



Mid-Term Review of the Project ‘Migrant Rights and Decent Work (MiRiDeW) Phase II’

QUICK FACTS

Country: Nepal

Evaluation date: 17 June 2025

Evaluation type: Project

Evaluation timing: Mid-term

Administrative Office: ILO Country Office for Nepal (CO-Kathmandu)

Technical Office(s): ILO Technical Office(s): CO-Kathmandu (supported by Decent Work Team, New Delhi)

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DC Symbol: NPL/23/02/CHE

Donor(s) & budget: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), USD 1'148'515

Key Words: Labour migration, migrant workers' rights, human trafficking, forced labour, remittances, gender-responsive policies, safe migration, decent work, labour migration governance, bilateral agreements, capacity building social protection, fair recruitment, skills development, regional cooperation, policy frameworks, migration services, capacity building, international labour standards, sustainable economic transformation, gender equality and social inclusion, migration-related vulnerabilities.

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The “*Migrant Rights and Decent Work (MiRiDeW) Phase II*” project is a partnership of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The total budget for this project is of US\$ 1,148,515 financed by the SDC. The project has two expected outcomes: (1) The Government of Nepal strengthens its policy framework and institutional mechanisms to ensure protection of the rights of migrant workers, in particular women migrant workers; and (2) Nepali migrant workers in countries of destinations have increased access to information and quality migration services.

Present situation of the project

The project began in July 2023 and will end in June 2026. Drawing upon the lessons learned from Phase I, the MiRiDeW Project Phase II is under implementation. The project's overarching goal is to enhance the economic and social well-being of migrant workers and their families, through improved access to decent employment opportunities and protection of their human and labour rights.

Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation

The mid-term review (MTR) of the project aimed to assess the following: (i) Project accountability; (ii) Promoting organizational learning; (iii) Planning and implementation improvement; and (iv) Building knowledge. This MTR covered project interventions between July 2023 and the time of the evaluation with a full review of the following project components: (i) The Government of Nepal strengthens policies, institutions, and partnerships to protect migrant workers' rights, especially women, through improved national legislation, bilateral agreements, and active regional engagement.; and (ii) Migrant workers from Nepal have better access to information and quality services abroad, supported by well-equipped diplomatic missions and enhanced awareness of available migration services.

The gender and disability dimensions were considered as a cross-cutting concern throughout the methodology, deliverables and final report of the evaluation. The primary end users of the evaluation findings are ILO Office for Nepal and the project's donor. Secondary parties who will make use of the evaluation results include ILO's tripartite constituents, as well as national and international partners, and other key stakeholders. Furthermore, the findings of this final evaluation are destined for ILO's management, overseeing the implementation of the project.



Methodology of evaluation

Different evaluation tools were combined to ensure an evidence-based qualitative and quantitative assessment. The evaluation used a combination of tools for a comprehensive assessment, including a desk review, semi-structured interviews, and short questionnaires. Data from various sources and methods were cross-validated through triangulation to ensure reliability. Findings were disaggregated by gender and other available factors, with conclusions and recommendations based on the evaluation's results. The major limitations of the evaluation were following:

1. *Time and Stakeholder Constraints:* Tight timelines, travel limitations, and the involvement of multiple stakeholders meant that priority was given to the most engaged actors identified by the project team. Some interviews were conducted post-field mission.
2. *Group Interview Limitations:* Focus group discussions were used to maximize stakeholder input within time constraints. However, this format may have limited participants' willingness to share views as openly as they might in individual interviews. To help validate findings and provide another opportunity for input, a stakeholder workshop was held to share results and gather feedback, though it remains a public forum where some views might still be underrepresented.

The above-mentioned limitations do not affect the validity of the evaluation.

MAIN FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The MiRiDeW project plays a critical role in strengthening inclusive and rights-based labour migration governance in Nepal. It promotes systemic reforms by supporting policy development, bilateral agreements, and multi-level coordination. The project has achieved good progress, particularly under Outcome 1: helping the Government of Nepal strengthen its policy framework and institutional mechanisms to protect migrant workers' rights.

Key milestones include facilitating high-level bilateral labour migration dialogues with Romania, Germany, and Spain; supporting the signing of Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs) with Romania and Germany; and mainstreaming gender equality into national migration policies and institutional frameworks. The project also provided technical assistance to key ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS), to advance more gender-responsive mechanisms and ensure the protection of migrant workers' rights. It further supported consultations with Nepalese parliamentarians focused on improving women migrant workers' mobility and rights, and contributed to advancing Nepal's Business and Human Rights Action Plan through multi-stakeholder dialogues.

The project and ILO are well positioned to pursue a no-cost extension enabling continued delivery into 2027 without additional donor funding. A Phase III would be essential to consolidate results, deepen institutionalization, and respond to rising demand for technical assistance, while supporting further systemic change in partnership with tripartite constituents, government bodies, diaspora organizations, the private sector, and civil society. Progress under Outcome 2 has been slower, notably due to operational challenges in transferring funds to destination countries, which caused delays in implementing planned activities. The project is currently exploring alternative solutions to address this bottleneck.

Overall, achievements include targeted capacity building for government institutions, trade unions, and recruitment agencies; a 50-hour hybrid BLMA training; an international training conducted by the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO) in Turin; and initiatives such as passport renewal camps in Malaysia with the Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC) and the North South Initiative (NSI). Recently, the project also hosted an online session on social security funds for migrants in partnership with Pravasi Nepal Coordination Committee (PNCC). In addition, a consultation on social protection was carried out in collaboration with the National Network on Safe Migration (NNSM).

The project also collaborated with the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA) to promote fair recruitment practices. Notably, it contributed to a gap analysis of Nepal's 2012 Foreign Employment Policy, providing evidence-based recommendations to national policy reform processes. By building on ILO's unique tripartite mandate, technical expertise, and systemic partnerships, the project remains well positioned to further strengthen safe and rights-based labour migration governance in Nepal.

RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

Main findings & Conclusions

Short-Term

Recommendation A

► Stakeholders: ILO and SDC

Conduct a short mid-term operational feasibility study and revise the Theory of Change (ToC)

Priority: High | Importance: High | Resource Implication: Medium

R1. Conduct a short mid-term operational feasibility study to assess the achievability of each expected result, revise the Theory of Change to include mindset shift KPIs, and present both the revised ToC and flexible implementation options to the donor to address challenges (e.g., funding transfers, alternative activities) and highlight key achievements, especially in changing mindsets.

Recommendation B

► Stakeholders: ILO and implementing partners

Accelerate disbursement under the second project component.

Priority: High | Importance: High | Resource Implication: Medium

R2. Prioritize implementation-ready interventions that can deliver early, tangible results – based on the short feasibility study.

R3. Establish a fast-response tracking system to identify and resolve disbursement bottlenecks in real-time.

Recommendation C

► *Stakeholders: ILO and implementing partners*

Strengthen private sector engagement with companies and recruitment agencies through targeted awareness-raising and visibility efforts, to broaden support for project objectives and mobilize potential co-funding for a next phase.

Priority: High | Importance: High | Resource Implication: Small

R4. Consider involving or partnering with recruitment agencies and companies to raise awareness on decent employment standards and migrant rights, leveraging their networks and platforms to broaden outreach and strengthen public-private collaboration.

R5. Consider facilitating sector-specific networking events and visibility campaigns that showcase project success stories, to attract companies with CSR programmes and philanthropic donors as potential co-funders for a next project phase.

Recommendation D

► *Stakeholders: ILO and implementing partners*

Explore digitalization of key project components to improve efficiency and reach.

Priority: High | Importance: High | Resource Implication: Medium

R6. Conduct a rapid assessment of digital access, literacy, and technological capacities of key user groups - including migrant workers and returnees - to identify gaps and needs. Based on the assessment findings, design and develop user-friendly, accessible digital tools and platforms tailored to enhance capacity-building, information dissemination, and service delivery.

Mid-Term

Recommendation E

► *Stakeholders: ILO, SDC and implementing partners*

The MTR recommends a no-cost extension of Phase II and to conduct Phase III with the support of SDC, while diversifying funding sources.

Priority: Medium | Importance: High | Resource Implication: High

R7. During the no-cost extension, map potential donors and foundations whose priorities align with the project. Potential donors may include: Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, The Global Fund for Women, Oak Foundation,

	MacArthur Foundation, The Freedom Fund, and the Laudes Foundation. R8. Develop targeted concept notes to gauge interest before committing to full proposal development clearly communicating the benefits (e.g. alignment with sustainability and social impact priorities), emphasizing the project's systemic, cross-border, and rights-based approach. R9. Engage in sustained donor dialogue to explore a potential Phase III, align objectives (e.g., joint engagement at political and policy level), assess operational feasibility to manage expectations, and formalize an early, participatory exit strategy for Phase II. Recommendation F ► <i>Stakeholders: ILO and implementing partners</i> Strengthen coordination mechanisms across government tiers, trade unions, civil society, and private actors for more coherent action. <i>Priority: High Importance: High Resource Implication: Low</i> R10. Establish and support longer-term multi-stakeholder coordination platforms across government tiers and tripartite stakeholders, alongside thematic working groups focused on priority areas such as gender equality and safe labour migration. This proven good practice fosters sustained collaboration, ensures policy continuity, and strengthens collective capacity to effectively address complex development challenges, while providing a foundation to raise awareness, coordinate joint actions, and engage networks to attract potential donors for sustainable interventions. Develop shared roadmaps with clear roles, responsibilities, and next steps to ensure accountability and sustained progress.
Main lessons learned and good practices	Emerging Lessons Learned Conducting rapid operational feasibility studies as part of project management is instrumental in proactively identifying and addressing key challenges, such as cross-border fund transfer restrictions, logistical complexities, staff turnover, and staffing limitations. For example, cross-border fund transfer restrictions significantly impacted the project's ability to fully implement Outcome 2. Such operational feasibility studies, conducted with technical expertise and in close coordination with donors and senior management, can inform realistic planning, budget allocation, and enable scenario-based decision-making. They also help anticipate constraints and identify viable partners and delivery mechanisms. Emerging Good Practice The project presents a good practice in multi-level, multi-stakeholder engagement for migrant worker protection. It strategically combined policy-level influence with direct support mechanisms for end beneficiaries. Notably, the project contributed to the gap analysis of Nepal's 2012 Foreign Employment Policy, feeding concrete policy recommendations into national processes. Additionally, the technical support provided to the Ministry of Labour,

Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) for the development of the Labour Migration Status Report will result in a comprehensive document capturing data on migrant workers across multiple dimensions. Simultaneously, it supported the capacity building of key actors involved in Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs), including ministries, constitutional bodies, coordination entities, national networks, and development partners. By actively involving provincial and local levels in project activities and, the project maintained a dual focus on national policy engagement and localized service delivery for migrant workers, while higher-level policy impact is still emerging. Growing collaboration with diaspora organizations, alongside planned capacity strengthening for diplomatic missions, illustrates the project's intentional efforts to shift mindsets and institutional practices in a sustainable manner.