.1	8.1
Lumbini	4.7	3.3	4.6
Overall	6.3	5.6	6.2

In the total sample, a small percentage of men (3.4%) and women (3.7%) migrants and their families were considering migrating internally for settlement (Table 43).



**Table 43: Migrant households considering migrating internally for settlement (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	3.7	3.0	3.7
Madhesh	4.5	6.8	4.6
Bagmati	5.1	6.6	5.4
Gandaki	4.6	5.8	4.7
Lumbini	1.9	2.2	2.0
Overall	3.4	3.7	3.4

The rates were identical across the provinces – less than seven per cent for both men and women migrants – but Lumbini had the lowest rates, only about two per cent, for both men and women in comparison to other provinces (Table 43).



Enumerators pose for a photo after completing an orientation on data collection for the migration profile development in Rajbiraj Municipality.



# 6 Post-return experiences of returnee migrants

This chapter discusses returnee migrant workers' reasons of return from foreign employment as well as post-return experiences in Nepal. The chapter especially highlights migrants' engagement in economic activities and expectations from government and other agencies in Nepal. The chapter is based on the analysis of survey data collected from returnee migrant workers.

## 6.1 Reason of return

End of contract was the main reason of migrants' return across all provinces covered in this study, and it accounted for the return of nearly two-thirds of male migrant workers (65.1%) and over half of the female migrant workers (56.7%) in the sample. The other prominent reasons were shutting down of the employer company, health-related issue, and lack of interest in staying abroad (Table 44).

**Table 44: Migrants' reasons of return (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
End of contract	68.3	62.6	77.8	60.7	76.1	68.4	56.1	54.0	46.8	45.4	65.1	56.7	64.8
Company closed	9.0	2.6	6.4	7.1	4.2	1.8	7.4	2.1	8.4	1.7	6.6	1.9	6.5
Health-related issue	3.2	1.7	3.7	0.0	4.2	5.0	5.3	8.0	8.7	8.8	5.3	6.5	5.4
Didn't want to stay abroad	0.0	0.0	1.8	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.9	20.5	4.1	8.3	4.3
Sent home due to COVID-19	3.4	5.2	1.3	0.0	2.4	1.6	8.0	4.8	5.3	3.1	3.9	2.9	3.9
Didn't get salary or work as said	0.0	0.0	1.2	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.2
Others	16.1	27.8	7.8	25.0	13.1	23.2	23.2	31.0	15.9	20.5	14.7	23.5	15.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 6.2 Investment of earnings from labour migration

As expected, many returnee migrants used their earnings from foreign employment to do multiple things, but primarily to pay for daily household expenses (64.9%, overall), and it was consistent among men (64.9%) and women (77%) returnee migrants. Over one-third of migrants, both men and women, had used their earnings to repay the loans although at a varying rate at the province level. While less than 10% of returnee migrants in Gandaki, both men and women, had used their income from labour migration to repay the loan, this rate was 60% for both men and women returnees in Lumbini (Table 45).

**Table 45: Investment of earnings by returnee migrant workers (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Daily household expenses	64.0	75.7	36.6	35.7	57.6	63.1	60.9	60.4	95.5	97.2	64.5	77.0	64.9
Repaying loan	34.4	36.5	27.7	25.0	18.7	12.4	7.3	6.4	67.2	61.3	32.5	33.4	32.5
Treatment/health services	17.8	23.5	4.0	3.6	3.1	4.4	3.5	2.1	73.8	74.3	22.7	33.8	23.1
Building a house	23.1	15.7	24.9	14.3	15.8	13.1	20.2	19.8	21.1	23.7	20.2	18.4	20.1
Purchasing land	23.1	15.7	19.7	14.3	15.8	13.1	20.2	19.8	21.1	23.7	19.2	18.4	19.2
Education of children	9.1	20.0	1.3	3.6	2.0	2.0	3.9	5.3	43.1	49.3	13.3	22.9	13.7
Starting a business	2.9	4.3	0.8	0.0	2.4	2.3	3.3	2.1	3.3	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.5
Saving	3.2	5.2	0.8	3.6	0.3	2.1	0.6	2.7	3.3	5.5	1.5	3.8	1.6
Lending money	0.8	0.9	1.0	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.2	1.1	1.6	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7
Others	0.0	0.0	1.4	10.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.3

Note: multiple responses

Nearly one-fifth of men and women returnees had used their savings for purchasing land and about the same percentage had invested in housing (Table 45).

### 6.3 Re-migration plan and employment status of returnee migrants in Nepal

Nearly one-fifth of returnee migrants (18.1%) had already initiated the re-migration process at the time of the survey, and the rate was about three percentage points higher among women in comparison to men (Table 46). The rate of those who were immediately re-migrating for work was highest in Lumbini (29.1%) and lowest in Bagmati (10.4%).

**Table 46: Returnee migrants who had initiated the re-migration process (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	16.0	11.3	15.8
Madhesh	15.6	14.3	15.6
Bagmati	10.3	12.9	10.4
Gandaki	19.5	23.5	19.6
Lumbini	29.0	29.1	29.1
Overall	18.0	20.7	18.1

Among the returnee migrants who had not initiated the re-migration process, those who were searching for a job ranked on the top, with 30.4%. The rate of those looking for employment was 10 percentage points higher for women returnees in comparison to men (Table 47).

**Table 47: Employment status of returnee migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Searching for a job	28.6	42.2	28.1	37.5	20.2	25.9	37.8	33.6	42.2	58.9	30.0	40.3	30.4
Self-employed	37.5	24.5	26.5	29.2	26.9	23.8	24.6	27.3	29.6	24.5	28.1	24.7	28.0
Agriculture	29.9	29.4	19.8	12.5	38.8	39.9	22.1	24.5	18.5	12.9	27.3	26.9	27.3
Salaried work	3.7	3.9	12.5	8.3	12.3	8.1	11.9	11.9	6.6	2.3	10.2	6.1	10.1
Animal husbandry	0.3	0.0	0.8	4.2	1.7	2.2	3.5	2.8	3.1	1.4	2.0	1.9	2.0
Labourer	0.0	0.0	8.2	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.1	1.5
Others	0.0	0.0	4.2	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.1	0.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Among those who were employed, most were either self-employed or engaged in agriculture across all provinces. A small number of workers had found salaried jobs. A few workers, but only from Madhesh, were working as labourers (Table 47).

Even among the returnee migrants who did not have an immediate plan of re-migrating and were, thus, either engaged in employment or were seeking employment at the time of the survey, the rate of those considering re-migrating was significant. Overall, two-fifths (40.6%) of these returnees were considering re-migrating for employment in the future (Table 48). There was a notable difference between male and female migrants in terms of the future re-migration intention. In comparison to a quarter of returnee women, over two-fifths of the male returnees were considering re-migrating.

**Table 48: Returnee migrants considering re-migrating in the future (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	43.9	28.4	43.4
Madhesh	49.7	33.3	49.7
Bagmati	30.4	19.8	30.0
Gandaki	47.1	38.5	46.9
Lumbini	45.3	24.5	44.1
Overall	41.2	24.7	40.6

In terms of provinces, Madhesh had the highest percentage of returnee migrants (about 50%) considering re-migrating in the future while the rate was lowest in Bagmati (30%). It would be safe to say that returnee migrants are considering re-migrating in the contexts of lack of (meaningful) employment, challenging business environment, and lack of entrepreneurial support in the country (see Table 47, Table 50, and Table 55).

## 6.4 Entrepreneurship engagement of returnee migrants

Among those who were engaged in entrepreneurship, the major employment sector was hotel or other business (44.3% for men and 49.4% for women). The other sectors were farming and livestock across all provinces, although at a different degree for men and women (Table 49).

**Table 49: Entrepreneurship engagement of returnee migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Hotel or other business	38.8	54.5	73.3	100.0	38.9	35.6	50.7	70.0	40.6	65.6	44.3	49.4	44.4
Vegetables farming	13.3	0.0	14.4	0.0	27.7	26.7	5.3	5.0	2.5	0.0	15.8	15.8	15.8
Goat farming	14.7	9.1	2.9	0.0	12.1	20.0	15.1	5.0	4.3	3.1	10.2	13.3	10.3
Cow farming	8.8	9.1	2.5	0.0	12.9	13.3	8.2	10.0	2.7	0.0	8.5	9.5	8.6
Agriculture	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	42.1	25.0	9.6	5.1	9.5
Poultry farming	13.5	9.1	5.6	0.0	5.4	4.4	12.2	10.0	4.0	3.1	6.9	5.1	6.8
Pig farming	8.1	18.2	0.7	0.0	2.4	0.0	7.5	0.0	2.7	0.0	3.6	1.3	3.6
Dairy business	2.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	3.1	0.5	0.6	0.5
Fruit farming	0.7	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The entrepreneurship sectors were similar among men and women returnee migrants, but some noticeable differences existed between them. A higher rate of women was involved in hotel or other business in comparison to men. The rates were in reverse order in sectors, such as agriculture, poultry farming and pig farming, where a higher rate of men were engaged compared to women.

## 6.5 Status of support for business promotion

Most returnee migrants (85.4%) did not receive any support from local government or any other sources for the promotion of their business (Table 50).

**Table 50: Migrants receiving support for business promotion (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	6.4	7.8	6.4
Madhesh	9.1	17.9	9.1
Bagmati	4.6	4.3	4.6
Gandaki	12.2	10.7	12.2
Lumbini	34.2	44.0	34.7
Overall	14.3	21.6	14.6

Only 14.3% of men and 21.6% of women received some support, and the rate was not consistent across the regions. While less than five per cent of returnee migrants, both men and women, received support from local government or other sources in Bagmati, over one-third of migrants received such support in Lumbini (Table 50).

## 6.6 Migrants considering engaging in entrepreneurship

In the total sample, about a quarter of the returnee migrants (24.7%) were considering engaging in entrepreneurship, and the rates were about the same for men and women returnees. In terms of province, Madhesh had the lowest percentage of returnee women (8.7%) and men (12.3%) thinking of engaging in entrepreneurship while this rate was 52.7% among men and 39.5% among women returnees in Lumbini (Table 51).

**Table 51: Returnee migrants considering engaging in entrepreneurship (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	25.5	20.4	25.3
Madhesh	12.3	8.7	12.3
Bagmati	14.9	13.5	14.8
Gandaki	14.3	11.4	14.2
Lumbini	52.7	39.5	51.9
Overall	24.7	24.5	24.7

**Table 52: Entrepreneurship plans of returnee migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Pig farming	39.7	34.8	4.8	0.0	38.6	40.6	43.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	15.0	11.8	14.9
Poultry farming	7.4	8.7	5.9	0.0	11.4	12.5	12.3	10.0	0.0	0.0	4.5	3.6	4.4
Vegetable farming	5.4	4.3	8.7	0.0	10.2	4.7	6.6	5.0	0.0	0.0	3.8	1.5	3.7
Cow farm and dairy	10.7	4.3	5.8	0.0	3.9	3.1	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5	0.9	2.4
Fruit farming	0.8	4.3	0.4	0.0	1.0	1.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.6	0.4
Goat farming	0.0	0.0	8.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.8
Obtaining skill training	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	28.5	13.5	19.1	13.7
Other types of businesses	36.0	43.5	66.3	100.0	34.9	37.5	34.4	60.0	75.0	71.5	59.6	62.4	59.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Returnee migrants were interested in poultry farming, cow farm and dairy, fruit and vegetable farming, goat farming, etc. A large number of returnee migrants from Lumbini (about a quarter) were interested in obtaining skill training (Table 52).

## 6.7 Expectation of support for entrepreneurship

Just over a quarter of men and women returnee migrants were expecting some support to start a business. The rates were identical across provinces, with slightly higher rates observed in Koshi and lower rates in Madhesh (Table 53).

**Table 53: Returnee migrants expecting support to start a business (%)**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	32.3	38.3	32.4
Madhesh	18.8	21.4	18.8
Bagmati	32.8	27.5	32.5
Gandaki	26.0	19.8	25.8
Lumbini	24.1	20.9	24.0
Overall	27.1	25.2	27.0

The types of support returnee migrants were expecting are cash support or concessional loans, followed by training and concession in business registration (Table 54). The rates were quite similar for men and women returnee migrants in the overall sample but were different across provinces. For instance, the expectation of cash support or concessional loans was highest for male migrants in Madhesh while lowest in Lumbini, while for women the rate was highest in Bagmati and lowest in Madhesh. Similarly, the expectation of training was highest for both men and women in Koshi among all provinces covered in the study.

**Table 54: Types of support sought by returnee migrants (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Cash support or concessional loans	50.3	52.3	73.8	50.0	68.7	73.5	62.5	59.5	44.4	58.3	61.8	64.7	61.9
Training	34.1	38.6	14.2	16.7	16.9	15.5	16.3	10.8	22.5	14.3	19.5	17.8	19.5
Concession in business registration	7.1	2.3	1.9	33.3	3.2	1.9	7.5	8.1	16.5	16.7	6.6	7.1	6.6
Material support	3.6	2.3	3.6	0.0	5.7	5.2	7.9	13.5	8.2	7.1	5.9	6.1	5.9
Technical support	4.9	4.5	6.5	0.0	5.7	3.9	5.9	8.1	8.4	3.6	6.2	4.3	6.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 6.8 Challenges in starting or conducting business

The returnee migrants reported that lack of budget, lack of grants, problems with markets, and lack of training are the major challenges in starting or conducting business. These factors featured on the top across all provinces although not equally for men and women returnees (Table 55).

**Table 55: Challenges in starting or conducting business (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Lack of budget	48.7	61.4	18.7	0.0	36.9	42.9	37.3	36.4	24.1	34.6	34.7	43.3	35.0
Grants not available	3.2	3.5	41.6	0.0	17.1	13.6	14.4	0.0	10.5	10.3	16.2	10.1	16.1
Problem with markets	26.7	14.0	19.6	33.3	7.0	3.4	18.5	45.5	25.1	17.9	16.2	11.6	16.0
No training available	6.6	7.0	24.3	33.3	14.4	16.4	8.3	4.5	5.1	7.7	12.0	12.2	12.0
Irrigation problems	3.9	1.8	22.7	33.3	11.9	11.9	7.7	4.5	5.8	6.4	10.3	8.6	10.2
Lack of technical support	3.2	7.0	19.5	33.3	4.4	5.6	7.1	4.5	7.2	5.1	6.8	5.9	6.8
Transportation problems	4.1	1.8	14.3	33.3	3.1	2.8	3.4	0.0	5.6	0.0	5.0	2.1	4.9
Inconvenient policy and rules	1.7	1.8	3.5	0.0	1.7	1.1	2.2	0.0	2.5	5.1	2.1	2.1	2.1
Lack of raw materials	1.5	0.0	2.9	33.3	1.9	1.1	1.2	4.5	1.3	0.0	1.7	1.2	1.7
Not getting a fair price	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.6	0.7
Others	0.3	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.8	12.8	2.2	3.3	2.2

Note: multiple responses

Lack of budget was cited as the main challenge by over one-third of men (34.7%) and over two-fifths of women (43.3%), and the rates were highest in Koshi and lowest in Madhesh for both women and men. Lack of grants was a major concern for over two-fifths of returnee men in Madhesh, the highest among all provinces, and among women, Bagmati had the highest percentage of women (13.6%) expressing concerns over lack of grants, across all provinces.

## 6.9 Skill training obtained prior to migration or during employment

The study finds just over a quarter (29%) of migrant workers taking skill training prior to migration or during employment overseas. In terms of province, Lumbini had the highest percentage of workers (46.2%) taking skill training prior to migration or during overseas employment while this rate was lowest for Madhesh, where less than one-fifth (18.2%) of workers had taken any training (Table 56).

**Table 56: Returnee migrant workers who had obtained skill training**

	Male migrants	Female migrants	Total migrants
Koshi	24.3	16.3	24.1
Madhesh	18.2	7.1	18.2
Bagmati	20.8	22.0	20.8
Gandaki	31.6	25.1	31.5
Lumbini	46.8	35.8	46.2
Overall	29.1	27.5	29.0

The rate of those obtaining skill training was slightly lower for women migrants in comparison to men, and the rate was lowest in Madhesh for both women and men. Lumbini had the highest percentage of both men and women taking skill training (Table 56).

## 6.10 Awareness of skill testing availability

In all provinces, most workers were aware of skill testing availability, and the rates were comparable for men and women (Table 57). However, only a small percentage of workers (overall 12.9%) had undertaken the skill testing, with Lumbini ranking on the top for men (17.4%), and Gandaki for women returnee migrants (16%).

**Table 57: Returnee migrants' awareness of skill testing availability (%)**

	Koshi		Madhesh		Bagmati		Gandaki		Lumbini		Overall		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
Aware, and already done	11.1	7.0	3.6	3.6	15.0	12.1	13.7	16.0	17.4	9.4	12.9	10.9	12.9
Aware, and planning to do	65.7	71.3	42.0	35.7	67.2	68.8	67.4	51.9	57.5	55.3	59.9	60.8	60.0
Aware, but not interested	13.9	13.9	5.4	0.0	17.8	19.1	19.0	32.1	17.4	17.7	15.2	19.4	15.4
Not aware	9.3	7.8	49.0	60.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.7	17.5	11.9	8.8	11.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Madhesh had the highest percentage of workers unaware of skill testing availability, where nearly half of the male returnee migrant workers (49%) and over three-fifths (60.7%) of the women returnees were unaware of the availability of skill training. This rate was lower than 10% for Koshi, and at zero for Bagmati and Gandaki among both men and women returnee migrants. Many workers (overall, 15.4%) were not interested in undertaking the skill testing, and this rate was highest among returnee migrants in Lumbini (Table 57).



# 7 Conclusion and policy recommendations

The study finds that most of the migrants from Nepal are youths and even returnee migrants are not much older than the current migrants. Nepali youths are migrating in the contexts of lack of meaningful employment in the local labour market and need of cash to meet diverse family needs. However, the costs of migration and the burden of debt have been significant among migrant households. The study finds most of the migrants paying over NPR 100,000 for migration to major labour destinations, such as the GCC countries and Malaysia, and the rates were comparable across provinces. The high cost of migration also means that migrants use a significant portion of their remittances for debt repayment for a long period of time, which is also evident in the analysis of data on remittance use. The debt burden prevents migrants from further investing in economic activities that can lead to capital growth.

Nepali migrant workers are employed in the jobs presumed to require “low skills” and pay low wages. For instance, general labour was the top-ranking employment sector of Nepali workers, offering employment to one-third of migrant workers. The employment of most migrants in low-wage and low-skill jobs also means a higher degree of vulnerability among Nepali migrant workers and low remittance transfers to migrants’ families.

The employment-related problems do exist among Nepali workers. The study finds that many Nepali workers are still duped in the migration process and the recruitment agencies and other labour intermediaries do not provide correct information to the migrants. Furthermore, the employer companies often do not abide by the contract. Indeed, the top-ranking problems of migrant workers was the gap between the real working conditions and the contract, followed by non-payment of salary.

Over half of the migrant workers had not obtained pre-departure information on migration although PDOT is mandatory for Nepali migrant workers travelling to countries besides India. This is a concerning issue as studies suggest that access to the right information in the pre-departure phase can help improve migrants’ overall migration experience.

The study also finds that Nepal does not offer a favourable economic environment to the migrants who have returned after working in foreign countries. A large number of returnee migrants are struggling to find a job or engage in entrepreneurship. In the absence of necessary capital and prevalence of unfavourable business environment, most of the returnee migrants in the study sample were already considering re-migration.

Following recommendations are proposed to policy-makers and relevant stakeholders based on the study findings:

- Several years have passed since Nepal’s adoption of “free-visa, free-ticket” policy in 2015. However, Nepali migrant workers are still paying an exorbitant amount in recruitment fees. A strong implementation of this policy is necessary to stop the workers’ exploitation in the migration process. The migration organisations and civil society will need to continue pressuring the government of Nepal in the implementation of the policy. It is important to establish help desks like Migrant Resource

Centres (MRCs) around the country to provide migration-related information, hear migrant workers' issues, and file complaints on behalf of the defrauded migrant workers. For this, the government of Nepal can expand the MRCs currently operating in Nepal to all district and area administration offices, and even further down to local governments, and provide these centres with additional responsibilities as necessary.

- The governments of Nepal and labour host countries should work together to hold employer companies accountable for various things related to workers' welfare, including control of recruitment costs and enforcement of labour contracts. The companies should make sure that migrant workers have paid no fees in the recruitment process. They should cover all the recruitment-related expenses and be held accountable if any workers are charged unauthorised fees by the recruitment agencies.
- The study finds that most migrants do not have access to pre-departure information although PDOT is mandatory for Nepali migrant workers traveling to countries besides India. This finding suggests that the PDOT centres in Nepal provide PDOT completion certificates to migrant workers, without providing them with the pre-departure information as required by the law. It is essential to effectively monitor the PDOT centres to ensure the quality of the training. Although pre-departure information does not necessarily solve every migration-related problem, it can help improve migrants' overall migration experience.
- Provision of quality skill training to potential migrant workers, aligning with the job demand in labour destinations, can strengthen Nepali migrants' job prospects in the changing global labour markets and can also diversify Nepali migrant workers' job sectors.
- While migrant workers and their families use remittances for several activities, such as loan repayment, daily household expenses, children's education, and health services, the overall investment has been very low in the economic activities that lead to capital growth. The study finds that loan repayment is the main sector of remittance investment for a quarter of migrant workers. Migrants also invest substantial proportions of their income to access health services and for children's education. The findings, thus, suggest that a significant reduction in migration cost and access to quality health services at low or no cost are necessary to divert the investment of remittances to other sectors. Furthermore, targeted programmes can be designed to encourage and facilitate the investments of migrants' savings in economic sectors that are viable in specific regions.
- Most returnee migrants are struggling after their return to Nepal. All three levels of governments – federal, provincial, and local – might need to provide financial, training, and other indirect support for reintegration of the returnee migrants into the local labour markets. The governments can identify the priority economic sectors – viable economic sectors with comparative advantage – and incentivise investments in them targeting returnee migrants. The governments and development agencies can work together to create favourable environments for entrepreneurship development and its sustainability, such as access to inputs, technology, and market.
- The study finds that migration leads to changes in social structure, such as independent living of migrants' parents (over 60 years of age) and children. As labour migration from Nepal is likely to continue in the foreseeable future, initiatives are necessary to provide support for child and elderly care for the migrant families undergoing through care deficit. The first step in this regard can be the formulation of policies and programmes for the development of institutionalised care for children and elderly in local communities.

- Despite the occasional sensational news reports in the media about the infidelity of male migrant workers' wives, second marriage was almost non-existent (less than half a percentage point) among migrant workers' wives. This type of media coverage and presumption about the sexuality of migrants' wives affect migrants, their spouses, and their families. An important step in this regard would be the training of journalists on the reporting of sensitive topics related to labour migration. Similarly, awareness-raising programmes, by use of mass media, can also be useful in breaking the stereotype and changing the social perception. Such programmes can contribute to improving the social environments for migrants and their families, and help enhance their mental health and overall wellbeing.
- The study finds many migrants experiencing difficulties in destination countries, including not getting benefits as per the contract, non-payment of salary, and food and accommodation issues. It might be necessary to enhance the capacity of Nepali missions in the respective countries to resolve migrants' issues through diplomatic channels and ensure migrants' access to justice abroad.



Enumerators participate in a two-day orientation on data collection techniques for developing migration profile in Devghat Rural Municipality.

# ANNEX: CASTE AND ETHNIC GROUPINGS IN NEPAL

The caste and ethnic groupings used in this study are consistent with the caste and ethnicity classification suggested in Pitamber Sharma's *Unravelling the Mosaic: Spatial Aspects of Ethnicity in Nepal* (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2008):

1. Mountain Janajati: Bhote, Byasi/Sanka, Dolpo, Lhomi, Lhopa, Sherpa, Thakali, Topkegola, Walung
2. Hill Janajati: Aathpariya, Bahing, Bantawa, Brahmū/Baramo, Chamling, Chepang/Praja, Chhantyal/Chhantel, Dura, Ghale, Gharti/Bhujel, Gurung, Hayu, Hyolmo, Jirel, Khaling, Khawas, Kulung, Kusunda, Lepcha, Limbu, Loharung, Magar, Mewahang Bala, Nachhiring, Newar, Pahari, Rai, Samgpaṅg, Sunuwar, Tamang, Thami, Thulung, Yakkha, Yamphu
3. Hill Caste: Bahun, Chhetri, Sanyasi/Dasnami, Thakuri
4. Hill Dalit: Badi, Damai/Dholi, Gaine, Kami, Sarki
5. Tarai Janajati: Amat, Bote, Danuwar, Darai, Dhanuk, Dhimal, Gangai, Jhangad/Dhagar, Kisan, Koche, Kumal, Majhi, Meche, Munda, Pattharkatta/Kushwadiya, Rajbanshi, Raji, Raute, Satar/Santhal, Tajpuriya, Tharu
6. Tarai Jat: Badhaee, Baraee, Bin, Brahman – Tarai, Dev, Dhunia, Gaderi/Bhedhar, Hajam/Thakur, Haluwai, Kahar, Kalwar, Kamar, Kanu, Kathbaniyan, Kayastha, Kewat, Koiri/Kushwaha, Kori, Kumhar, Kurmi, Lodh, Lohar, Mali, Mallaha, Marwari, Nuniya, Nurang, Rajbhar, Rajdhob, Rajput, Sonar, Sudhi, Teli, Yadav
7. Tarai Dalit: Bantar/Sardar, Chamar/Harijan/Ram, Chidimar, Dhandi, Dhankar/Kharikar, Dhobi, Dom, Dusadh/Paswan/Pasi, Halkhor, Kalar, Khatwe, Musahar, Natuwa, Sarbaria, Tatma/Tatwa
8. Other (specify): Bangali, Muslim, Punjabi/Sikh



**Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme/Helvetas Nepal**

Dhobighat, Lalitpur, P.O.Box : 688, Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone : +977-1-5421063, 5437148

Email: [sami.np@helvetas.org](mailto:sami.np@helvetas.org)

Website: <https://www.helvetas.org/en/nepal>