Pardesi.org.np – A digital hub for Nepali migrants

CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Key to MIDEQ's work on digital technologies and inequalities is working with migrants directly to understand how they use technology and collaborating with them to create digital interventions that could reduce inequalities. Through their research, the team, UNESCO Chair in ICT4D, found that while Nepali migrants and their families often use digital technologies, they rarely use the technology that is designed specifically for them. In addition, a widespread lack of digital literacy among migrants and family members constrains their ability to make safe and informed use of digital technology.

Rather than designing another app, the team brought together migrants, migrant organisations and tech companies to co-design and implement interventions that they believed could help improve the lives of Nepali migrants. Through this collaboration, two interventions emerged. One was to develop resources on the importance of safe, wise and secure use of digital tech that can be used by migrant organisations and government offices to train migrants. The other focused on creating an online platform, now known as *Pardesi.org.np*. It functions as a trusted source of information, a "one stop shop" which collates migration related information in one place.

FOCUSING ON THE NEEDS OF NEPALI MIGRANTS

Conversations around *Pardesi.org.np* began in September 2022 when 20 participants gathered in Kathmandu for a sandpit and workshop session to co-create digital interventions that address the needs of Nepali migrants. Included in the meeting was returnee migrants, migrant organisations (AMKAS, PNCC, Pourakhi, NNSM and the Safer Migration project (SaMi), MIDEQ in Nepal (NISER), local media and tech organisations (AuraEd, the National Innovation Centre, Hamro Patro, Ujyalo and IME Pay).

The session aimed to generate ideas on potential digital interventions while also creating connections between migrant organisations and local tech companies. The workshop was supported by international partners including the UNESCO Office in Nepal, ILO Nepal, IOM Nepal and the GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation. In addition, Gandaki University and the Migrant Resource Centre in Pokhara played key roles during the workshops held in Pokhara. Subsequent co-design workshops were organised in 2023 to expand upon the development of the chosen interventions.

SANDPIT WORKSHOP IN

Photo via UNESCO ICT4D

As a result of the workshops, migrant and tech organisations are now working together on a common agenda related to the safe, wise and secure use of digital technologies by migrants. Participants such as Aayush Pradhananga from AuraEd, a youth-led company, shared excitement about working with new organisations during a video interview.

Others noted the environment created during the workshops:

"The discussion was interactive. I really liked that. Everybody present here is working towards the betterment of migrants; they are working towards the safe and secure migrant, which is great."

The workshops highlighted the importance of having a trusted portal which is easily accessible to migrants and their families. While many Nepalis move abroad for employment, most are not familiar with the migration process. Thus, migrants are often taken advantage of, taking on a large amount of debt or purchase the incorrect employment document. When Nepali migrants arrive in their destination country, many struggle to navigate the new financial, cultural and employment laws. Part of this is due to a lack of prior information about foreign employment, the destination country and other migration related issues.

Pardesi.org.np is designed as a portal where migrants can find accurate and up to date information on migration related topics. The platform is free, providing access to existing resources from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, its subordinate bodies, national and international NGOs, trade unions and civil society organisations.

LAUNCH OF PARDESI.ORG.NP

In December 2023, *Pardesi.org.np* was launched in Kathmandu. 80 participants attended, representing government, civil society, private sector, international organisations and digital tech students. The team presented *Pardesi.org.np* as well

as the digital technology training resources that can be used to train migrants on safe, wise and secure use of digital tech. These training resources are available in Nepali, Maithili, Bjohpouri, Tharu, Tamang and Nepal Bhasa (Newar), as well as English. A guidance document to support the training is also available.

The interventions were also launched in Pokhara, at an event attended by 26 participants from local government, civil society, the private sector, media and digital tech students. These launch events in Nepal were covered by a range of local media outlets including:

- Desh Paradesh
- Kalika Khabar
- CIN Khabar
- Ratopati
- Nagarki News
- enaturenews
- myRepública
- newsbanknepal
- Business & Human Rights Resource Centre

LAUNCH IN KATHMANDU

Photo via UNESCO ICT4D

In support of the launch, returnee migrants and others working for migrant organisations shared their views on why *Pardesi.org.np* is an important tool for future migrants. Amira Subba from AMKAS, an NGO for returnee women migrant workers, noted that *Pardesi.org.np* can help make the migration process more systematic, dignified and organised for migrants.

HITTING THE AIRWAVES

Together with partners working in Nepal, the team subsequently collaborated with the Association of Community Broadcaster Nepal (ACORAB) and the Community Information Networks (CIN) to spread the word about *Pardesi.org.np*, as well as safe use of digital tech by migrants and their families. Together ACORAB and CIN developed Public Service Announcements (PSAs) about MIDEQ's materials to be shared across 300+ community radio stations that reach 6.7 million listeners. The PSAs were also live streamed via Facebook and YouTube. Views from the livestreams range from 2,800 to 5,700 views. In total, four PSAs were created. Further details on the individual views for each PSA can be found on MIDEQ's website.

ACORAB and CIN also broadcast two 30-minute segments which discussed the importance of safe use of digital technologies and the role of *Pardesi.org.np* as a portal to access information. The segments were part of *Sajha Nepal,* a CIN programme live streamed on Facebook. Featured in one of the segments was Mr. Kabiraj Upreti from the Department of Labour and Occupational Safety discussing the importance of digital technologies to support safe migration. The second segment featured Swarna Kumar Jha, the coordinator of the National Network Nepal and Sindhu Aryal, Secretary General of Pourakhi Nepal. Featured in this segment were migrant workers sharing their experiences while employed abroad.

MOVING FORWARD

Since December 2023, *Pardesi.org.np* has been accessed by 1,400 unique users. The development of *Pardesi.org.np* has led to a broader awareness of the importance of digital technology, in particular, having access to information to facilitate safe migration. It has also led to further engagement with international organisations such as IOM Nepal and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process particularly with the ITU. The learning materials developed in Nepal have also been adapted and used in South Africa and Brazil.

PARTNERS IN NEPAL

Photo via UNESCO ICT4D

Both migrant organisations and the tech companies involved in the interventions are committed to updating the portal with new, relevant information to support migrants as they begin their migration journey. Further work is being planned to continue the dissemination of the portal and training resources, most notably with Radio Nepal.

The work from these Impact Interventions in Nepal has also facilitated new partnerships between migrant organisations and tech companies. These connections form the foundation for furthering advocacy on safe, wise and secure use of technology beyond MIDEQ's intervention.

RELATED CONTENT

The digital technologies work with Nepali migrant communities and tech companies was part of the team's Impact Intervention. Further details and outputs from their work in Nepal are listed below. Many of these links also contain videos

from interviews with returnee migrants, tech companies and migrant organisations discussing topics such as – experiences using digital tech abroad, collaborations through the Intervention and praise for the launch and potential impact of *Pardesi.org.np.*

Publications

- Padesi (Online portal)
- A digital hub for Nepali migrants
- Working with migrants and migrant organisations in Nepal
- Use of digital technologies by Nepali migrants and their families
- Use of digital technologies by Nepali migrants in Malaysia
- Hitting the airways with community radio in Nepal
- Launch of MIDEQ WP9 interventions in Nepal
- Digital tech, inequality and migration
- Migration and digital tech

Cover Image

MIDEQ's digital technology team working with partners in Nepal. Photo by UNESCO Chair in ICT4D .

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