RETURN, WEAK REINTEGRATION, AND REMIGRATION

A Study of Nepali Migrant Workers

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Pravasi Nepali
PNCC

Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CoD	Country of Destination
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ESC	Employment Service Centre
EU	European Union
FEIMS	Foreign Employment Information Management System
FEWF	Foreign Employment Welfare Fund
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFMD	Global Forum for Migration and Development
GoN	Government of Nepal
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MEDEP	Micro-Enterprise Development Programme
MoLESS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NEMIS	National Employment Management Information System
PMEP	Prime Minister Employment Programme
PNCC	Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee
PRA	Private Recruitment Agency
ReMi	Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers
RMW	Returnee Migrant Worker
RWMW	Returnee Women Migrant Worker
SaMi	Safer Migration Programme
SOCSO	Malaysian Social Security Organisation
SSF	Social Security Fund
UAE	United Arab Emirates

CHAIRPERSON'S DESK

I am thrilled to present the report titled 'Return, Weak Reintegration, and Remigration: A Study of Nepali Migrant Workers'. This report presents the challenges and experiences of Nepali returnee migrant workers who were identified and interviewed from the service delivery data maintained by PNCC from 2014 to 2022. Many Nepali migrant workers return with financial capital, new skills, knowledge, perspectives and expertise gained from their migration experience. Therefore, it is important to facilitate the economic and psychosocial reintegration of returnee migrants. However, for migrant workers who return with no money or savings, and endure experiences of fraud, exploitation, and abuse, there exist significant challenges for their sustainable reintegration. Sustainable reintegration of migrant workers is complex and requires collective action and careful decisions based on accurate information. PNCC has been working tirelessly to support migrant workers by providing paralegal services to migrant workers and their families and implementing rescue, repatriation and reintegration activities in countries of destination and in Nepal.

By realising the importance of documentation of cases of migrant workers, PNCC began to keep the record of migrant workers' cases from 2012 in Microsoft Excel documents. In addition, the organisation used to record the information of its beneficiaries on traditional paper forms, but, as the number of cases increased significantly, it became difficult to manage them manually. Later in the COVID-19 period, there were difficulties in recording the cases of migrant workers, and it was revealed that a rescue form had been produced, which made it possible to assist over 16,000 pandemic survivors. As a result of this system's successful implementation, the organisation has advanced its use of technology for mass data management by introducing the Case Management Information System (CMIS).

Our sincere gratitude extends to the Open Society Policy Centre for their invaluable financial support. We are also thankful to the study team at the Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) at Social Science Baha which includes Bhimkala Limbu, Manju Gurung and Ratna Kambang for their support in data collection and Sudeshna Thapa for reviewing the final paper. Special thanks to PNCC's Executive Director Som Prasad Lamichhane, Project Coordinator Aviman Singh Lama, PC cum Data Analyst Bijaya Basyal and the Rescue Unit, who significantly contributed to this study. This report would not have been possible without the returnee migrant workers who participated in the interviews and gave us their invaluable time and information.

I expect the report to be a useful and interesting read for academicians, policymakers, civil society, trade unions, media, and those who work in labour migration, specifically, return and reintegration of migrant workers and I believe it will help inform initiatives and programmes targeted at returnee migrant workers.

Kul Prasad Karki
Chairperson

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The issue of reintegration carries utmost importance for Nepal due to the temporariness of labour migration from the country. The popular destination countries such as the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Malaysia have restrictive policies for integration into host societies, resulting in the need for Nepali migrant workers to either return home and reintegrate or keep re-migrating. The problems with reintegration in Nepal was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic which precipitated the return of migrant workers. The concept of reintegration has not been addressed substantively by Nepal's legal and policy framework prior to the introduction of the Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers, 2022. However, the lack of specificity in the directive and the nascency of programmes have meant the questions regarding Nepal's reintegration regime persist. Against this backdrop, this study was conducted to understand the situation of and challenges in the economic and psychosocial reintegration of Nepali migrant workers. The study used a mixed method consisting of a survey with 109 returnee migrant workers (RMWs) and a literature review of relevant publications as well as law and policy documents. The research participants were identified from the database managed by Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC) and included returnees who had faced distress in the destination countries.

Major Findings

Economic reintegration: All of the returnee migrant workers in the study had faced distress in the destination countries and many had truncated and failed migration experiences. As such, many were unable to pay back their loans (48 per cent) and reported a worsening of financial stress after migration (42.2 per cent). Only 29 per cent of the respondents reported having any savings from migration. As such, the economic reintegration of returnee migrants in Nepal was not smooth: many of the returnees were involved in subsistence agriculture, wage work or were unemployed, signalling a paucity of work opportunities in Nepal. They (only 9.2 per cent reported utility of skills) also reported the incompatibility of skills learned abroad with work opportunities available in Nepal and difficulties in opening up businesses (55 per cent). Low awareness of government and non-government run economic reintegration programmes was also reported (58.7 per cent).

Psychosocial reintegration: The returnee migrant workers reported significant changes in their communities after return, mostly (infrastructural) development and loss of social network. Despite this, one-fourth of the interviewees reported that their relationship with their spouse and family members has remained same as before. Reintegration in the community, however, was more challenging with a significant 32.1 per cent reporting that their community members had not been welcoming after their return. A large majority

(83.5 per cent) reported not knowing about the ongoing psychosocial reintegration programmes.

Drivers of remigration: A significant (44 per cent) of the research participants were planning to remigrate, with another (22 per cent) yet to decide. For most migrants, the key reason for remigration is the lack of opportunities in Nepal (54 per cent), to finance the consumption needs of their families (50 per cent) and the desire to secure the future education of their children (42 per cent). Most of the respondents (62 per cent) plan to finance their remigration through loans although a significant share of the respondents had not paid back the loans taken for their last migration episodes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Returnee Migrant-centric Policies and Programmes

- The policies and programmes related to labour migration, reintegration and employment such as the Foreign Employment Act, the Foreign Employment Rules, the Foreign Employment Policy, the National Employment Policy, the Prime Minister Employment Programme (PMEP), the Micro-Enterprise Development Programme (MEDPA), and the National Youth Action Plan should prioritise failed and indigent returnee migrants and/or their families. In particular, the neediest left behind family members of migrants should also be considered eligible to benefit from the 100 days of employment programme.
- The government needs to introduce financial programmes dedicated to migrant workers who face distress, allowing them to repay their loans and rebound to their financial situation prior to migration.
- The process for application for concessional loans should be simplified so that returnee migrant workers can benefit from it. The provision of the Integrated Guidelines for Interest Subsidy to Concessional Loan, 2075 whereby returnee migrant workers must have worked for at least six months in the CoDs in order to be eligible for subsidised loans should be scrapped because the neediest returnees could be those who have returned under vulnerable situations before spending six months in the destination countries and without recovering their migration cost.
- Ongoing reintegration programmes including those of local governments should be designed and implemented with a view to addressing the remigration drivers.

Skilling and Utilisation of Returnee Migrant Workers' Skills

- It is paramount that the Government of Nepal (GoN) invests in skilling, upskilling and re-skilling, and capacity building of RMWs to match the demands of the

Nepali labour market, and augment the access to such programmes for all returnees. Concerted efforts need to be made on the part of the governments and employers to link the skills and knowledge of the returnee migrants with the opportunities for employment and enterprise in Nepal. This could be enhanced through better management and linkage of digital systems such as the National Employment Management Information System (NEMIS) and FEIMS in particular.

- In line with the ongoing technological advancement and changes in labour demand and supply both globally and locally, it is necessary to tailor the skills and vocational training provided to migrant workers to reflect these changes.
- There is a need for bilateral or multilateral skills recognition frameworks to certify the skills acquired by migrant workers in countries of origin and destination.

Information Dissemination and Awareness Raising

- Increase the awareness of migrant workers and their families about safe migration and the processes of application for social security provisions such as the Social Security Fund (SSF) of Nepal, the social security protection of PERKESO/Social Security Organisation (SOCSO) in Malaysia, and the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund, etc. through outreach activities, use of audio-visual information and communication materials, and social media.
- The government needs to conduct awareness raising campaigns, at the community level and through the use of media (mass media and social media), to change the general perception whereby female migration is often conflated with sex work, and encourage the recognition of women migrant workers as agents of transformation who have contributed to the development of the country and communities.
- Drawing on lessons from the existing programmes of the government such as MEDPA and the financial literacy programme of SaMi, financial literacy related awareness and counselling could be provided to the general public as well as migrant workers and their families for better planning and management of their incomes. The reach of these awareness activities could also be widened through (digital) media and targeted outreach programmes.

Access to Finance

- The government needs to ensure accessibility to formal loan mechanisms for aspiring migrant workers and returnee migrants with fair terms to reduce their debt burden. For this, the government can build partnerships with banks and other financial intermediaries which have good rural penetration to provide specialised loans tailored for migrants.
- The government needs to work on reducing the barriers faced by migrant workers, such as long and cumbersome procedures for opening up businesses and finding employment in the country to ensure the full utilisation of the skills, capital and knowhow brought back by RMWs.

Strengthening Existing Mechanisms to Support Migrant Workers

- The existing information dissemination and psychosocial counselling as well as welfare-related services provided through the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) need to be further scaled up across the country, preferably at the local government level with more resources. It is important that these services be provided through Employment Service Centres (ESCs) in line with MoLESSs Five Year Strategic Plan 2079/80-2083/84 (2022/23-2027/28).

Role of Donors and Reintegration Service Providers

- Donors and reintegration service providers should prioritize discussion on indebtedness in reintegration plan and programmes, and assist aspirant and returnee migrant workers in developing debt repayment and reduction strategy.
- Distressed returnee migrant workers should be prioritized when providing reintegration services and support. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 3x6 approach could be used when designing reintegration programmes.

Furthering Knowledge on Return and Reintegration

- Statistics on RMWs and their needs need to be gathered through surveys and qualitative research, and recorded and updated in FEIMS. Such information will be important in identifying (vulnerable, neediest, skilled) beneficiaries and the barriers and challenges facing them and in informing reintegration policies and programmes.
- The government should recognise the unique opportunity provided by the administrative data collected and managed by CSOs like PNCC and use the findings about the patterns and trends in the experiences of migrants and returnees to inform and guide its future policies and programmes related to safe migration and reintegration.
- Organisations like PNCC have rich institutional experience on providing support services to migrant workers and their families both in CODs and Nepal. Hence, the government can benefit by tapping into their knowledge and experience. Regular engagement and consultation between the government and institutions working for and with migrant workers, returnees and their families can help improve migration governance related policies and practices.

1. BACKGROUND

Reintegration constitutes an essential element of the labour migration process. Most labour migration, especially from low-income countries, is characterised as 'temporary'.[1] This temporariness of labour migration necessitates the reintegration of migrant workers in their home countries. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines reintegration as, 'the re-inclusion or re-incorporation of a person into a group or process, e.g. of a migrant into the society of his or her country of origin or habitual residence'.[2] The sustainability of the reintegration of migrant workers is determined by three parameters as defined by IOM: 'economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers'.[3]

The precipitation of return migration in Nepal, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, foregrounded the issue of reintegration in the labour migration regime of the country. However, labour migration has been a prominent feature of Nepali society for decades, with 630,089 labour permits issued in the fiscal year 2021/22, and is mostly concentrated in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Malaysia.[4] Between 2008/09 and 2021/22, the number of labour permits issued to Nepali migrant workers exceeded 4.7 million, reaching a peak in 2013/14.[5] Commensurate with the outflow of migrant workers, the inflow of remittances in the corresponding period has transformed the Nepali economy, and allowed many households to grow out of poverty.[6] In the fiscal year 2020/21, Nepal received NPR 961 billion (ca. USD 7 billion)[7] in remittances,[8] equivalent to 22.7 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).[9] Likewise, according

1 Michiel Baas, 'Temporary Labour Migration', in the *Routledge Handbook of Asian Migrations,* eds. Gracia Liu-Farrer and Brenda S.A. Yeoh (New York: Routledge, 2018).

2 International Organization for Migration, *Glossary of Migration* (Geneva: IOM, 2019).

3 IOM, *Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of Return* (Geneva: IOM, 2017).

4 MoLESS, *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022* (Kathmandu: GoN, 2022).

5 MoLESS, *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022.*

6 Bandita Sijapati, Ang Sanu Lama, Jeevan Baniya, Jacob Rinck, Kalpana Jha and Amrita Gurung, *Labour Migration and the Remittance Economy: The Socio-Political Impact* (Kathmandu: USAID, The Asia Foundation and CESLAM, 2017); Sailesh Tiwari, *Moving up the Ladder: Poverty Reduction and Social Mobility in Nepal*: *Poverty and Equality Global Practice* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 2016); Maheshwor Shrestha, 'The Impact of Large-Scale Migration on Poverty, Expenditures, and Labor Market Outcomes in Nepal,' *Policy Research Working Paper*, No. 8232 (2017).

7 The conversions to USD employ rates as applicable on 14 June, 2023. The rates might be higher or lower for the year referred to or when the transaction mentioned took place.

8 'Annual Reports', Nepal Rastra Bank, accessed June 12, 2023, https://www.nrb.org.np/category/annual-reports/?department=red.

9 'Personal remittances, received (% of GDP)', The World Bank, accessed June 12, 2023, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?most_recent_value_desc=true.

to the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/18, only 42.8 per cent of the returnees were employed, with 13.4 per cent being unemployed and the remaining 43.8 per cent being outside the labour force,[10] which illustrates the poor state of reintegration of returnees in the country. Studies elsewhere and in Nepal have found returnees' inability to adapt to lower salaries back home, skills mismatch, insufficient finances, lack of expertise, and lack of favourable environment for investment in enterprises, structural and cultural environment of return as reasons of weak integration.[11] Thus, a majority of migrant workers are compelled to remigrate to same or another destination country when faced by barriers in effective reintegration in Nepal. This emphasises the importance of a holistic reintegration mechanism for Nepal in facilitating a conducive environment for returnees' reinclusion in their families, communities, and the economy. This is not only important for the country's economic development but is a matter of welfare enhancement for migrant workers.

Migration scholarship has not focused adequately on reintegration and mostly reflects the implied assumption of seamless reintegration—people are returning to their homes, their way of life, their culture.[12] Evidence suggests much of the focus of the research and policymaking on migration has been on pre-migration experiences and safe migration, remittances, and the situation in destination countries or experiences of return, including during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Reintegration: Policy Development and Landscape below). This study assesses the reintegration situation of Nepali migrant workers with the help of the administrative data collected by Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC). PNCC, a non-profit, non-political, non-governmental social organisation has been working to protect and promote Nepali migrant workers and their rights and providing support to distressed migrant workers especially in the GCC countries, Malaysia and other middle-eastern countries since 2009.[13] PNCC has developed a rescue and support mechanism through the establishment of outreach offices in Qatar, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, and networks in different destination counties in the GCC and middle-eastern countries. While conducting such support, rescue, and repatriation

10 Central Bureau of Statistics, *Report on the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/18* (Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, 2019).

11 G. Battistella, 'Return Migration in the Philippines: Issues and Policies', in *International Migration: Prospects and Policies,* eds. J. Edward Taylor and Douglas S. Massey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 212-229; Katie Kuschminder, 'Structural and Cultural Environment of Female Return Migration to Ethiopia', in *Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship,* eds. Robin Cohen and Zig Layton-Henry (Gewerbestrasse: Springer International Publishing, 2017); Sijapati et al, *Returning Home: Challenges and Opportunities for Women Migrant Workers in the Nepali Labour Market* (Kathmandu: UN Women, 2019).

12 Katie Kuschminder, 'Reintegration Strategies: Conceptualizing How Return Migrants Reintegrate', in *Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship*, eds. Robin Cohen and Zig Layton-Henry (Gewerbestrasse: Springer International Publishing, 2017).

13 'Introduction', Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee, accessed February 9, 2023, https://pncc.org.np/introduction/.

efforts over the years, PNCC has collected a vast amount of data, consensually, of the migrant workers who have approached the organisation for help.

Reintegration: Policy Development and Landscape

The Foreign Employment Act, 2007—which governs the labour migration regime in Nepal—does not address the issue of reintegration of migrant workers in a comprehensive manner although it authorises the usage of the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund (FEWF) for conducting employment programmes for migrant returnees.[14] The Foreign Employment Rules (2008) has further strengthened the mechanisms for protecting the rights of workers, especially by establishing the rights and responsibilities of workers, employers, and recruitment agencies. Likewise, the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007 and other support measures related to trafficking are believed to help control human trafficking and provide much-needed support and care to victims. Similarly, the Foreign Employment Policy, 2012 provides for the economic and social reintegration of migrant workers in Nepal through the mobilisation of skills and remittance savings towards entrepreneurship by promoting the development of those organisations that focus on training migrant returnees on entrepreneurship, capital formation and investment, and promotion of awareness programmes and psychosocial services.[15]

Likewise, Section 19 of the Directive for Sending Domestic Workers for Foreign Employment (2015) made provisions for the safe return and support of domestic migrant workers if their work in the CoD is different from what was promised, their health issues restrict their work, they suffer physical and psychological violence or abuse, or if their employer does not allow them to leave despite the completion of term as per their contracts.[16] Similarly, the 15th Periodic plan (2019/20-2023/24) acknowledged the potential of returnees for entrepreneurship development in the country: the government envisaged policies for providing technological, technical and financial support to returnee migrant workers (RMWs) in a bid to encourage them to start businesses.[17] In particular, the government has highlighted the increasing attraction of RMWs towards agriculture and acknowledged the capital, motivation and technical knowhow returnees possess that can be crucial for the sector's development.

Recently in 2022, the GoN released the Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers, 2079. The Directive introduced three kinds of reintegration programmes for returnees: socialisation of returnees, employment, and entrepreneurial development.[18] Similarly, the government launched

14 Foreign Employment Act, 2007, s. 33 (a).

15 Government of Nepal, *Foreign Employment Policy 2012* (Kathmandu: GoN, 2012).

16 Directive for Sending Domestic Workers for Foreign Employment 2015, s. 19.

17 National Planning Commission, *The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 – 2023/24)* (Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, 2020).

18 Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers, 2079.

the Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers (ReMi) project in 2022.[19] This absence of specificity around reintegration in Nepal's legal structure and the fact that ongoing initiatives are at a nascent stage have meant the attenuated development of reintegration procedures in the country. This issue is particularly acute for migrant workers who face distressful situations in the CoDs as they may face added layers of challenges in their reintegration process.

Additionally, the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) (2022-2027) has identified the financial and social reintegration of returnees as an aspect of labour migration the Ministry needs to address.[20] To make the reintegration process seamless, the Ministry has sought to use the FEIMS database: the details of returnees—experience, expertise, knowledge and capital—is to be updated in the software. Further, various programmes and activities such as those aimed at employment, entrepreneurship development and social integration will be conducted by the Ministry in collaboration with the provincial and local governments for the dignified economic and social reintegration of Returnee Women Migrant Workers (RWMWs). For this, the Ministry has planned to take financial and technical support from the destination countries as well. Also, the government has recently, in 2023, introduced the option for migrant workers to get enrolled in the Social Security Fund (SSF) programme of the government. The programme has three plans: accident and disability security plan, dependent family security plan and old age security plan.[21] These plans will help migrant workers who have been injured in the CoDs as well as older migrant workers who are at the point of retirement to economically reintegrate better in Nepal. The dependent family security plan, which comes into operation in case of the death of the migrant worker, will help ameliorate the financial situation of the families of migrant workers.

Besides national institutional and policy provisions, the Colombo Process, Abu Dhabi Dialogue, and the Asia-European Union (EU) Dialogue are other inter-regional forums, along with the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD) and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM)[22] which emphasise the need to make reintegration sustainable by providing returnees with access to social protection, psychosocial assistance and opportunities for decent work.

19 MoLESS, *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022.*

20 MoLESS, *Paach Barse Rananitik Yojana (2079/80 to 2083/84) (Five Year Strategic Plan)* (Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, 2023).

21 Baideshik Rojgari Ma Raheko Shramik ra Bidesh ma Sworojgar ma Raheka Byakti ko Lagi Yogdaan ma Adharit Samajik Surakshya Yojana Sanchalan Karyabidhi, 2079 (Procedure for the Contribution-based Social Security Plan for Migrant Workers and Nepalis Self-Employed Abroad), s. 5.

22 For these platforms and forums, see: Rajita Dhungana and Jeevan Baniya, *Labour Migration: Nepal in Regional and Global Processes* (Kathmandu: CESLAM, 2022), https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/Research%20paper%20XII_Regional%20Processes.pdf.

1.1. Objective

Successful reintegration of RMWs at home country is shaped by factors such as the pre-migration context and reasons for migration, migration conditions in destination countries, circumstances of return, post-return (policy) environment, social and gender norms and practices, and social and network structures. A study of the roles of all of these factors is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, the primary objective of this study is to understand the situation of reintegration of Nepali migrant workers in the economic and psychosocial sphere, as well as explore their aspirations and reasons for re-migration. More specifically, this study aims to:

a. Understand the financial situation of migrant workers during their return,
b. Assess the aspirations and experiences of economic, and psychosocial reintegration of migrant workers,
c. Identify the aspirations, plans or reasons for re-migration, and
d. Identify migrant workers' awareness about the existing reintegration related policies and schemes.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative data has been used for the study. A detailed description of the methodology is presented below.

2.1. Literature Review

Desk review of existing data and publications: Documents and administrative data related to the reintegration situation of Nepali migrant workers published by government and non-government institutions as well as grey literature were thoroughly reviewed.

Review of existing legal and policy framework: A review of migration-related policies, acts and guidelines, such as the Foreign Employment Act (2007) and its amendment, the Foreign Employment Rules (2008) and its amendments and the Foreign Employment Policy (2012), was conducted to understand the existing legal provisions and mechanisms for guiding and regulating labour migration in Nepal. Further, the Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers, 2079, the authoritative legal document for reintegration of migrant workers, was reviewed. The policies, guidelines, annual reports and other documents released by the authorised government agencies in the migration sector at the national, provincial and local levels such as the Fifteenth Plan, MoLESS's latest strategic plan and the Social Security Plan Procedure were explored to understand reintegration-related provisions for migrants.

2.2. Quantitative and Qualitative Administrative Data

The administrative data of PNCC was used to identify research participants for the study. A total of 15,340 cases (22,148 individuals) have been registered at PNCC since 2014. PNCC has gathered both quantitative data collected through registration forms filled by migrant workers (to request support with either rescue or shelter placement) and qualitative data as provided in the forms to elaborate on the request in each of the cases registered. A survey was conducted with 109 returnee migrant workers, to understand their plans, expectations and, situation of reintegration. The research participants were purposively selected from among the 22,148 individuals who were registered in the PNCC database, after considering the relevancy of the case and the availability of contact information. The list of participants was drawn to cover a diverse range of migrants in terms of gender, caste/ethnicity, migration process, challenges and issues faced and their reason for return as far as possible. Descriptive statistics were used for the analysis of the quantitative data. An exhaustive review of the qualitative content was performed, with the analysis done through the development of themes. This report focuses on a specific sub-group of returnees to Nepal: distressed returnees that have experienced suffering abroad and identify their migration as a failed migration episode.

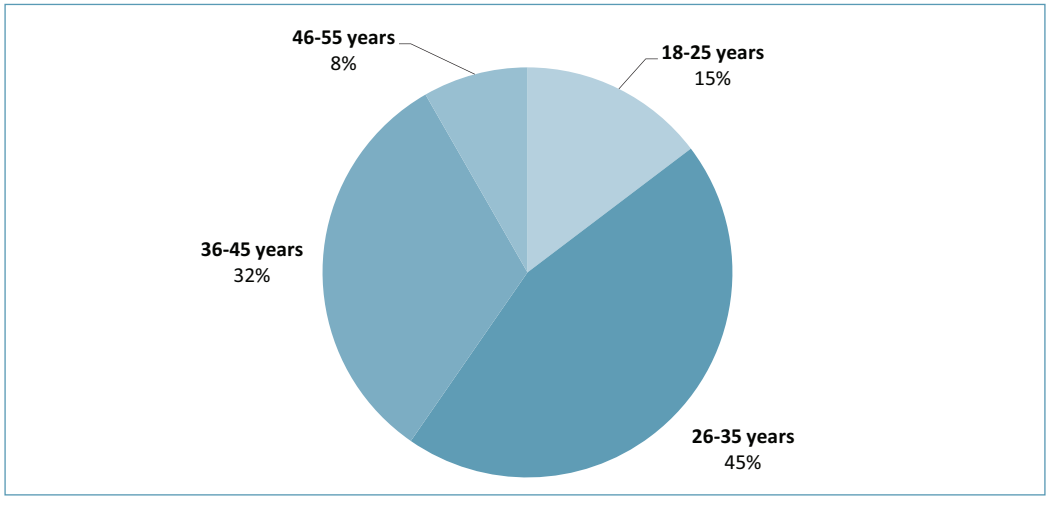
3. FINDINGS

3.1. Demographic Characteristics

Complementing the labour migration flow from Nepal, most of the survey respondents were male (88.1 per cent). Similarly, most of the respondents were from the 26 to 35 age category (45 per cent) followed by the 36 to 45 age group (32.1 per cent).

The highest share of the respondents belonged to the Hill Janajati and Hill Caste groups at 35 per cent and 22 per cent respectively.

Figure 1: Distribution of research participants by age



3.1.1. Province of Origin

The highest number of respondents reported their province of origin as Lumbini at 22 per cent. Madhesh, Bagmati and Koshi were reported as origin provinces by 21.1, 20.2 and 19.3 per cent of the respondents respectively. Labour migration from Nepal originates mostly from Madhesh and Koshi,[23] thus, this sample, which includes only distressed migrant workers who sought services from PNCC, is not commensurate with the overall outflow of migrant workers from Nepal.

3.1.2. Education

More than half of the RMWs had attained secondary level education. Only 8.3 per cent of the respondents reported having attained education beyond school level. This corrobo-

23 MoLESS, *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022.*

Figure 2: Distribution of research participants by ethnicity

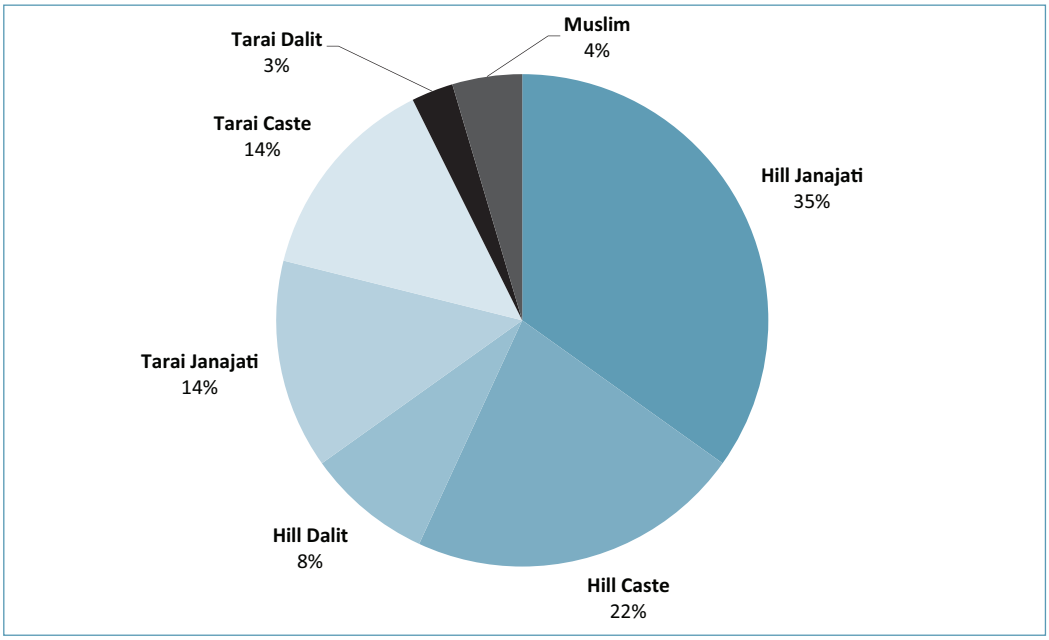
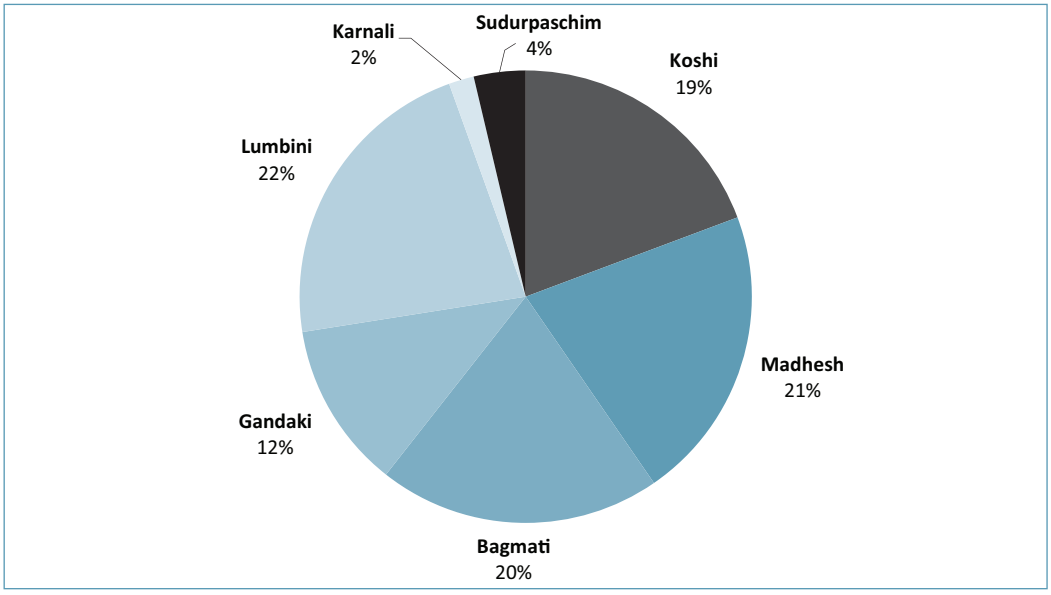


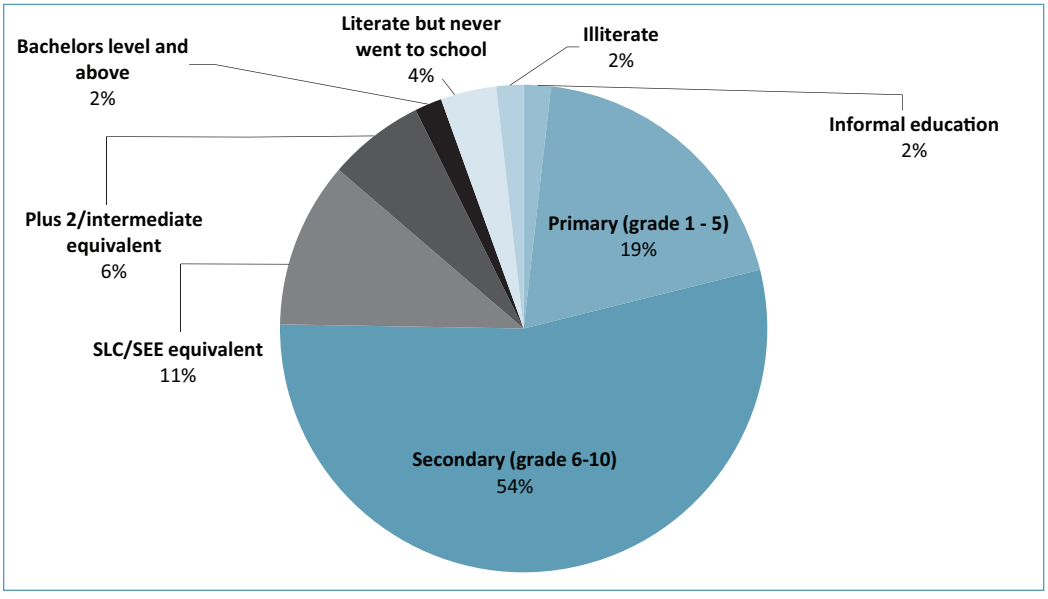
Figure 3: Distribution of research participants by province of origin



rates scholarship that labour migration from Nepal to countries like the GCC countries and Malaysia mostly includes workers who have lower education qualification, and partake in jobs categorised to be low-skilled in the destination countries.[24]

24 MoLESS, *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022.*

Figure 4: Distribution of research participants by education



3.2. Recruitment Process

The motivations for partaking in labour migration can be manifold. Labour migration can be an informed choice, with migrant workers choosing to migrate to make use of their skill sets abroad and obtain relatively higher salaries. However, it can also be a compulsion for some migrant workers who are compelled to seek employment abroad because of the structural deficiencies in the origin country. A staggering majority of migrant workers (85.3 per cent) reported migrating for work to support their families financially and to meet consumption needs (Table 1). The lack of opportunities in Nepal was reported by 48.6 per cent of the respondents as a reason for migration. Higher income abroad, for financing children's education and the need to pay back loans also featured prominently as migration drivers. The role of social networks in proliferating migration was also illustrated: 11 per cent reported that encouragement from their social networks prompted the migration. A higher proportion of women (53.8 per cent) migrated for children's education in comparison to their male counterparts (26 per cent). Also, 15.4 per cent of the women migrant workers reported abuse at home to be a reason for their migration.

The recruitment process can be a key determinant of the migration experience of migrant workers. However, as borne out by the drivers for partaking in labour migration, the bargaining strength of the migrant workers in the labour recruitment market is extremely poor due to their compulsion to migrate. These market asymmetries can incentivise unethical behaviour on the part of private recruitment agencies (PRAs) and employers.[25] The recruitment fees

25 Amnesty International, *Turning People into Profits: Abusive Recruitment, Trafficking and Forced Labour of Nepali Migrant Workers* (London: Amnesty International, 2017).

Table 1: Reasons for migration (%)

Reasons for migration	Men	Women	Total
Lack of opportunities in Nepal	52.1	23.1	48.6
To support family financially/To finance consumption needs of the family	84.4	92.3	85.3
To pay back loan	26.0	23.1	25.7
For children's education	26.0	53.8	29.4
Higher income abroad	39.6	15.4	36.7
Encouraged by social network	10.4	15.4	11.0
Due to abuse at home	0.0	15.4	1.8
Lack of reintegration measures for returnees in Nepal	2.1	0.0	1.8
Business failure in Nepal	3.1	7.7	3.7
Lack of access and stability in Nepal's labour market	4.2	0.0	3.7
Relative flourishment of migrant workers from my village	1.0	0.0	0.9
Political instability in Nepal	2.1	0.0	1.8
Others	2.1	0.0	1.8
Total %	**253.1**	**246.2**	**252.3**
Total number	**96**	**13**	**109**

Note: Multiple responses.

reported by migrant workers illustrates this asymmetry: even with governmental mandates with the adoption of the 'free visa, free ticket' policy and the 'employer pays' model that limit the fees that can be charged by PRAs and require other recruitment costs to be borne by the employer, 27.5 per cent of the migrant workers reported paying recruitment fees of NPR 200,000 or more, with only 4.6 per cent paying the mandated amount (Table

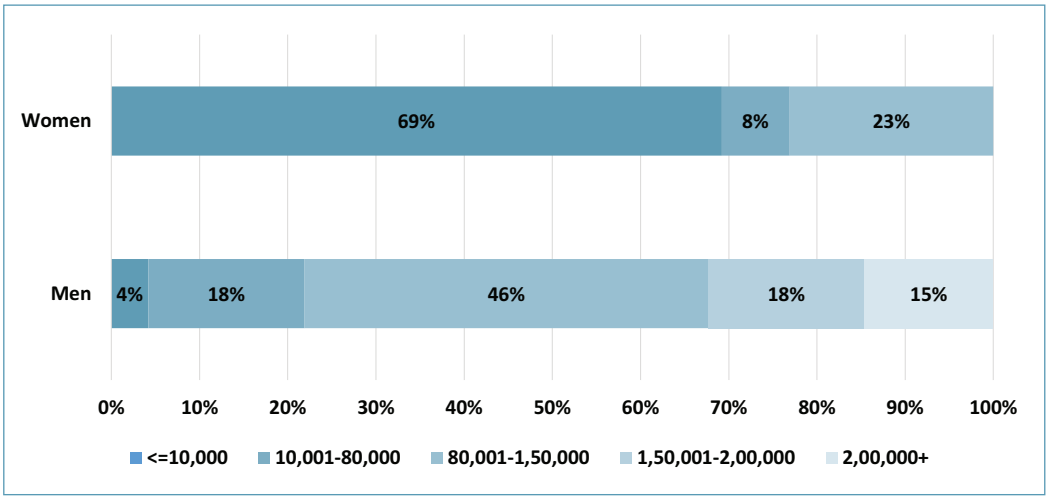
Table 2: Total recruitment fees paid by migrant workers (%)

	Men	Women	Total
<=10,000	2.1	23.1	4.6
10,001-80,000	6.3	46.2	11.0
80,001-1,50,000	34.4	23.1	33.0
1,50,001-2,00,000	26.0	7.7	23.9
2,00,000+	31.3	0.0	27.5
Total %	**100**	**100**	**100**
Total number	**96**	**13**	**109**

2). One-third (33 per cent) reported paying between NPR 80,001 to 150,000 and another 23.9 per cent paid between NPR 150,001 to NPR 200,000, far exceeding the legal limit.

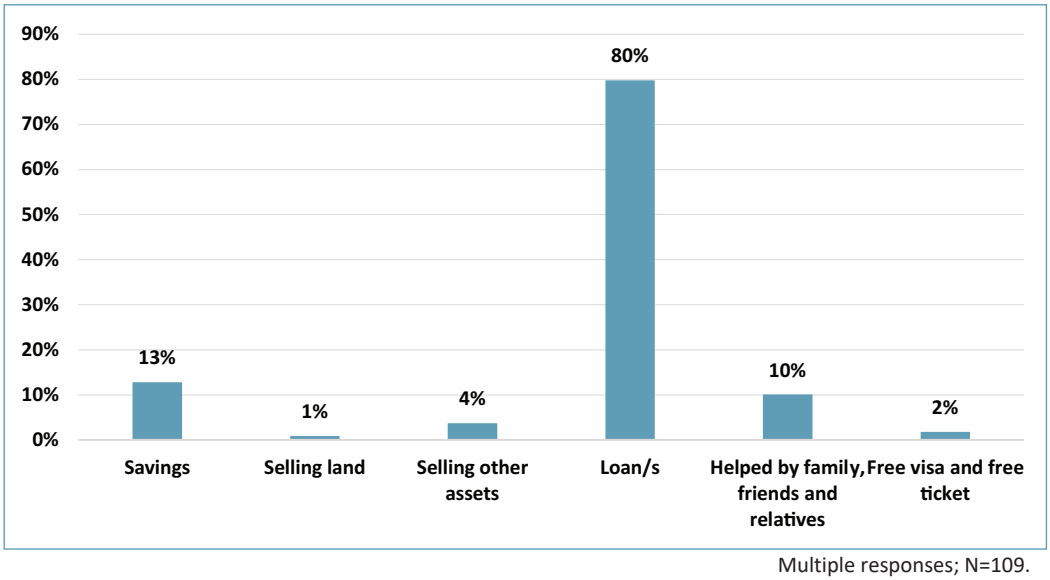
The highest number of migrant workers paid between NPR 80,001 to 150,000 solely to the labour intermediaries including recruitment agencies and agents. Notably, only 11.9 per cent reported paying the mandated amount of NPR 10,000 or less (N=13). A large

Figure 5: Fees paid to intermediaries



majority of the female participants (69.2 per cent) paid NPR 10,000 or less although it must be noted that the number of female respondents was low.

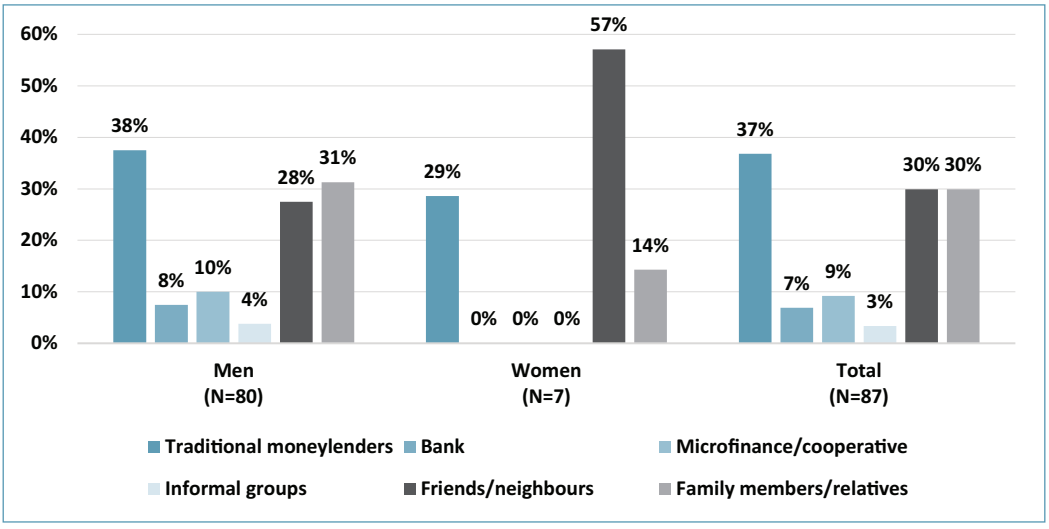
Figure 6: Source of finance for migration



Multiple responses; N=109.

One of the primary risks for migrant workers from Nepal has remained the need to obtain loans to finance their migration process. Most of the migrant workers, at 79.8 per cent, used loans to fund their labour migration episodes (Figure 7). Further, these loans were mostly taken from traditional moneylenders (36.8 per cent), followed by friends/neighbours (29.9

Figure 7: Source of loan



Multiple responses; N = 109.

per cent) and family members/relatives (29.9 per cent), with only 16.1 per cent in total and none of the women migrant workers using formal financial intermediaries (Figure 8). The interest paid on these loans was also exorbitant. Besides seven migrant workers who did not pay any interest on their loans due to them being provided by family members/relatives, the others, regardless of source, paid debilitating interest rates (Table 3).

Table 3: Source of loan with interest rates

	0%	<=12 %	13-24 %	25-36 %	>36 %	Total number
Traditional moneylenders	0.0	8.1	13.5	54.1	24.3	**37**
Bank/Cooperatives	0.0	42.9	42.9	14.3	0.0	**7**
Microfinance/Cooperative	0.0	25.0	37.5	25.0	12.5	**8**
Informal groups	0.0	25.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	**4**
Friends/neighbours	3.2	6.5	25.8	48.4	16.1	**31**
Family members/relatives	21.2	9.1	21.2	33.3	15.2	**33**
Total	**7.7**	**15.4**	**31.9**	**53.8**	**22.0**	**92**

3.3. Situation in Country of Destination

A large majority of migrant workers (72.5 per cent) reported one of the GCC countries as their last country of destination. Malaysia, at 21.1 per cent, also featured prominently. The numbers for other countries such as Jordan and India are comparatively low.

Figure 8: Country of destination

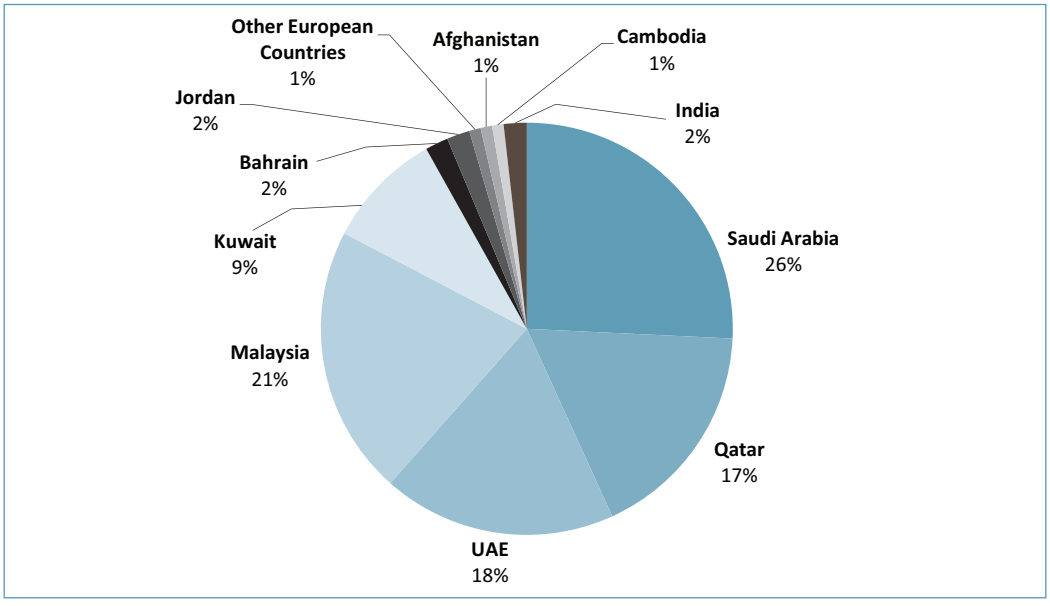
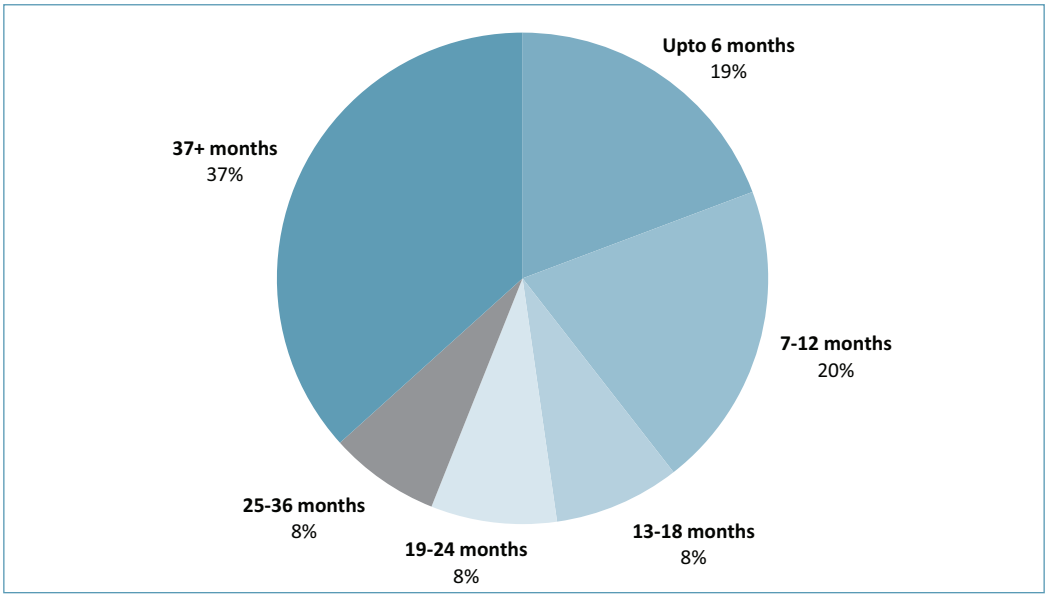


Figure 9: Duration of foreign employment



Because of the distresses faced, many migrant workers had truncated migration experiences: nearly 20 per cent had less than six months of employment in the CoD; another 20 per cent reported their foreign employment to have lasted only 7 to 12 months.

3.3.1. Distresses Faced

The highest share of RMWs (42.2 per cent) faced unspecified contract issues in the destination countries. Other contract-related problems faced were the non-payment of wages (9.2 per cent) and contract substitution (5.5 per cent). Other prominent issues reported were problems faced in return to Nepal (18.3 per cent) and being undocumented in the CoD (10.1 per cent). Being stranded in the destination country without work was also reported by 7.3 per cent of the respondents.

Table 4: Distresses faced in the country of destination

Nature of case	
Unspecified contract issues	42.2
Issues related to return to Nepal	18.3
Undocumented migrant worker	10.1
Non-payment of wages	9.2
Stranded in destination country without work	7.3
Health issues	6.4
Contract substitution	5.5
Engaged in criminal activity	3.7
Illness and injury	3.7
Jailed cases	3.7
Issues related to accommodation	2.8
Non-renewal of residence permit	1.8
Physical and mental abuse	1.8
Out of contact	0.9
Other	0.9
Total %	**118.3**
Total number	**109**

Note: Multiple responses.

3.4. Economic Situation and Reintegration

In this subsection, an analysis of the situation of migration-related loans, loan repayment, financial condition after return, post-return employment situation, utilisation of

skills after return, access to existing programme aimed at supporting RMWs, their access to several modes of financial schemes and their perception of barriers in accessing such schemes, among others, has been presented.

3.4.1. Low Saving but Increased Debt of Returnee Migrant Workers

As illustrated in Figure 6, a vast majority of migrant workers (80%) had taken loans to fund their migration episodes. Among the RMWs who had taken loans, 50.5 per cent reported they had not paid back the loan amount in its entirety (Figure 10). Essentially, the loans that are not yet paid back were taken from traditional moneylenders, banks, cooperatives, and microfinances (Figure 11). Traditional moneylenders, in particular, charge interest at exorbitant rates (Table 3) and the non-payment of these loans means a massive deterioration in the financial situation of the migrant workers coupled with added debt and vulnerability. In the words of a returnee migrant worker:

> 'I went to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2078, paying NPR 220,000 (ca. USD 1648) to an agent. I stayed there for four months only as the agent who took me there kept me in a room for a month and ran away after that. I couldn't find any job and had to pay for my return by myself. I managed to pay the recruitment fee to the agent managed through the loan I took from a microfinance near my home. As I was cheated by the agent and could not find any job, I could not earn any money, resulting in inability to pay back the loan I took. I am still struggling to pay the loan back. I have to pay 10,000 every month for NPR 150,000 I took for the time span of 2.5 years to the microfinance, and I have been confronted by the employee of the microfinance for not having paid the loan'.

Another male returnee migrant worker who had put his land on mortgage at an interest of 36 per cent per annum and also taken additional loan from a bank at an interest of 18 per cent per annum said:

> 'I was told that I will be working in a poultry farm in Saudi [Arabia]. But it was a labour supply company. We had to do several types of hard-labour work. I was not paid three months' salary. The company also did not make ID cards. So, the police arrested me during the checking and put me in jail. I am not educated and I'm doing labour work in Nepal as well. Previously, before going to Saudi, I was in Qatar. I did labour work in Qatar as well. I still have not been able to pay back the loan. I have paid the bank loan. But the 'meter loan' I took on is compounding steadily. I am not able to pay. I feel like committing suicide. I get NPR 600 (ca. USD 4.5) daily from labour work. That too, some weeks, there is no work. It is difficult to run the family. How can I pay the loan back?'.

However, those migrant workers who have paid back the loans have mostly done so through their earnings from abroad, thus resulting in no loss of previously accumulated

Figure 10: Situation of loan repayment

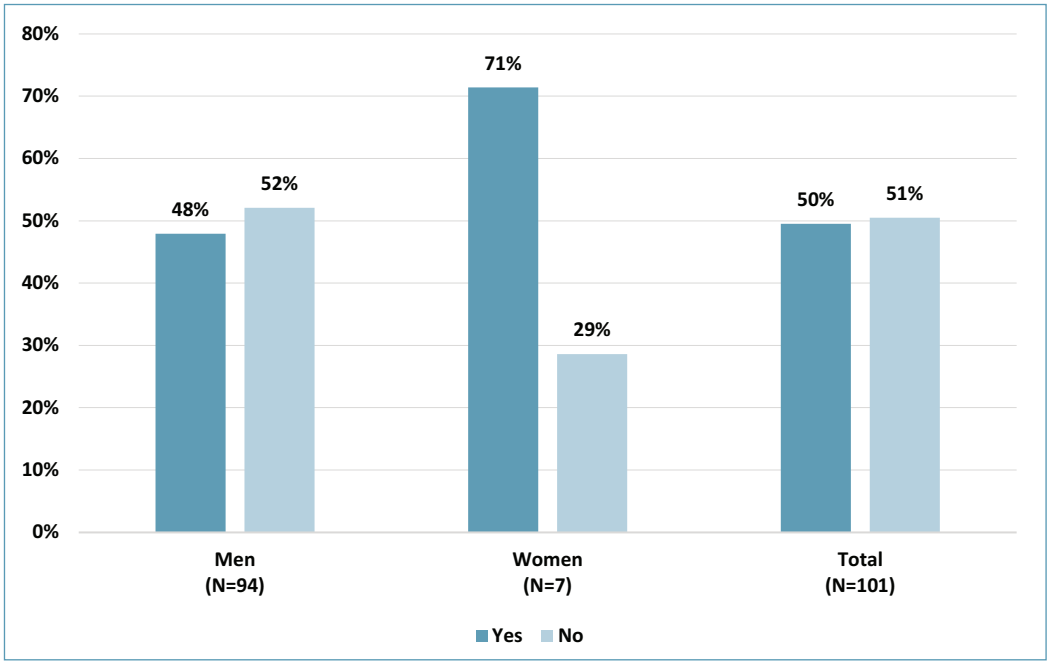
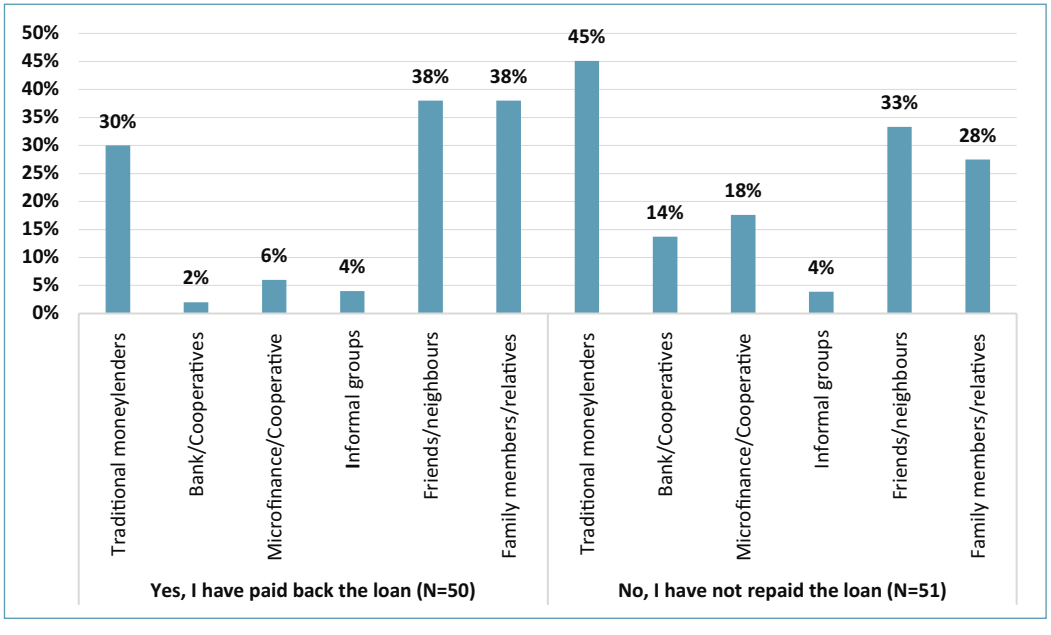


Figure 11: Source of loan and situation of loan repayment



capital in Nepal. A high majority (88 per cent) paid back their loans with earnings from foreign employment.

Despite 'negative' or 'failed' migration experience, 28 per cent of the migrant workers were able to save from their migration episodes after considering all the expenses including

Figure 12: Source of loan repayment

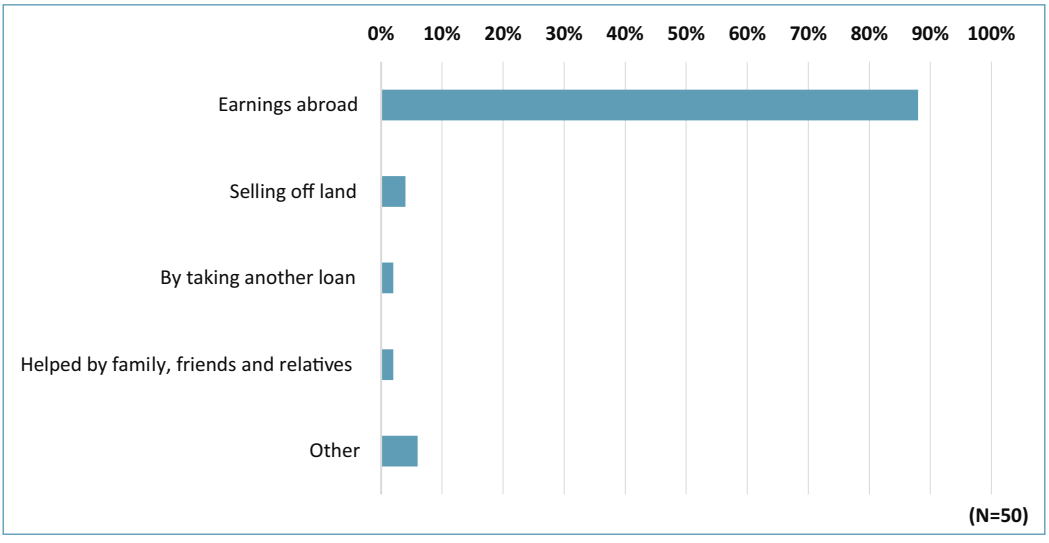
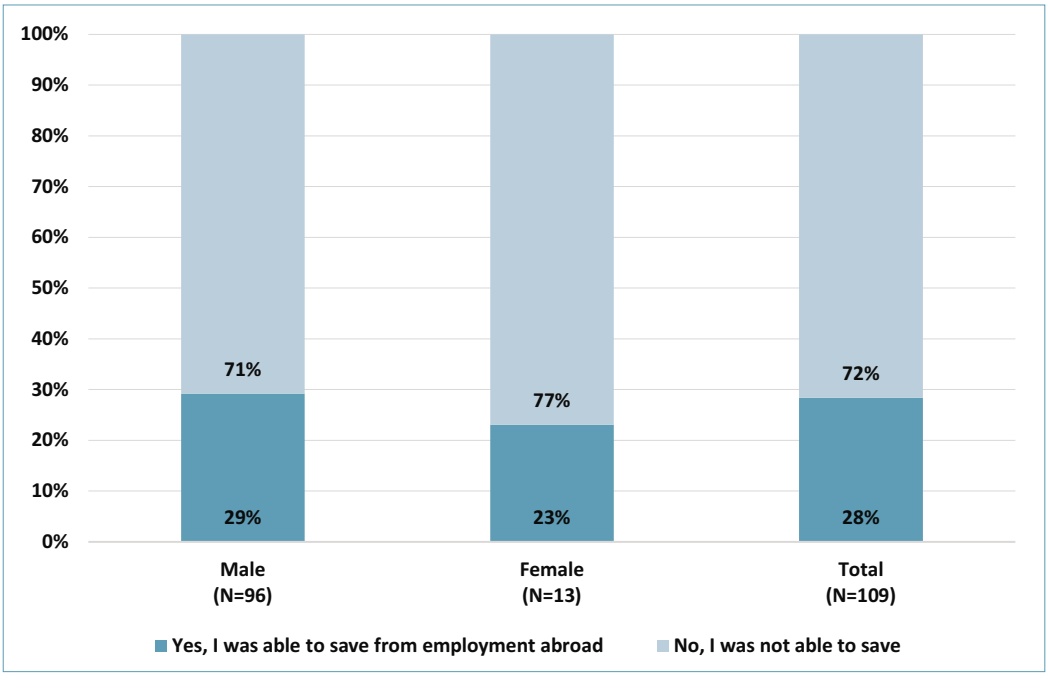


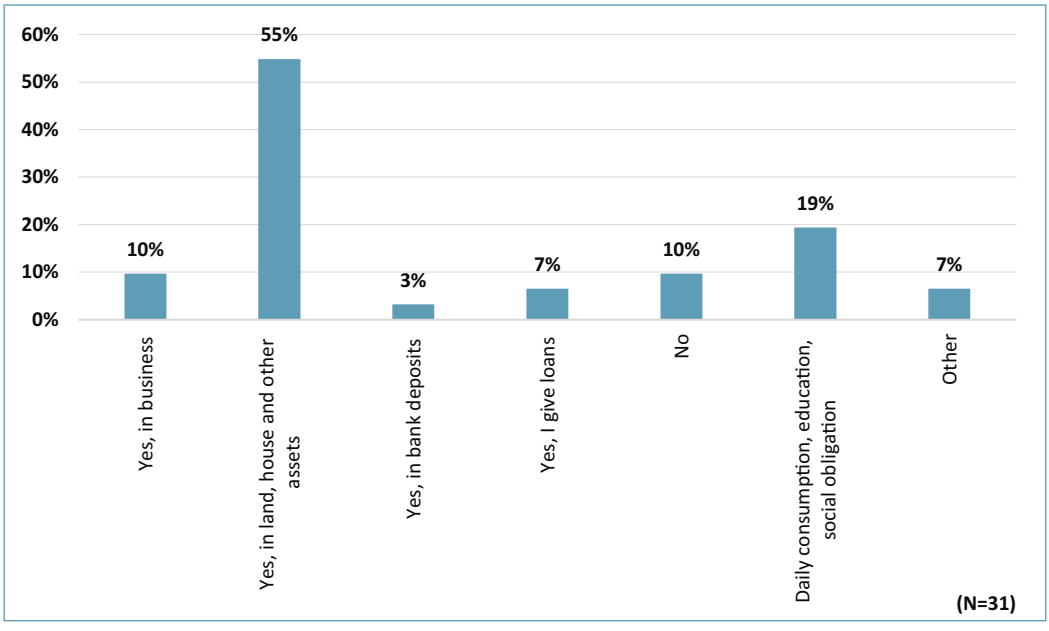
Figure 13: Savings from foreign employment



repayment of loans (Figure 13). Due to the distresses faced, most migrant workers have not been able to capitalise on their foreign employment opportunity. Of those that have been able to save, 54.8 per cent have chosen to invest their savings in fixed assets such as land and houses (Figure 14).

Most of the RMWs had returned after suffering from distress, exploitation and labour rights violations. This resulted in their 'failed' migration which was cited by 42.3 per

Figure 14: Investment of savings

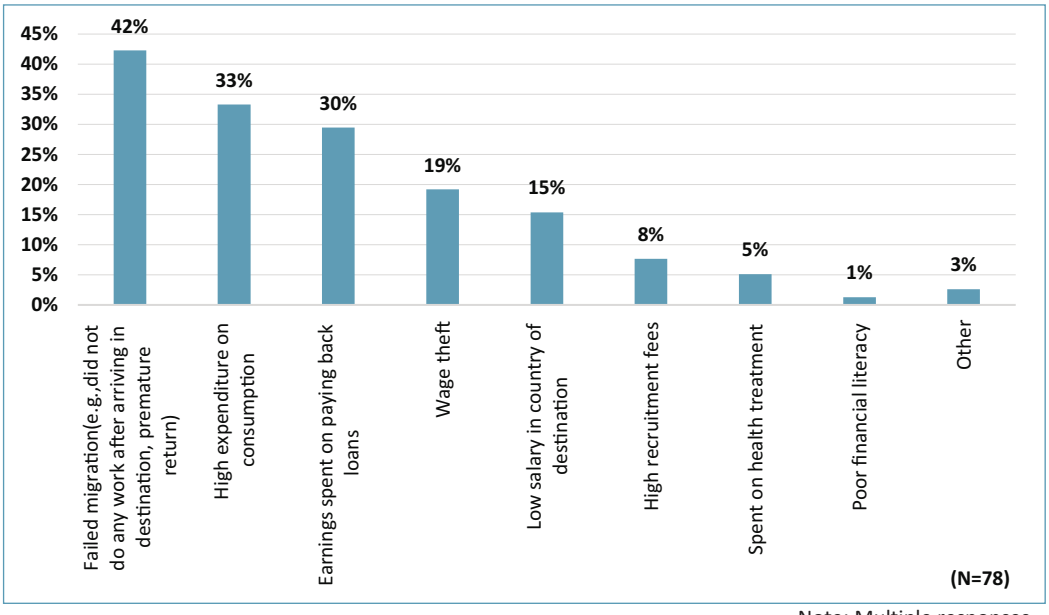


cent as the reason for the inability to save from foreign employment. Other prominent reported reasons for the inability to save included high expenditure on consumption (33.3 per cent), earnings being spent on paying back loans (29.5 per cent) and low salary in the destination country (15.4 per cent). As a corollary, migrant workers who face distress and thus are forced to truncate their migration experience earn very little money and are unable to transcend the consumption needs of the family and invest in assets which would have compounded their earnings.

3.4.2. Perception of Financial Situation in Destination Country and after Return

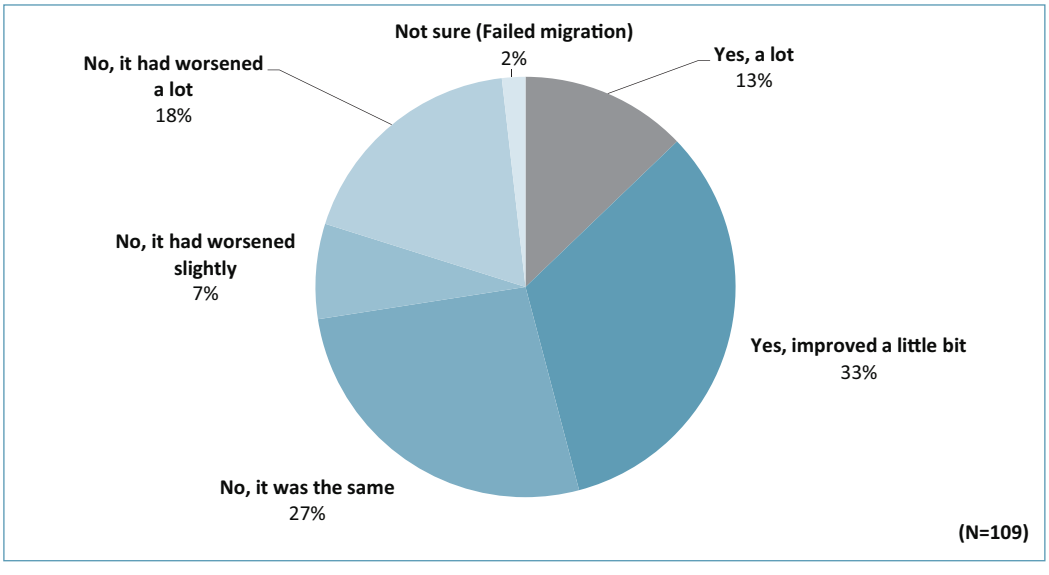
When the RMWs were working in the destination country, a significant number (45.9 per cent) felt that their financial situation was improving, with 12.8 per cent reporting a significant improvement as compared to their pre-migration circumstances (Figure 16). On the other hand, one-fourth of the migrant workers reported their financial predicament had gotten worse compared to when working in the CoD prior to their return. However,

Figure 15: Reasons for inability to save



Note: Multiple responses

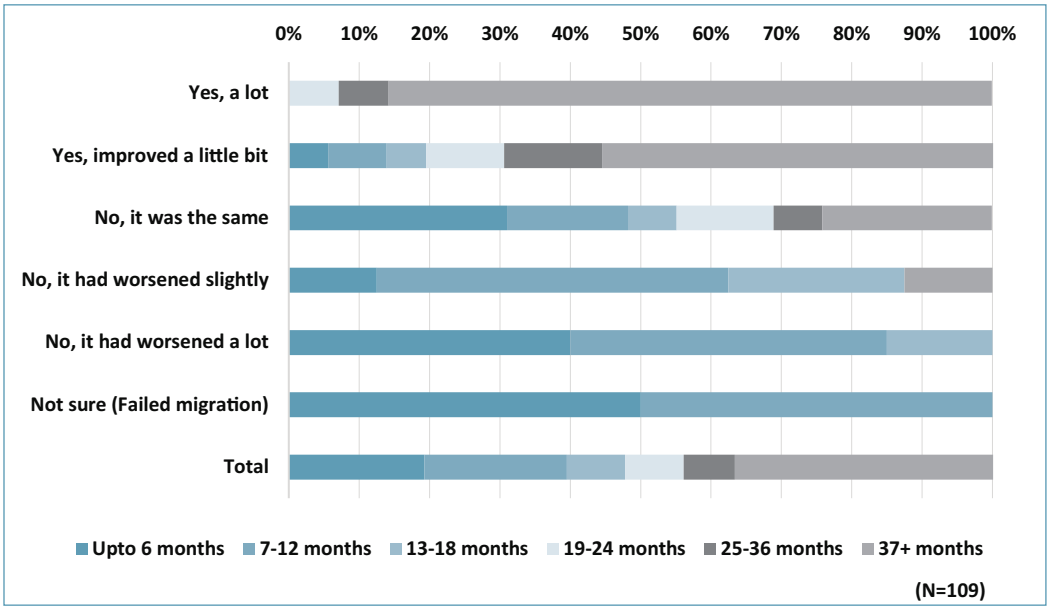
Figure 16: Perception of financial situation in destination country



most of the migrant workers who claimed improved financial situations had longer migration episodes (37 months and above), with the financial situation of migrant workers who faced distress early in their migration episodes worsening (Figure 17).

In contrast to the assessment made by the migrant workers of their financial situation while working abroad, most of them do not feel an improvement in their financial

Figure 17: Perception of financial situation in destination country by duration of employment



predicament after their return to Nepal (Figure 18). More than 40 per cent reported worsened financial conditions, while 33 per cent say it has remained the same. Only 23.8 per cent of the migrant workers could definitely say that their financial situation had improved. A higher per cent of women migrant workers reported worsened financial

Figure 18: Perception of financial situation after return

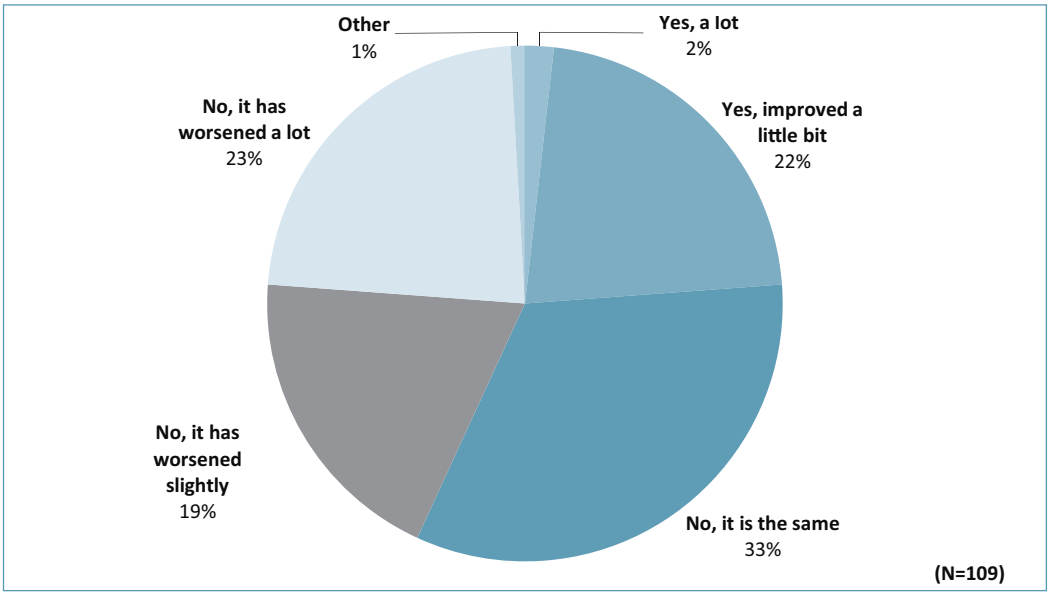
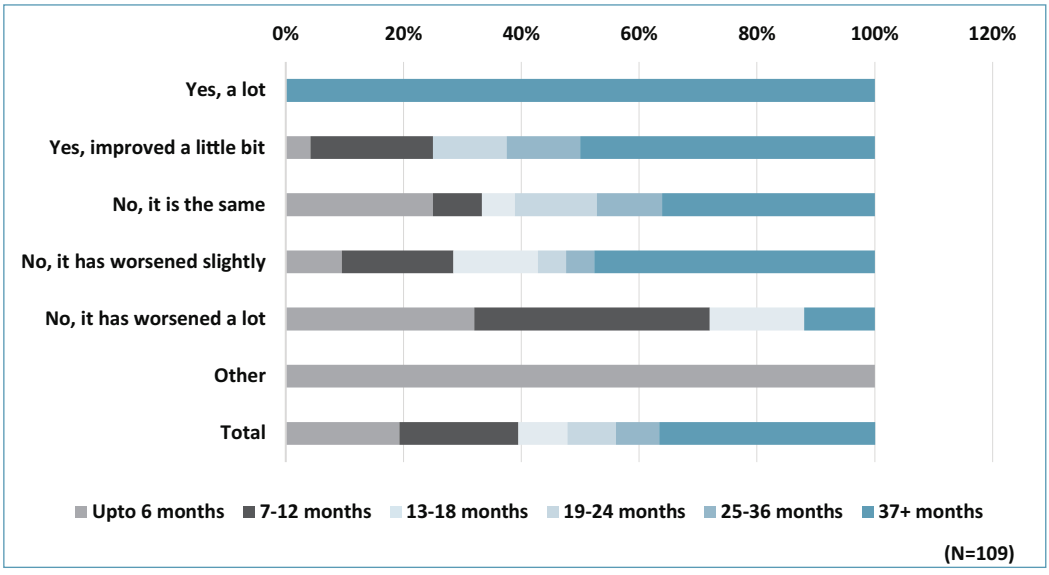


Figure 19: Perception of financial situation after return by duration of employment

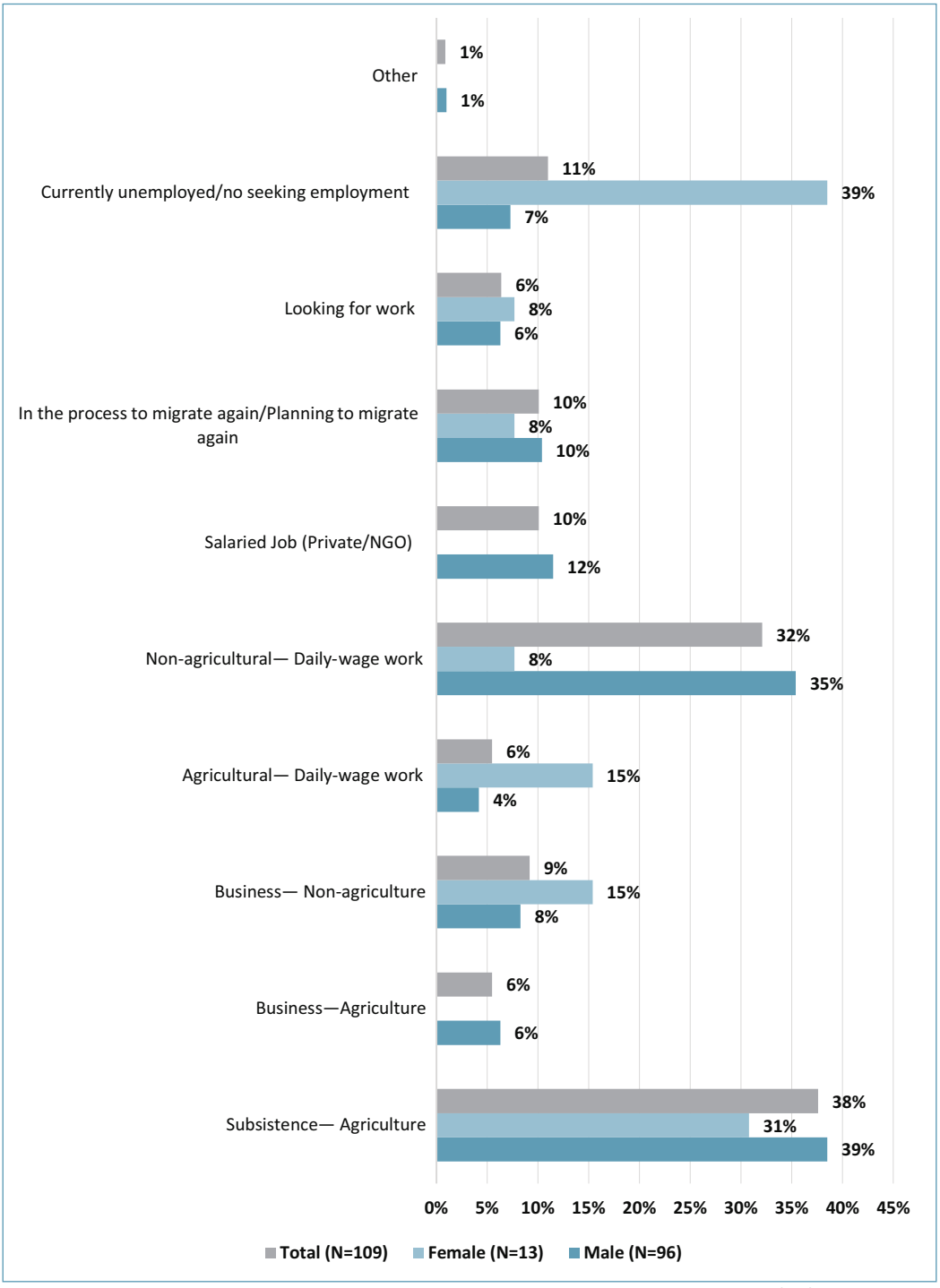


situation than men. Similar to the assessment prior to return, a higher share of respondents with shorter migration episodes reported worsened financial predicaments after return to Nepal. However, even migrant workers who had long migration episodes have reported, in significant numbers, a slight worsening of their financial predicament after -return (Figure 20). The primary driver of migration is the need for improved finances. However, failed migration experiences keep migrant workers from achieving this goal. This worsening of financial predicament exacerbates their pre-migration vulnerabilities and can also result in the migrant workers being targets of resentment within the family making familial reintegration more challenging.

3.4.3. Returnees Find it Difficult to Find Employment or Run Business after Return

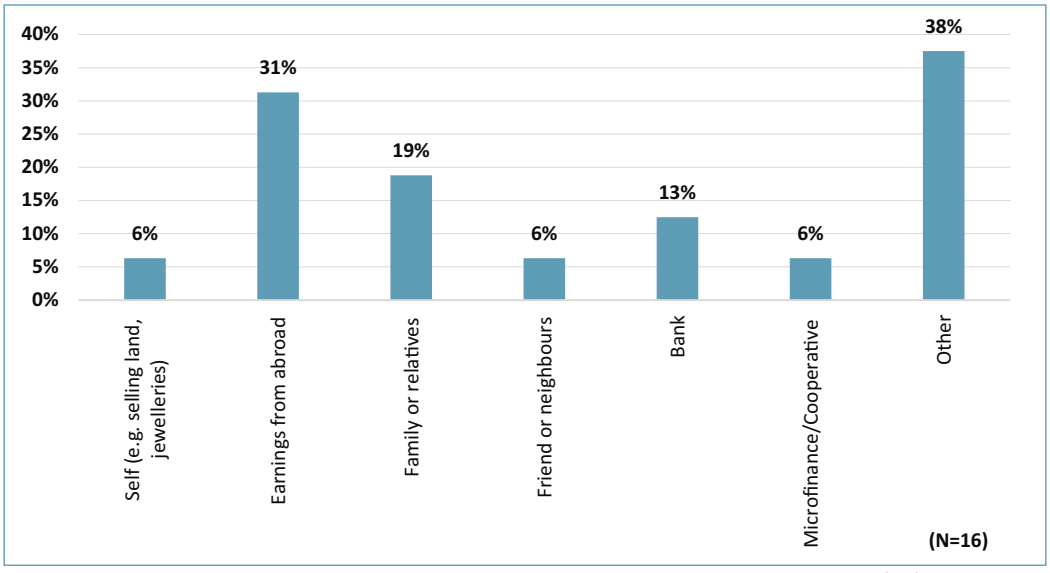
The highest percentage of migrant workers (37.6 per cent) have been involved in subsistence agriculture once they have returned to Nepal. Subsistence agriculture entails production for survival and thus, accrues extremely low financial benefits, if any; this implies the inability of the returnees to obtain high-value work once they have returned, a mismatch of skill and knowledge in the labour market in Nepal and a possible paucity of decent work opportunities. Another 32.1 per cent of the returnees have been doing daily wage work in the non-agricultural sector, with 12.8 per cent of the migrant workers opening up businesses—either in the agricultural or the non-agricultural sector. Those who have opened businesses have mostly done so through earnings from abroad (Figure 21). A significant number of the migrant workers, at 16.5 per cent, are unemployed, and a further 10.1 per cent are looking to migrate again. Also, 27.5 per cent of the respondents reported to have migrated internally in Nepal, after their return, for employment or to start a business (Figure 22).

Figure 20: Proportion of returnee migrant workers by sector of work



Note: Multiple responses.

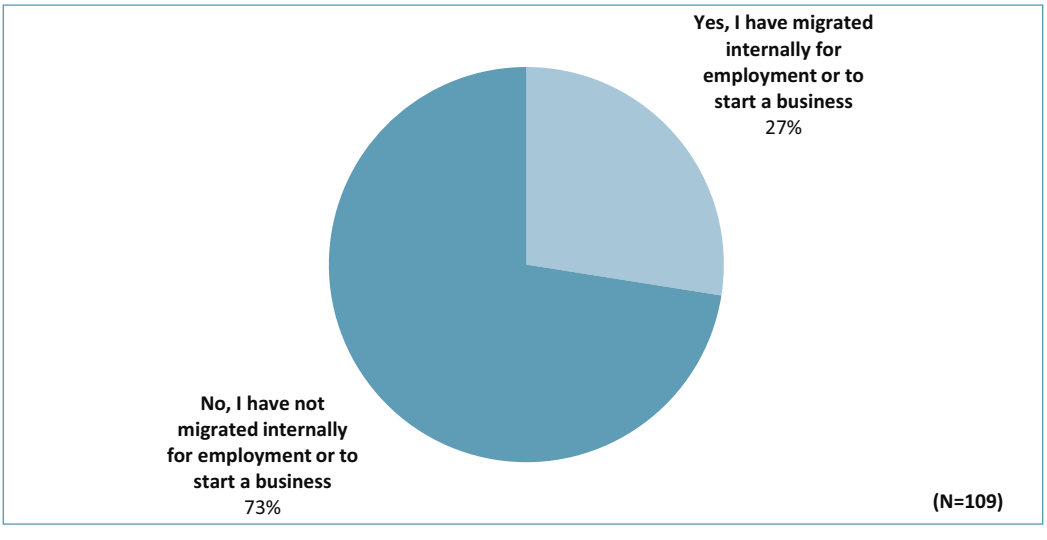
Figure 21: Source of capital for opening business



Note: Multiple responses

Policies related to supporting RMWs as well as the recent Reintegration directive envisions conducting reintegration programmes at the local level. However, individual livelihood practices may span geographical distances going beyond the municipal demarcation set by the reintegration-related policies. Lack of employment possibilities and access to the labour market at their place of origin, which for many migrants in Nepal include rural

Figure 22: Returnee migrant workers who have migrated internally for work after return



areas,[26] has not only propelled returnee migrants to engage in subsistence agriculture but has also impelled returnees to migrate internally in order to find jobs. A returnee migrant said,

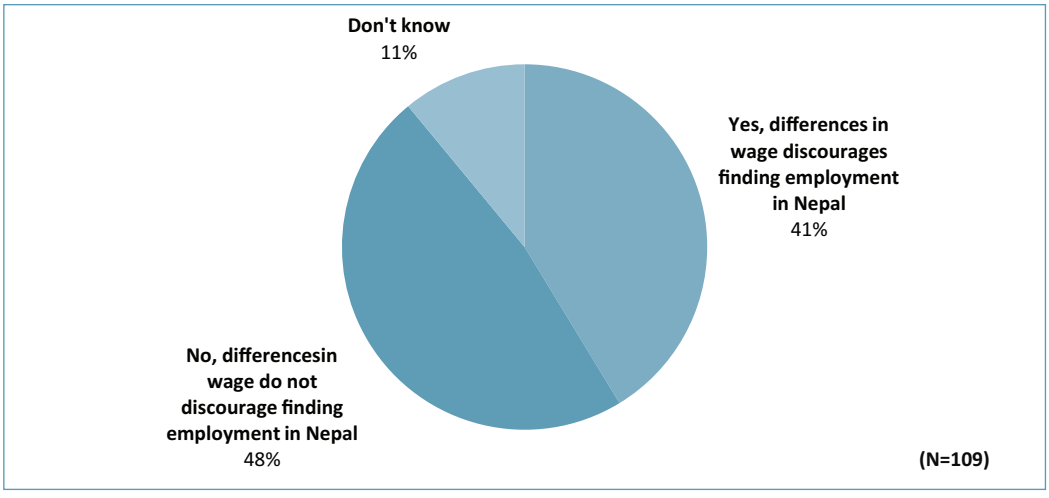
> 'I had planned to start a business while returning but I could not arrange capital. I wanted to start a poultry farm, but it required lots of investment and documentation. I searched for a job in my own village but could not find one. I was seeking a job for four months but no job opportunity was available then shifted to another Palika [municipality] from my own district for a job. Now I have been working as a construction worker in another rural municipality after four months of my return'.

Similarly, another migrant shared,

> 'After coming back to Nepal, I did subsistence farming for about a year, later it became difficult to provide education to my children so I came to Kathmandu and started doing labour work. It's been around five years. It is difficult to get money for the work rather than finding the work itself'.

In addition to the lack of job opportunities, inadequate capital is another barrier for RMWs in starting their own business. Apart from this, some RMWs also highlighted the need for social networks in order to find jobs in Nepal, 'I tried to find a job as a driver in a bank in Nepal but couldn't find one…There is a system of giving priority to known people so it (the

Figure 23 : Perspective on difference in wage in Nepal

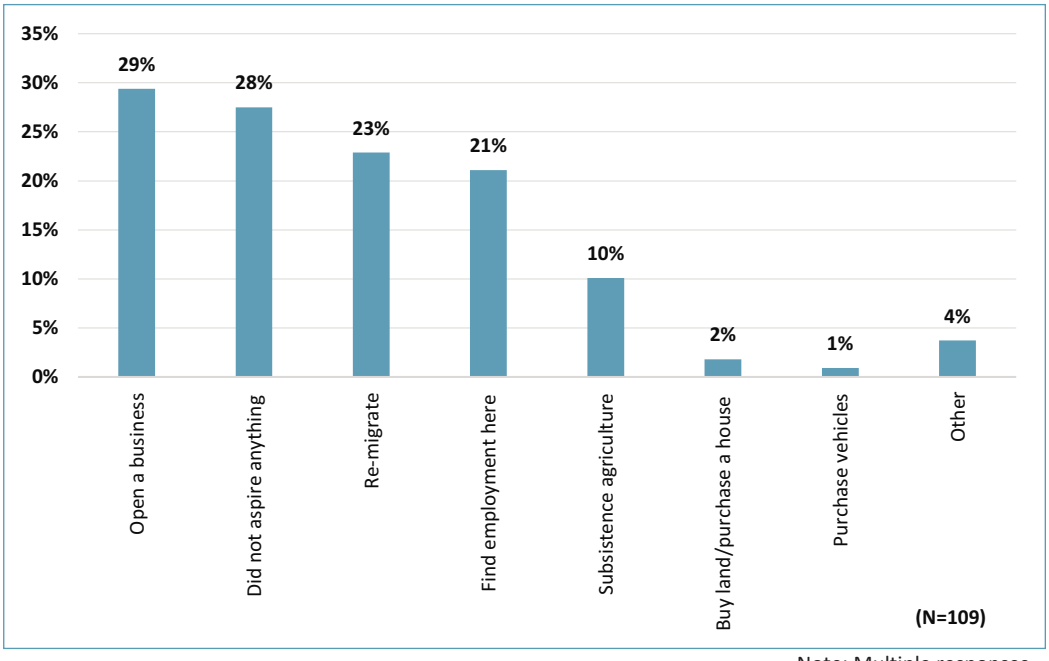


26 National Statistical Office, *National Population and Housing Census 2021: National Report* (Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, 2023).

job) didn't happen. I had also thought about buying a vehicle but all the money I earned was spent while making a house. So, I am thinking about going abroad again'. In the same context, another migrant said, 'It is hard finding a job in Nepal. They keep their own people at work. Those who say they will find a job for you, ask for money in return. I inquired in two to three places for a job as security guard but was asked for 6-7 thousand rupees in return'. More than 40 per cent of the RMWs cited difference in pay in Nepal as a discouraging factor in finding employment in the country (Figure 23). This indicates that the relatively higher financial benefits in destination countries can be a serious deterrent for returnees to choose to stay in Nepal for employment or business.

As such, the aspirations carried by a significant number of respondents before returning were either to open up businesses or to remigrate immediately after return (Figure 24). Only 21.1 per cent aspired to find employment in Nepal. However, regardless of the preference for financial engagement in Nepal, 55 per cent of the respondents reported difficulty in opening up a business or finding employment in the country (Figure 25).

Figure 24 : Aspirations before returning

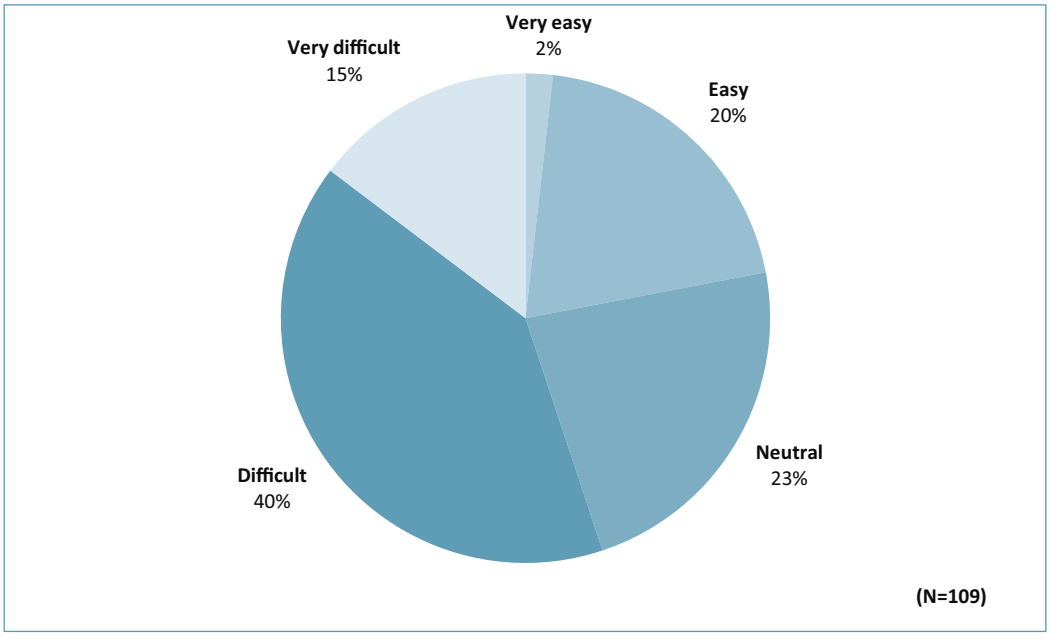


Note: Multiple responses

3.4.4. Poor Utilisation of Returnee Migrants' Skills after Return

The findings from this study show that the skills migrant workers learnt during their stay in the CoDs have not helped them find employment opportunities in Nepal after their return. Only 9.2 per cent of the migrant workers reported the utility of skills learned abroad in navi-

Figure 25 : Ease of opening business/finding employment in Nepal



gating the Nepali labour market and finding employment in the country. The irrelevancy of the skills learned abroad in the Nepali labour market and the unavailability of jobs in Nepal that are similar to the jobs held in the CoDs are the primary reasons for the reported incompatibility of the skills learnt abroad by migrant workers (Table 6).

However, the challenges faced by women returnees is slightly different as 23.1 per cent of them reported the lack of information about the labour market of Nepal as the reason for not being able to utilise their skills in the country, along with the irrelevancy of skills learned abroad—particularly from domestic and care work. There are a host of barriers for women to work in Nepal, particularly in the rural areas, and this has been reflected in the survey. Even highly skilled women workers are unable to utilise their skill-set in the Nepali labour market due to societal barriers. 'The work that I did was taking care of children, cooking, cleaning etc. What skill can be learned through domestic work? If I had gone to a company, I might have learnt some skills. The works that I have done abroad has not helped me find job in Nepal', said a female migrant worker on the irrelevancy of the skills learned abroad.

The existing laws and policies in Nepal such as the Constitution of Nepal 2015, the Fifteenth Periodic Plan, MoLESS's five-year strategic plan and the Reintegration Directive mention the utilisation of skills, expertise and remittances of migrant workers in Nepal. However, these legal and policy instruments do not consider the circumstances of return and the needs of migrant workers. Migrant workers who suffered from abusive and fraudulent recruitment processes, those carrying a high debt burden and those who have had truncated migration experiences due to distresses faced in the CoD cannot be expected to gain skills or save from their migration episode. Almost 20 per cent of RMWs reported that they did

Table 5: Reason for inability to utilise skills learned abroad

	Men	Women	Total
Lack of Capital	3.5	7.7	4.0
The skills I learnt abroad are not relevant to the labour market in Nepal	37.2	7.7	33.3
Lack of information about labour market in Nepal	4.7	15.4	6.1
Inability to access loans	1.2	0.0	1.0
Technological differences	11.6	7.7	11.1
Same skills level garners poor salary	5.8	0.0	5.1
Same job unavailable in Nepali labour market/Local market	23.3	0.0	20.2
Because I want to switch sector	0.0	7.7	1.0
Because I am unwilling to do the same job in Nepal	3.5	0.0	3.0
Care work at home	1.2	15.4	3.0
Failed migration (e.g., did not do any work after arriving in destination)	16.3	23.1	17.2
Did not learn any skills from the job	14.0	30.8	16.2
Other	11.6	7.7	11.1
Total %	**133.7**	**123.1**	**132.3**
Total number	**86**	**13**	**99**

not acquire any skills due to 'failed' migration, particularly because they were deceived by recruitment agencies or agents and were stranded in the destination country without a job. Likewise, although the Reintegration directive acknowledges the need of the modernisation of traditionally operated occupations, a diverse plan to implement the same is still missing. Interviews with RMWs in this study also show that returnees have not been able to utilise the skills they have learned abroad because of the differences in technology, working modality and safety measures adopted in countries of destination and in Nepal. In this regard, a returnee migrant worker said,

> 'I have experience of scaffolding work abroad, so I went to learn more about the same work here in Nepal, but I saw people doing that work without any safety gear. One has to work hanging in a building that is being constructed without any safety measures unlike the practice abroad. So, I didn't do it thinking it would be dangerous for me'.

3.4.5. Lack of Information and Poor Governance Hinders Access to Government Programmes

Not only the programmes themselves, but access to information about the plans, programmes and policies in the country of origin is also critical in terms of shaping percep-

Table 6: Awareness of financial schemes

	Male	Female	Total
Subsidised loan (low interest loan programme)	19.8	0.0	17.4
Prime Minister Employment Programme	28.1	7.7	25.7
Chief Minister Employment Programme	2.1	0.0	1.8
Skill training and vocational training	22.9	15.4	22.0
Cash grant	6.3	7.7	6.4
I am not aware about any such schemes	55.2	84.6	58.7
Total %	**134.4**	**115.4**	**132.1**
Total number	**96**	**13**	**109**

Note: Multiple responses.

tion and decision about staying back. However, 58.7 per cent of the respondents reported a lack of knowledge of financial schemes run by the government (Table 6). This share is much higher for women returnees at 84.6 per cent, corroborating the earlier finding that the lack of information is a major hindrance for women workers in the Nepali labour market. The Prime Minister Employment Programme (PMEP), run by the government for all unemployed citizens, is the most known with 25.7 per cent of the respondents recognising the scheme. Besides this, 22 per cent knew about skills and vocational trainings and 17.4 per cent had knowledge about subsidised loan schemes. However, only 13.3 per cent—that had heard about the different schemes—have obtained benefits from the schemes, with no representation of women returnees at all. While the government

Table 7: Barriers in Accessing Government Schemes

	Male	Female	Total
Lack of information about the scheme or incentives	68.8	84.6	70.6
Limited capacity/seats	24.0	0.0	21.1
Long and cumbersome process to access the schemes	4.2	7.7	4.6
Inadequate knowledge on application process	11.5	15.4	11.9
Only accessible to those who are related, have connection or power	25.0	7.7	22.9
Others	10.4	7.7	10.1
Total %	**143.8**	**123.1**	**141.3**
Total number	**96**	**13**	**109**

Note: Multiple responses.

has initiated programmes like the PMEP to help unemployed youth including returnee migrants, structural barriers such as the requirement to acquire labour approval from the government prior to migration in order to be eligible for certain programmes and schemes creates obstacles for returnee migrants who migrated via irregular channels. This is illus-

trated by what one male returnee migrant worker said:

> 'A brother from Lumle, working in Foreign Employment Board came here and asked about my whereabouts and told me that I cannot be helped as I went there on a visit visa'.

As per the Reintegration guideline, RMWs will be provided grants and subsidised entrepreneurial loans to promote enterprise development. However, as the findings from this study shows, returnee migrants face various barriers in accessing such schemes. The major barriers in accessing the schemes were reported to be the lack of information on the schemes among migrant workers (70.6 per cent) and limited seats (21.1 per cent).

The Constitution of Nepal mandates equal and easy access of the people to the services and facilities delivered by the state with public administration being fair, transparent, free from corruption, accountable and participatory.[27] However, the findings from this study show migrant workers lack of trust in the government as a service provider which can have a negative impact on the confidence of RMWs in accessing government programmes. Many of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with problems in accessing these programmes and the lack of transparency and accountability. Many of the respondents do not believe they will get any kind of benefit from these programmes and many others have not shown any keen interest in collecting information about these programmes. As a returnee migrant worker said regarding the potential to benefit from such government programmes: 'I have filled out the form for the Prime Minister Employment Programme three times but have not been listed as a beneficiary. People who worked under it the previous year are the only ones listed. The ward chairperson includes his own people only'. Another returnee mentioned,

> 'In my experience, such programmes and provisions are for those only who have access and political connection. The local government provides agriculture grants, but it is distributed to people who are close to those in authority. Even a person who rears a single buffalo gets a grant from the local government if he has connections but those without connections do not get such grants even though they run a proper commercial farming/business. Such programmes are already over by the time we are informed'.

Similarly, another returnee migrant said regarding accessibility to reintegration programmes',

> 'There must have been provisions for training. But we are of no concern to the municipality or the ward. Once I went to the municipality and asked about such

27 Constitution of Nepal 2015, article. 51(b).

> training, they told me there is nothing as such at the moment. We were told we would be called if anything came up. But so far, I have not received any calls either. I live a little farther away from Ward and Municipal centre and have no constant access. I just know about PM Self-employment (programme). But have never received an opportunity to work in this scheme. They recruit the people they know'.

3.5. Social and Psychosocial Reintegration

The post-return acknowledgement and acceptance of migrant workers by family, peers and broader communities is relatively overlooked but an essential condition for the successful reintegration of migrant workers.[28] There can be significant changes in familial and community dynamics during the migration episodes of the migrant workers, and these changes may mean difficulties with adjustment for the migrant workers after returning.[29] The respondents corroborated this, with 40.4 per cent reporting that state-induced development had transpired in their communities during their migration episodes. Migration-induced changes was also cited by a significant number of respondents: 23.9 per cent claimed they had only a few friends left in the community due to large-scale migration. Nevertheless, on an encouraging note, 21.1 per cent said significant migration-induced development had transpired in their communities. However, on the other hand, 39.4 per cent of the respondents also said things had not changed at all. A significant

Table 8: Perception of how things changed in the community after migration

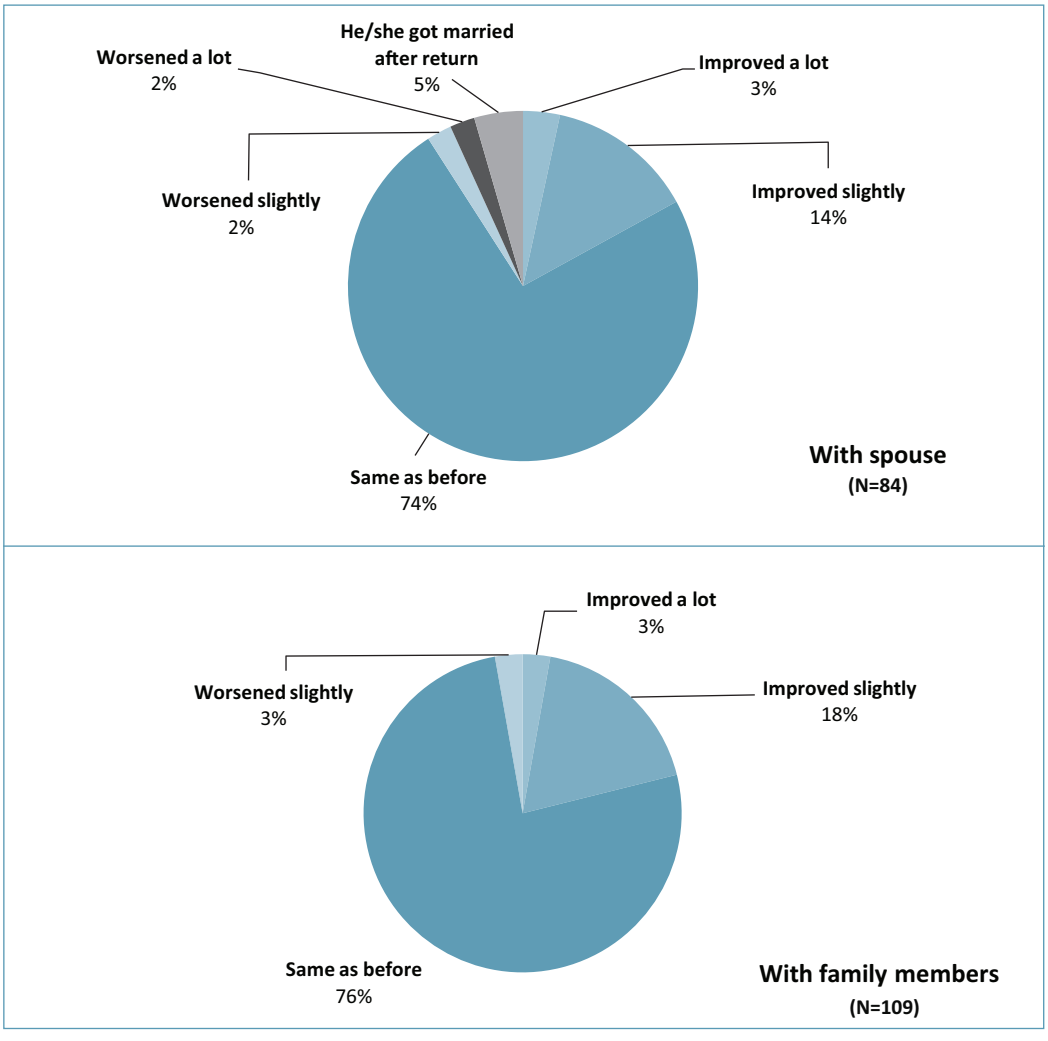
	Male	Female	Total
Loss of social network	3.1	7.7	3.7
Migration-induced development	24	0.0	21.1
State-induced development	44.8	7.7	40.4
Few friends left due to excessive migration	29.2	0.0	25.7
Loss of communitarian values	1.0	0.0	0.9
Feeling of exclusion due to long time abroad or behaviour of other community members	5.2	7.7	5.5
Loss of belonging to the community	5.2	15.4	6.4
Things have not changed at all	35.4	69.2	39.4
Others	10.4	7.7	10.1
Total %	**158.3**	**115.4**	**153.2**
Total number	**96**	**13**	**109**

Note: Multiple responses

28 IOM, *Reintegration Handbook: Practical Guidance on the Design, Implementation and Monitoring of Reintegration Assistance* (Geneva: IOM, 2019).

29 Kuschminder, 'Reintegration Strategies: Conceptualizing How Return Migrants Reintegrate'.

Figure 26: Relationship with spouse and other family members after return



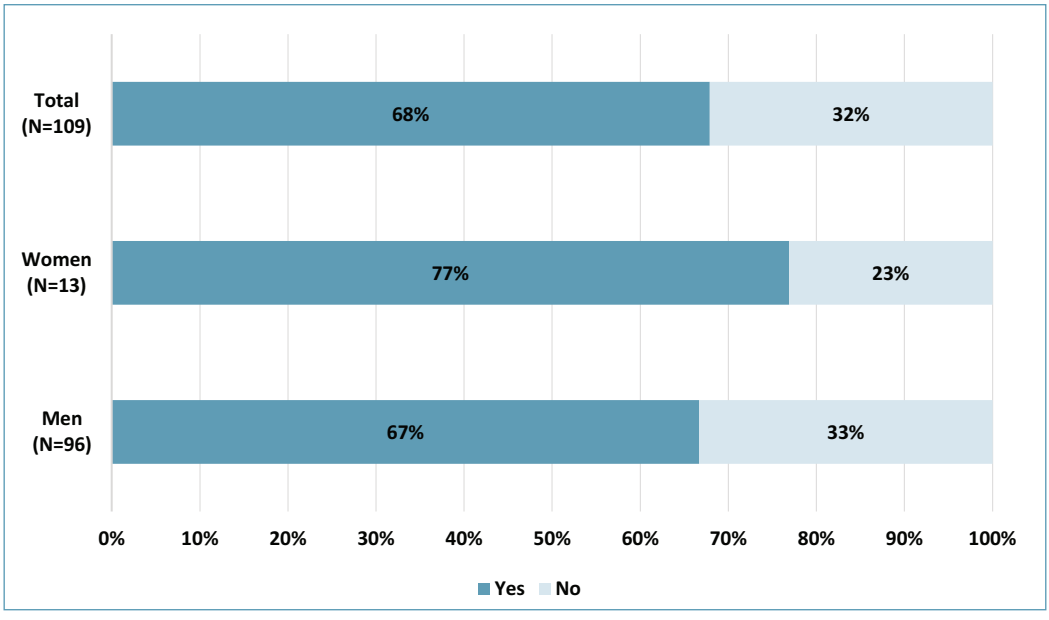
number of the RMWs had truncated and failed migration episodes which can lead to marginalisation by the community after return hindering smooth reintegration into society. Other changes cited by the respondents were mostly negative: 5.5 per cent said they felt a loss of belonging to the community, 4.6 per cent felt excluded due to the length of the abroad stay or the poor behaviour of the community members and 3.7 per cent cited a loss of social network.

Migrant workers reported a smooth reinclusion and reintegration at the familial level. Three-fourths of the migrant workers said their relationship with their spouse had been the same as before, and 17.9 per cent reported an improvement—out of which 3.6 per cent said the relationship had improved a lot. Only two migrant workers each said their relationship with their spouse had either worsened slightly or worsened a lot. A similar

theme is echoed when it comes to migrant workers and their relationships with their families after return: 76.1 per cent said the relationship was the same as before with 21.1 per cent reporting an improved relationship. Thus, our study broadly suggests that the reintegration of migrant workers in their families seems to have gone fairly well despite their negative migration experience at large.

At the community level, however, migrant workers faced some problems with reinclusion and reintegration. A significant 32.1 per cent reported their community members had not been welcoming (acknowledging) after their return (Figure 27). As for reaction to the migration episodes of the migrant workers, 62.4 per cent said they received positive responses from their families and communities. Although only 10.1 per cent of the migrant workers reported receiving a negative reaction on their migration

Figure 27: Welcomed by the community after return

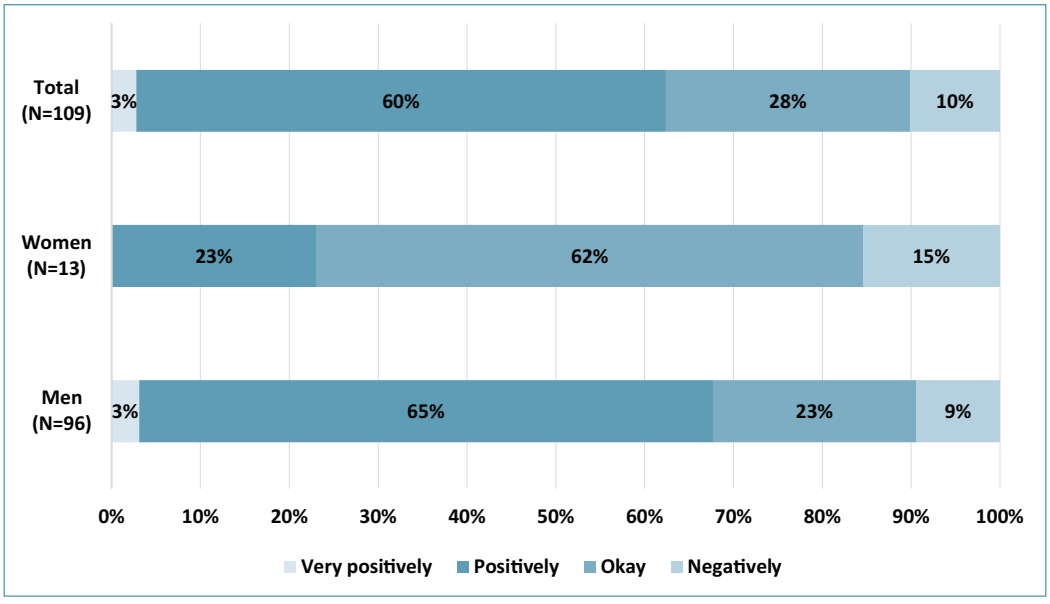


episode, one-fourth reported they received an 'okay' response, possibly showing the ambivalence of the respective families and communities. The 'okay' responses were received heavily by women migrant workers in particular (Figure 28). Despite the increase in the number of female migrant workers, female labour migration is still a stigmatised concept in many parts of Nepal,[30] exacerbating challenges for the social reintegration of female migrant workers. This is observed in the case of a female returnee who faced violence and abuse from her husband after returning due to the stigma associated with female migration. She said,

30 Giovanna Gioli, Amina Maharjan and Manju Gurung, *Neither Heroines nor Victims: Women Migrant Workers and the Changing Family and Community Relations in Nepal* (New York: UN Women, 2017).

'My husband used to treat me badly before migration as well, he used to beat me, abuse me verbally. He is an alcoholic so I migrated to support the family financially. After I returned, my relationship with him worsened. He tortures me mentally, accuses me of staying with Muslims in Kuwait and accuses me of engaging in illicit relationships'.

Figure 28: Reaction of family and community to migration episode



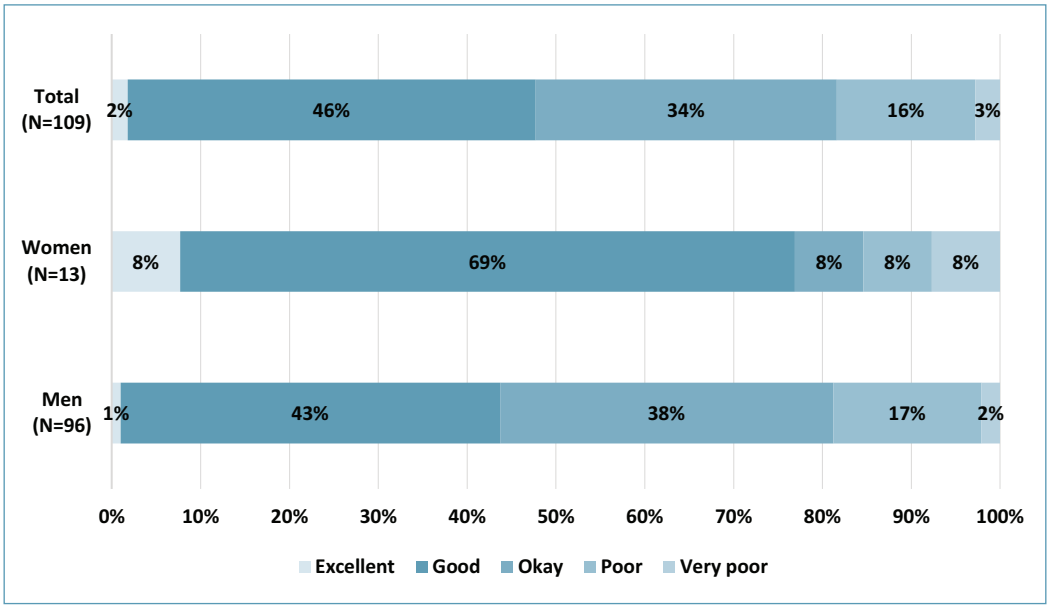
The association of female migration with sex work, prostitution and the portrayal of women migrant workers as victims of sexual violence has been illustrated by previous studies as well.[31] As such, it has been found that many Nepali women migrant workers refrain from revealing their migration journeys for fear of stigmatisation in the society.

The reported mental health of the respondents, despite their poor migration experiences and difficulties faced after return, however, seems to be relatively good. Almost half of the migrant workers reported that their mental health was good with a further 1.8 per cent claiming it was excellent. On the other hand, poor and very poor mental health conditions were reported by relatively lower numbers—15.6 per cent and 2.8 per cent respectively. Again, a sense of ambivalence is reflected in the responses of many migrant workers with 33.9 per cent answering their mental health was 'okay'.. However, it must be noted that determining the awareness of migrant workers regarding the concept of mental health is beyond the scope of this research.

31 Gioli, Maharjan and Gurung, *Neither Heroines nor Victims.*

The awareness of various psychosocial programmes implemented by governmental or non-governmental organisations is very low among the migrant workers surveyed. A large majority, 83.5 per cent, reported that they did not know about such programmes at all (Figure 30). Only 6.4 per cent of the respondents knew about any such programmes, but none of them had participated yet. Also, 10.1 per cent did not know about the programmes,

Figure 29: Mental health after return



4.6 per cent said they wanted to participate in such programmes while 5.5 per cent said they had no interest in participating in such programmes. Interviews with RMWs showed that for those with 'failed' migration experiences or who returned in distress, returning home has lessened their stress or that they felt a sense of relief when they returned to their home country. In this regard, a female returnee migrant worker said,

> 'While I was in Kuwait, I was in a lot of stress due to my boss's behaviour. I used to have a constant fear about what might happen next. I couldn't sleep. After coming back to Nepal, I feel relieved'.

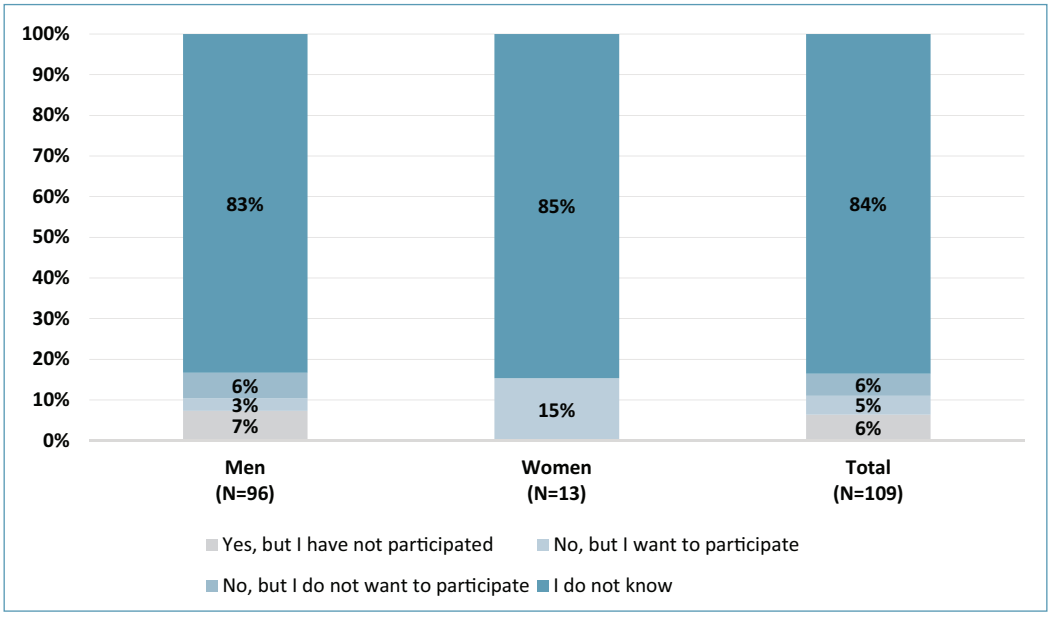
Another returnee said,

> 'There were many people in the jail. It was crowded, the light used to be on all night and I couldn't sleep. I used to worry about my family. As compared to abroad, I am getting better after being able to stay with my family in Nepal. I want to consult a mental health doctor once and tell them about all my problems'.

3.6. Returnee Migrant Workers Remigrate with More Indebtedness

As discussed above, RMWs face various challenges and barriers in their economic re-integration at home. Consequently, many migrant workers decide to re-migrate[32] to the same destination or employer, or to a new location and occupation.[33] Among the RMWs interviewed for this study, 44 per cent said that they are planning to migrate again. In the case of male returnees, 45 per cent had plans to remigrate while 38 per cent of the females said the same.

Figure 30: Awareness of migrant workers on psychosocial programmes

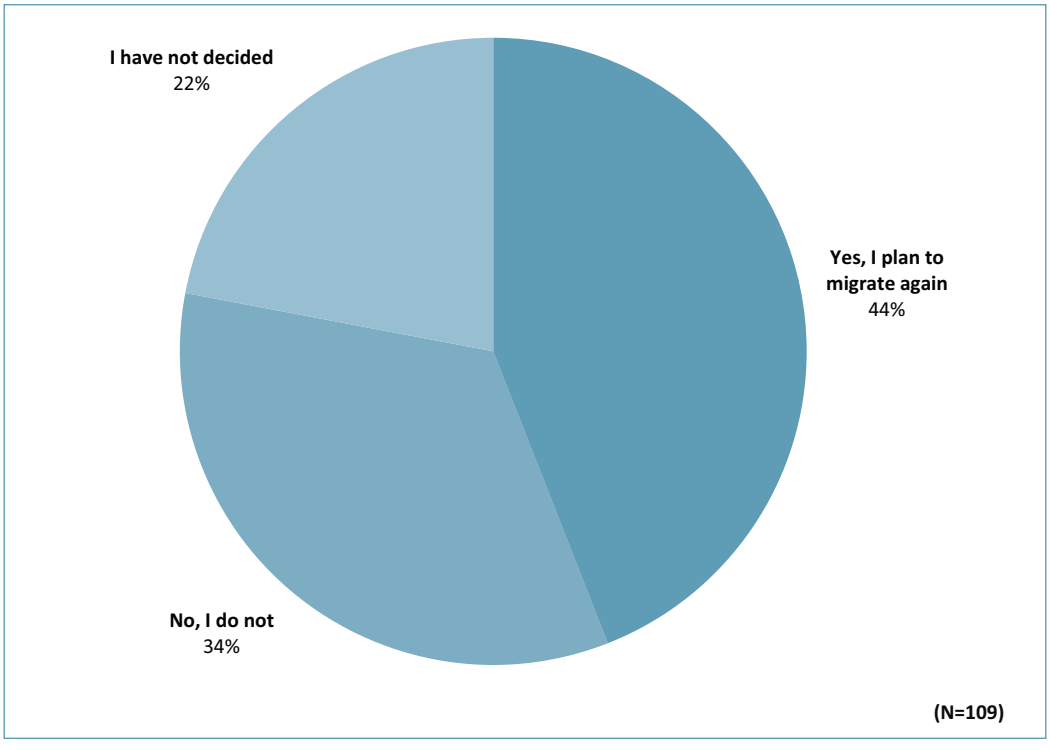


Various interrelated factors drive the individual to remigrate either to the same or different CoD. For instance, the failure of returnees to reintegrate in the local labour market, insufficient household income to sustain their household expenses and business

32 Re-migration in this study is defined as the migration of an individual again after their return.

33 Sadikshya Bhattarai, Jeevan Baniya and Dogendra Tumsa, *Impact of COVID-19 on Nepali Migrant Workers: A Case Study of Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Malaysia* (Kathmandu: CESLAM and PNCC, 2022), https://www.ceslam.org/our-publications/impact-of-covid-19-on-nepali-migrant-workers-a-case-study-of-migrant-workers-in-saudi-arabia-the-uae-qatar-and-malaysia; Sadikshya Bhattarai, Jeevan Baniya, Dogendra Tumsa and Nilima Rai, *Return, Wage Theft and Access to Justice of Nepali Migrant Workers During the COVID-19* (Kathmandu: CESLAM/SARTUC/ITUC_NAC, 2022), https://www.ceslam.org/our-publications/return-wage-theft-and-access-to-justice-of-nepali-migrant-workers-during-covid-19; IOM, *Mapping of Reintegration Services in Nepal* (Kathmandu: IOM, 2022); IOM and Nepal Institute of Development Studies (NIDS), *Status of Nepali Migrant Workers in Relation to COVID-19* (Kathmandu: IOM, 2020).

Figure 31 : Returnee migrant workers' plans to remigrate



failures, among others, drive migrant workers to migrate again. More than half of the RMWs cited the lack of opportunities as their reason for remigration. In general, income insufficiency in the migrants' household pushed them out of Nepal and relatively higher income opportunities pulled them to the CoDs. For migrant workers whose migration episode has been a failure, they also choose to remigrate to be able to pay back the previous loans they have incurred. As discussed above, due to wage differences in Nepal and abroad for the same job in the same sector, RMWs are reluctant to work in Nepal and instead prefer to migrate abroad.

The inability to find employment in Nepal and the decision to remigrate is also reinforced by other micro-factors such as education qualification and financial situation at home.

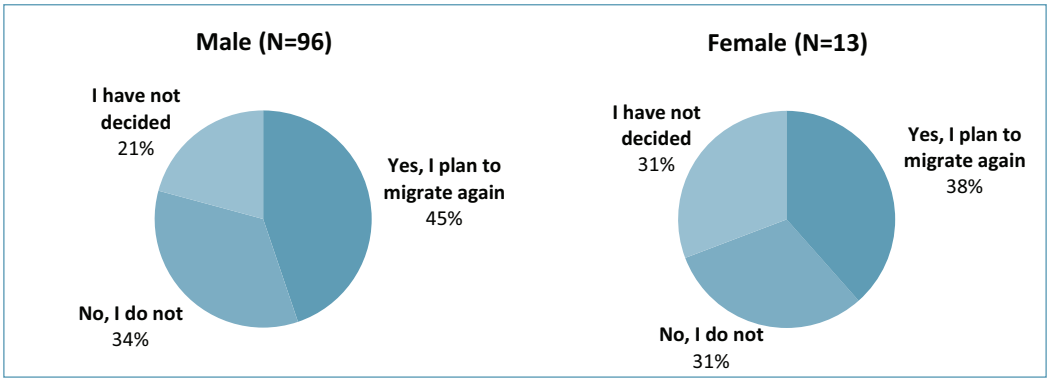
This is explained in the following quote from a returnee migrant worker:

> 'It has only been 20 days since I came back. I am not literate and cannot find a job here. The little that I earned abroad was spent on family expenditure. I do not have any savings to start a business. I have already been to India once, where I worked as a domestic helper. So, I am thinking of going to India again. My brother and sister-in-law are there. I will stay there and find a job'.

Another returnee migrant worker added:

> 'It is hard to find a job in Nepal. The main thing is, there is a problem with finance. Even if I wanted to buy a vehicle (to work as a driver), I do not have money. If I do commercial farming, the product rate is low so it will not even compensate for the investment. So, is it okay to stay in Nepal? No, right? That is why people need to go abroad. Otherwise who wouldn't wish to stay in their own country?'.

Figure 32: Returnee migrant workers' plans to remigrate (by gender)



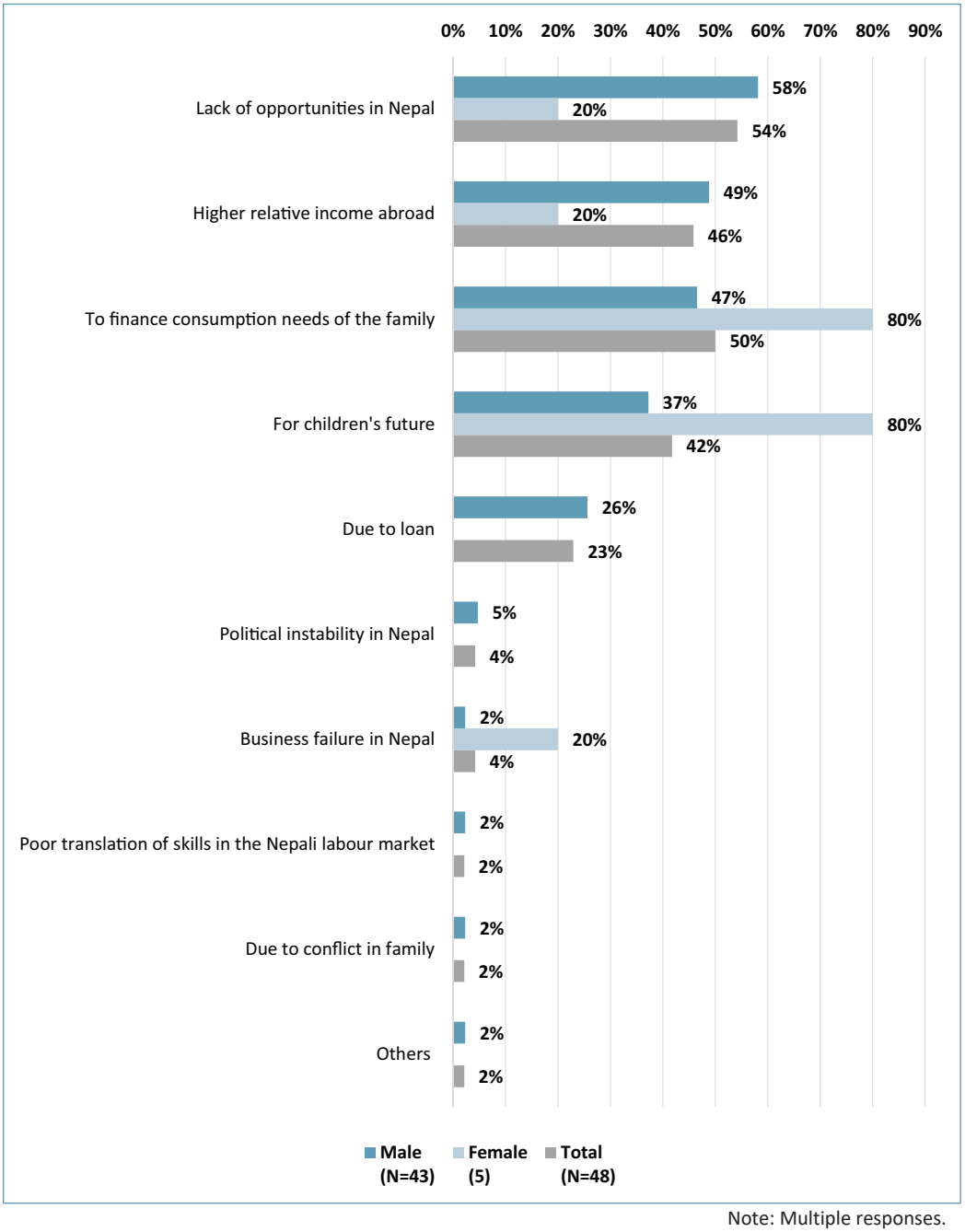
Similarly, a migrant who returned from the UAE stated that he is in the process of remigrating because he does not want to work in Nepal because he is a Muslim which he believes might not be practicable in Nepal. He said,

> 'I have worked as a barbecue chef expert in the UAE so I do not have any interest in doing any other work. Here the butcher work of Muslims and non-Muslims don't match. We don't touch and eat the meat butchered by others. That is why I myself don't want to work in Nepal'.

Several research participants also mentioned income (or employment) vulnerability and investment insecurity as the major cause for their plan to remigrate. For instance, returnees who are engaged in subsistence (or commercial) agriculture are wary of the risk of not getting seeds and fertilisers in due time, indicating the precariousness of doing agricultural work in Nepal. Similarly, returnees who are engaged in daily wage work cited that they do not have full-time employment opportunities in their sector. One of the returnees quoted:

> 'After coming to Nepal, I started working in the loading and unloading of goods on to vehicles. I did this work for some five to six months—some three-four days a week. I had difficulty getting full-time work on a weekly basis. So, I am considering re-migrating abroad'.

Figure 33 : Returnee migrant workers by reason for re-migration and gender



Note: Multiple responses.

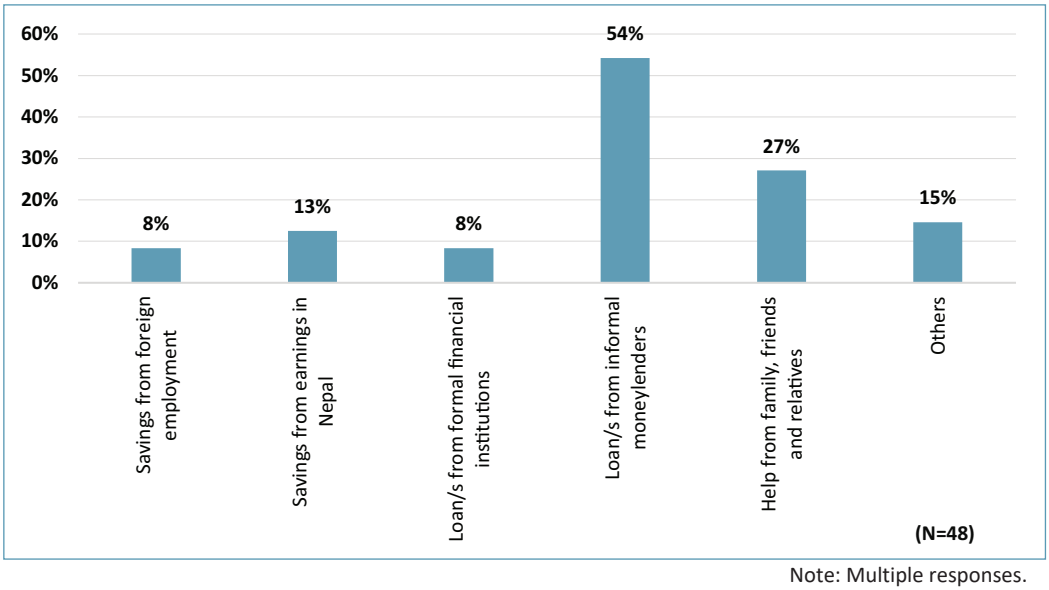
It is important to note that while the migrant workers planned to use multiple sources to finance their migration, only a small proportion planned to use their savings either from their employment abroad or in Nepal after return.

Equally striking is the finding that among the migrants who planned to remigrate, almost 92 per cent (n=44) had taken loans to finance their previous migration episode. Of these 44 returnees, 45 per cent had still not paid back the loans incurred. Further, despite not having paid back their previous loans, some returnee migrants were planning to take further loans to finance their remigration.

For RMWs, having a stable employment opportunity and higher minimum wage in Nepal were reported as the major factors that could lead them to decide not to re-migrate. It is also noteworthy that easier access to capital and loan, and low interest rates were also reported as important parameters that could prompt them to decide not to re-migrate. As a RMW explained,

> 'If there were a regular job with a salary above NPR 15,000 (ca. USD 112) and availability of capital (punji) to start a business, I would stay in Nepal'.

Figure 34 : Source of financing re-migration



Note: Multiple responses.

Figure 35: Plans of re-migration and loans incurred in previous migration episode

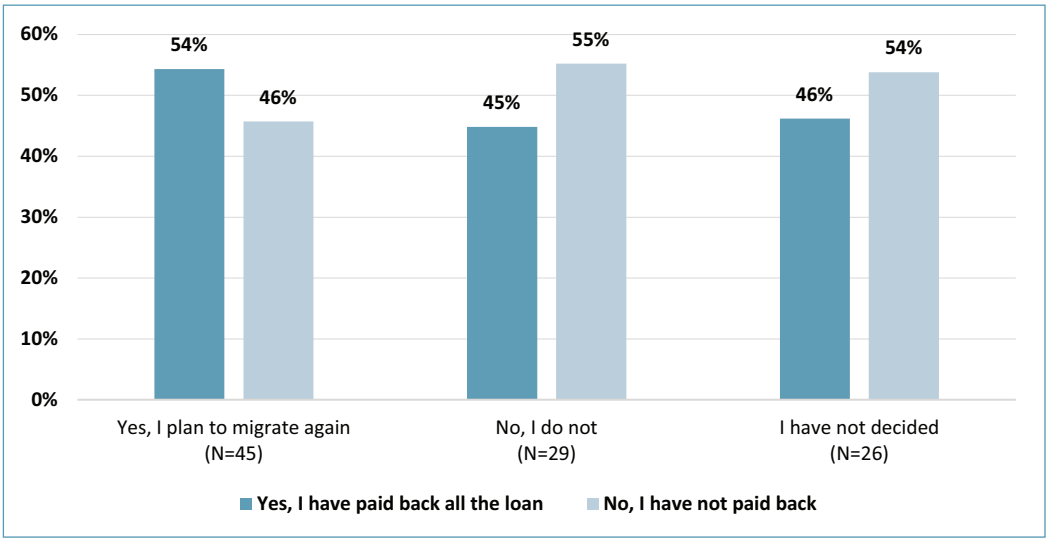


Figure 36 : Source of financing re-migration and loans incurred in previous migration episode

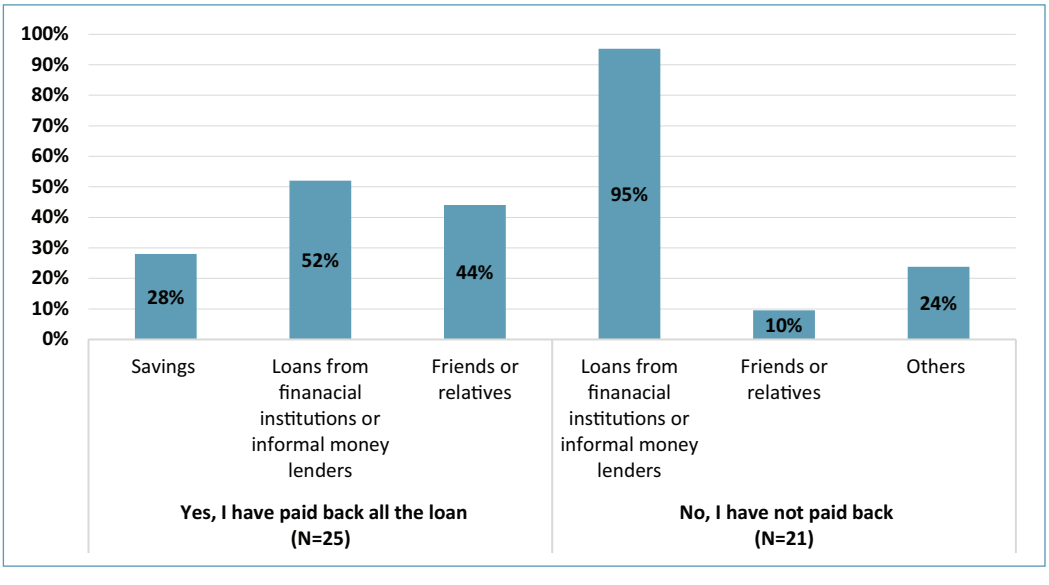
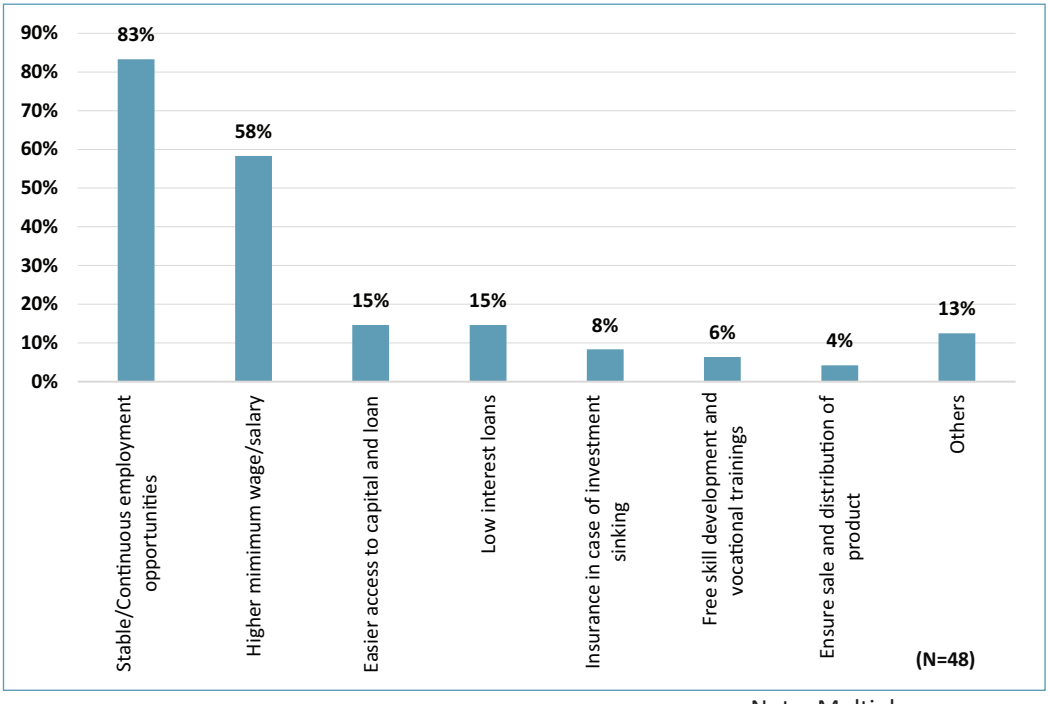


Figure 37: Factors that can influence returnee migrant workers' decision to not re-migrate



Note: Multiple responses.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The increment in the number of temporary migrant workers means return and reintegration is of vital importance in Nepal's labour migration regime. However, until 2022, there was a lack of legal or policy framework on reintegration in Nepal. The introduction of the directive on reintegration in 2022 has provided a policy framework for the social and economic reintegration of RMWs. However, moving forward, understanding the key barriers that hinder the successful reintegration of Nepali migrant workers will be essential for effective implementation of policy and programmes on reintegration. As reflected by this study, economic reinclusion, which is vital given the financial predicament faced by many migrant workers because of the failed migration experiences, is particularly difficult. A large proportion of the migrant workers were involved in subsistence agriculture and other low-return employment, with only a small percentage reporting the utility of skills learned abroad after their return to Nepal. Such a failure in economic reintegration meant almost half of the RMWs have decided to remigrate due to problems like lack of opportunities and the need to finance family consumption. The complete lack of knowledge of reintegration measures being run by the government seems to be a major barrier for returnees: a majority of the respondents reported lack of information on ongoing schemes and incentives.

Based on the findings and discussion, the following recommendations have been put forth:

Returnee Migrant-centric Policies and Programmes

- The policies and programmes related to labour migration, reintegration and employment such as the Foreign Employment Act, the Foreign Employment Rules, the Foreign Employment Policy, the National Employment Policy, the Prime Minister Employment Programme (PMEP), the Micro-Enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) and the National Youth Action Plan should prioritise returnee migrants who had failed migration experiences and their families, thus catering to the neediest. In particular, the neediest left behind family members of migrant workers should also be considered eligible to benefit from the 100 days of employment programme.
- A high proportion of migrant workers who faced distress early in their migration stints and those who have had failed migration experiences reported worsened financial situations after return. They were unable to recoup their investment for the migration journey resulting in a higher debt burden, financial debilitation, and possible issues with social reintegration. Such migrant workers should be prioritised in the reintegration directive and other programmes irrespective of their legal status at the time of migration.

- Access to and the process of application for obtaining concessional loans should be simplified so that returnee migrants can derive benefit from them. The provision of the Integrated Guideline for Interest Subsidy to Concessional Loan, 2075 which requires returnees to have worked for at least six months in the CoD to be eligible for a subsidised loan should be scrapped as it excludes needy and vulnerable returnees who have returned before the arbitrary 6-month mark after facing distress early in their migration stints.
- The findings evidence that structural deficiencies in the economy have meant that migration drivers have remained rife, prompting the remigration of migrant workers. As such, reintegration programmes, including those conducted by local governments, should be designed and implemented with a view to addressing remigration drivers.

Skilling and Utilisation of Returnee Migrant Workers' Skills

- The study has highlighted a clear schism between the skills learnt by migrant workers abroad to the skills that are relevant to the Nepali labour market. Thus, because of this incompatibility, economic reinclusion of returnees has been difficult. Most respondents, after return, reported to be involved in subsistence agriculture which entails low financial gains, if any. Further, the awareness of reintegration measures seems to be extremely poor among migrant workers hindering access to the much-needed programmes. Hence, for the effective implementation of reintegration-related policies and programmes, it is paramount that the GoN invest in skilling, upskilling, re-skilling and capacity building of RMWs in line with the Nepali labour market, but also augment access to such programmes for all returnees. Concerted efforts need to be made on the part of the government and employers to link the skills and knowledge of returnee migrants with the opportunities for employment and enterprise in Nepal.
- Recently established VSTDA and its training centres should excel in designing training curriculums, effective implementation, monitoring, quality assurance, skill testing and certifications, including in alignment with National Vocational Qualifications Framework. The authority should be strengthened with human, financial and technical resources.
- Existing efforts for this could be enhanced through better management and linkage of digital systems such as the National Employment Management Information System (NEMIS) and FEIMS, in particular.
- In line with the ongoing technological advancement and changes in labour demand and supply both globally and locally, it is necessary to tailor the skills and vocational training provided to migrant workers to reflect these changes. International organisation, civil society organisations and trade unions should advocate for skilling and upskilling opportunities for returnee migrant workers in line with the changes in the labour market.
- There is a need for bilateral or multilateral skills recognition frameworks to certify

the skills acquired by migrant workers in both countries of origin and destination. The private sector, including CSOs, are crucial in advocating for such initiatives.

Information Dissemination and Awareness Raising

- Access to and knowledge of reintegration programmes being run by various governmental and non-governmental bodies is a major concern as illustrated by the study. It is necessary for the government to make all returnees eligible for reintegration programmes. Currently, the Reintegration Directive requires returnees to submit applications to the Employment Service Centre to become possible beneficiaries of reintegration programmes. However, this would be contingent on awareness of the requirement on the part of migrant workers and the need to invest of time and money in order to be able to access such reintegration programmes. The government needs to integrate the process of identifying returnee migrant workers and linking them with ongoing reintegration programmes into FEIMS so that migrant workers can benefit from programmes without undergoing any bureaucratic hassle. For this, either government officials at the airport or the migrant worker themselves should be able to mark the return of the migrant worker. Further, post-return information dissemination programmes can be used to make RMWs aware about this process.
- Increase awareness of migrant workers and their families about safe migration and the process of application for social security provisions such as the Social Security Fund (SSF) of Nepal, social security protection of PERKESO/Social Security Organisation (SOCSO) in Malaysia and the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund, etc through outreach activities, use of audio-visual information and communication materials, and social media. More specifically, migrant workers need to be sensitised about the procedural aspects associated with SSF and SOCSO so they are able to avail of all the benefits from the scheme. For example, migrant workers need to send an acknowledgement letter to SOCSO upon the receipt of the initial social security payment in order to receive continuous payments thenceforth. However, because migrant workers do not have knowledge of this procedural requirement, they can remain deprived of the benefits despite having made contributions for the same.
- Additionally, relevant officials at all tiers of government as well as organisations providing support to migrant workers need to be made aware and trained about the procedural aspects of SSF and SOCSO including other existing welfare and social security mechanisms Nepalis are eligible for in the destination countries.
- Drawing on lessons from the existing programmes of the government such as MEDPA and financial literacy programmes conducted by SaMi and KOICA EPS Section more recently, awareness and counselling on financial literacy could be provided to the general public as well as migrant workers and their families for better planning and management of their incomes. Debt management plans and counselling on debt should be integrated into financial literacy programmes. The reach of these awareness programmes could be extended through (digital) media and

other outreach activities.

- The stigmatisation of female labour migration has remained intractable in Nepali society despite the accentuation of female migration from the country. This has raised difficulties for the psychosocial reintegration of women migrant workers. To uproot such social perception, the government needs to conduct awareness raising campaigns, both at the community level and through the media (mass media and social media). The campaigns can educate people on the contribution of Nepali women migrant workers to the national economy, highlight success stories and also document the working and living conditions of women migrant workers abroad. The conflation of migration with sex work, which is prevalent in Nepal, needs to be eradicated. In this regard, civil societies and trade unions can conduct awareness raising campaigns to inform the community and migrant households.

Access to Finance

- The findings suggest that most migrant workers finance their migration through loans obtained from traditional moneylenders and other informal sources. As such, they pay debilitating interest rates which exacerbates their vulnerability before and during their migration stint abroad as well as after their return. It is paramount that the government ensures accessibility to formal loan mechanisms with fair terms for aspiring migrant workers as well as returnee migrants to reduce their debt burden. For this, the government can introduce regulations requiring individuals seeking approval for migration to submit evidence of having acquired officially sanctioned loans with a specified interest rate from government-approved lenders. In such instances, there will be the need to build partnerships with banks and other financial intermediaries with good rural penetration to provide specialised loans tailored for migrants. These loans may come with a higher interest rate but offer guarantee of debt forgiveness in cases where the individual returns in distress, thereby providing insurance for the migration. It will also be important to determine the criteria for debt forgiveness for returnees.
- The Government of Nepal has committed to reducing the cost of migration through implementation of policies such as 'free visa, free ticket' and adoption of the employer pays model in bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs). This study, however, illustrates that Nepali migrant workers continue paying high costs to migrate abroad for work. This has led to indebtedness for many migrant workers impacting the sustainable reintegration of migrant workers. Hence, it is crucial that continued efforts are made to reduce the migration cost. Effective monitoring of recruitment agencies will be important to ensure fair practices related to migration costs. In the context of federalisation, it is necessary that the responsibilities related to oversight and monitoring of recruitment agencies and other actors engaged in foreign employment business be decentralised to the provincial and local governments. For this, it will be important to amend existing laws to define the roles and responsibilities of the

three tiers of government. It is also important to strengthen the provincial and local governments' capacity to deal with labour migration issues.

- The Foreign Employment Act, 2007 allows for the use of the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund (FEWF) for conducting employment programmes for returnees. In light of this, a strategy can be developed for using the welfare fund for returnee migrant workers, especially for distressed returnees. An important aspect of the migration cycle for the origin country is the utilisation of skills and know-how gained by migrant workers abroad in the country of origin after their return. However, as showcased by the report, remigration aspirations among the returnees are extremely high, mainly due to structural problems in the economy like lack of opportunities. The aspirations carried by migrant workers, as per the study, pointed to both a desire to open up businesses as well as engage in employment after return, but respondents reported difficulty in accessing both. Thus, to utilise the know-how and capital of RMWs, the government needs to work on reducing the barriers faced by migrant workers such as long and cumbersome procedures for opening up a business in the country.

Strengthening Existing Mechanism to Support Migrant Workers

- The existing information dissemination and counselling, rescue and repatriation as well as welfare-related services provided through Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) need to be further scaled up effectively across the country, preferably at the local government level, with more resources. It is important that these services are provided through Employment Service Centres (ESCs), in line with MoLESS's Five-Year Strategic Plan 2079/80-2083/84 (2022/23-2027/28).

Role of Donors and Reintegration Service Providers

- As the findings from this study show, accumulation of debt from loans taken to fund migration and related costs is a significant challenge faced by migrants. Accumulated debt can hinder the reintegration process and drive them to remigrate. In this context, the role of donors and reintegration service providers is crucial. It is important that they make discussions on indebtedness central when formulating and implementing reintegration plan and programmes. Similarly, they can assist aspirant migrants and/or returnee migrants in developing a debt repayment and reduction strategy.
- Donors and reintegration service providers should recognise that distressed returnees are the most vulnerable population in need of more intensive support. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 3x6 approach, a crisis response programme targeting vulnerable groups, can be a good intervention for distressed returnee migrant workers. Such programmes could include provisions for debt repayment and social cohesion by encouraging community members to work with the target groups.

Furthering Knowledge on Return and Reintegration

- Statistics on RMWs and their needs need to be gathered through surveys and qualitative research and recorded and updated in FEIMS. Such information will be important in identifying (vulnerable, needy, skilled) beneficiaries as well as the barriers and challenges facing them and in informing reintegration policies and programmes. The government should conduct migration surveys periodically to incorporate different phases of migration including return and reintegration.
- Further research is needed to understand the intricate relationship between indebtedness and reintegration and circular migration. To illustrate the role of debt on reintegration of returnee migrants, it is crucial to situate returnees' debt experiences within the broader context of their migration journey and explore the causes behind people's decisions to migrate or re-migrate.
- Administrative databases of CSOs and trade unions generated while providing support and assistance to migrant workers such as the one maintained by PNCC have the potential to support evidence-based policy making, be inclusive and complement existing data collected by different government agencies such as the National Statistics Office and the Department of Foreign Employment. The government should recognise the unique opportunity provided by such administrative data and make use of the findings on patterns and trends related to the experiences of migrants and returnees in order to inform and guide future policies and programmes regarding safe migration and reintegration.
- Organisations like PNCC have rich institutional experience on providing support services to migrant workers and their families, both in the CoDs and Nepal. Hence, the government can benefit by tapping into their knowledge and experience. Regular engagement and consultation between the government and institutions working for and with migrant workers, returnees and their families can help improve migration governance related policies and practices.

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Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC) is a non-profit, non-political, non-governmental social organization dedicated to safeguarding and advancing the rights of Nepali migrant workers. It was founded in 2009 by returnee migrant workers with the mission of offering all possible support to migrant workers in hardship, particularly in the Gulf countries and Malaysia.

PNCC began its mission by establishing Migration Information Centers in Jhapa and Chitwan, partnering with the International Organization for Migration Nepal in 2011. Later, in 2012, we extended these services to seven more districts, including Jhapa, Mahottari, Makwanpur, Chitwan, Palpa, Rukum, and Kanchanpur, offering counseling and emergency support.

We opened an outreach office in Qatar in 2012 to better serve these workers, expanding to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Malaysia, and the United Arab Emirates. Further, PNCC partnered with diaspora organisations to safeguard migrant workers and their families and to promote shared interests. This extension empowered PNCC to address worker complaints through external coordinators, partnering with the Nepali embassy and other stakeholders.

PNCC has provided support to around 30,000 distressed Nepali migrant workers. This humanitarian support has propelled PNCC to the forefront of the national and international arena, and has solidified its status as one of the most trusted and dedicated organisations for Nepali migrant workers.

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