

## Nepal

### Co-Investigator

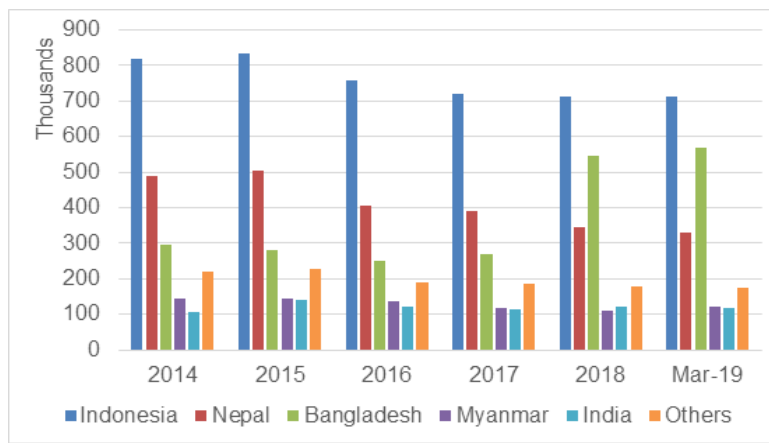
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### Research Context

Approximately 3.5 million Nepalese (14% of total population) are working abroad; primarily in Malaysia, the six countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), and India. Due to the limited employment opportunities within the country, international migration is considered as a livelihood strategy for many poor people. Most Nepalese migrants are involved in semi/unskilled labour, mainly on building sites, in factories and in domestic work.

Migration for foreign employment has become a major source of income for the country as migrant workers send around US\$4 billion home every year, comprising 28% of Nepal's gross domestic product in 2018 (World Bank, 2019). For Nepali workers, Malaysia has been the top destination for labour migration since 2008 when the government started keeping records of labour migrants. It is the second most common destination for Nepali female migrant workers. In 2019, Nepali mission in Malaysia reported around 500,000 Nepalese living in Malaysia. 4.23 % of total labour permit issued in 2018/19 were for Malaysia (IOM, 2019) and 15.72% of total female migrants went to Malaysia. Though the number has started decreasing since 2015, it still receives the highest number (24.1%) of Nepali migrants. The government of Nepal temporarily banned migration to Malaysia in 2018 due to high risks (deaths, workplace accidents), Nepali migrants faced there. Further, it was estimated that the flow would decrease after the devaluation of Malaysian currency and a government-to-government agreement between Bangladesh and Malaysia likely to displace Nepali migrants. However, bilateral talks initiated between Nepal and Malaysia is expected to increase migration from Nepal to Malaysia again.

Malaysia is a major destination and transit point for large number of migrant workers in the region. Together with Indonesia and Bangladesh, Nepal accounts for a significant share of migrant workers in Malaysia. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs of Malaysia, as at March 2019, Nepalis make up 331,724 (16.4%) of the migrant population. They are mainly employed in manufacturing, construction, agriculture (like farming, plantation, fishery, forestry) and services (public safety and security) industries.



Source: Parliament of Malaysia, 2014-2019.

Despite Malaysia being a common destination for Nepalis, we do not know what perceptions aspiring migrants hold towards Malaysia and what drives their choice of this destination. We also have less information about how Nepali workers experience employment in Malaysia, the challenges they face and the support system that are available to them and how this affects what they contribute to Malaysia, Nepal and their own families. We also have less information about how the intermediary process works for Nepalis going to Malaysia and how the policies of the two countries affect the intermediaries in Nepal and Malaysia and what impact this ultimately has on the workers and their families. This research aims to generate scientific evidence on the above gaps. It focuses on three themes: Gender inequalities, Migration perception and decision-making and the intermediary system and looks at the Nepal migration corridor as a case study.

## Work Packages

WP1: Gender inequalities and South-South migration

WP4: Migrant perceptions, knowledge and decision-making

WP5: Migration intermediaries

## Research Questions

1. What drives migration decisions and perceptions for Nepalis to go to Malaysia? (WP4)
2. How do Nepali workers experience Malaysia as a destination? How are these experiences gendered? What are the challenges that Nepalis face in Malaysia and what are the support practices? (WPs 1 and 4) What gender inequalities are inherent in the Nepal-Malaysia migration trajectory and what are their impacts on migrants and their families? (WP1)
3. How does the intermediary process in Nepal and Malaysia function for Nepali migrants in Malaysia? What are its implications for migrants and their families? How does the global, regional and local migration policy of Nepal and Malaysia impact on intermediaries and the intermediary process? What implications does it have on the migrants and the families? (WP5)

4. How do global, regional and national policies of Nepal and Malaysia impact migration perception and decision-making among male and female migrants? What implication does it have on migrants and inequality in the home country? (WPs 1 and 4)
5. What are the current legal mechanisms available to migrant workers in Nepal and Malaysia to protect their rights? What are their limitations? What more can be done? (WP8)

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