



## Migrant Rights and Decent Work Project (MiRiDeW) – Phase 1 – Independent Final evaluation

### QUICK FACTS

**Countries:** Nepal

**Evaluation date:** 24 May 2023

**Evaluation type:** Independent

**Evaluation timing:** Final

**Administrative Office:** ILO Country Office, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Technical Office:** Decent Work Team for South Asia, ILO Office

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**DC Symbol:** NPL/18/01/CHE

**Donor(s) & budget:** Government of Switzerland; USD 2,945,898.79 (CHF 2,777,030)

**Key Words:** Labour migration, migrant worker rights, decent work, Nepal, labour migration governance and policies



## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

### Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

Migrant Rights and Decent Work (MiRiDeW) is an International Labour Organisation (ILO) project supported by Government of Switzerland that is being implemented in Nepal along with the selected countries of destination (CoD) of Malaysia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait and Qatar.

The overall development objective is to strengthen support systems of the Government of Nepal (GoN) to better protect the rights of Nepali migrant workers along with increased benefits from labour migration. The project has four outcomes and seven outputs,

Outcome 1: Labour migration policies strengthened and implemented at federal and state levels,

Outcome 2: Bilateral and regional mechanisms strengthened to improve Nepali migrant workers' access to better jobs,

Outcome 3: Nepali consular and diplomatic missions in country of destinations and provide effective support services to Nepali migrant workers, and

Outcome 4: The GoN has effectively engaged with regional and global policy dialogues on labour migration and has implemented relevant policy outcomes.

The project partners include Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLESS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and National Planning Commission (NPC), Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), Non-Residential Nepalese Association (NRNA), General Federation of Nepalese Trade Union (GEFONT), Center for Migration and International Relations (CMIR), Center for Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM), Labour Employment Journalist Group (LEJoG) and National Network on Safe Migration (NNSM).

The project team comprised of a national project coordinator and an administrative assistant. The national project coordinator reported to the ILO Director in Kathmandu. The project was backstopped by a senior programme officer and the technical support was provided by the Labour Migration Specialist of the Decent Work Team (DWT) for South Asia.

### Present situation of the project

The project was originally planned for 35 months, i.e. from October 2018 to August 2021 and is now scheduled to end on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 after a couple of extensions. The project's original budget of USD



	1,383,492.32 was increased to USD 2,966,616.54 to support COVID-19 response activities and to complete activities under other heads.
<b>Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation</b>	The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure accountability and to further the ILO’s agenda of learning from the experiences of this project. The findings of the evaluation provide independent assessment of the project’s progress in achieving its stated objectives. The evaluation also identifies lessons learned, challenges, good practices and recommendations for improvement and development of future programmes and projects. The evaluation covered the project implementation period, i.e. 1 Oct 2018 – 31 December 2022 and the primary clients of the evaluation include ILO, donor and the implementing partners.
<b>Methodology of evaluation</b>	The evaluation followed a mixed-method approach wherein it made use of the both the qualitative and quantitative data and key stages in the evaluation process included inception, primary data collection (30 in-depth interviews), validation workshop (11 May, 2023) and report development and finalisation. As one of the key limitations, the evaluation team could not interview MoFA, one of the key partners in the project.

<b>MAIN FINDINGS &amp; CONCLUSIONS</b>	<p><b>The findings are briefed as per the evaluation criteria:</b></p> <p><b><i>Relevance and strategic fit</i></b></p> <p>The project is highly relevant to the needs of the migrant workers including women workers of Nepal as it addresses their concerns related to decent work in the CoDs. The project is highly relevant to the government of Nepal as it targeted strengthening of government’s systems under all the four outcomes. The project is fully aligned to the DWCP Nepal 2018-22 and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2018-22). The project remains highly relevant to the needs of the migrant workers post COVID-19 pandemic as the labour migration from Nepal in 2022 was near all time high and the issues related to decent work in CoDs have become even more prominent and wide-spread.</p> <p><b><i>Coherence</i></b></p> <p>The MiRiDeW project was highly coherent with the other ILO projects in Nepal on labour migration and complemented the broader outcomes of other ILO projects like Skills for Employment</p>
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Project (SEP), Fair Recruitment (FAIR), Work in Freedom (WiF) project, and Governance of Labour Migration in South and South East Asia (GOALS). The teams of different ILO projects pitched itself as “Migration Team” and worked in a coordinated and synchronized manner to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the projects’ activities and to avoid duplication of efforts. The project made special efforts to build linkages with the other key stakeholders like UN Women, Migration Group Nepal (MGN), International Organisation of Migration (IOM).

#### ***Validity of design***

The outcome and output level indicators and their means of verification were largely appropriate and useful, however, some of the outcome indicators were unrealistic, vague and required specification and were at the level of outputs. At the Development Objective level, the indicators did not capture the impact of results of all the outcomes.

The project tracked the progress of the outcome level indicators; however, output level indicators were not tracked. The project also found it difficult to report against the outcome indicators due to limited results. While the initial timeframe of three years was quite short, however, even after 23 months of extension, the project could not make any significant progress towards Outcomes as conceived in the project design.

The project complied with the monitoring and evaluation systems as per the ILO’s and donor’s templates and collected relevant data in a gender-disaggregated manner. The project could not conduct site visits for monitoring due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In absence of close collaboration with government and impact of pandemic, the project adapted a need based implementation approach to provide technical assistance to the government on ad-hoc basis. The adapted delivery methods included partnership with technical agencies, which helped in carrying out the project activities with higher efficiency. Accordingly, the implementation approach was realistic, however, it was not sufficient to achieve the planned results.

The design did not identify any risk & assumption for Outcome 1 and 2, which impacted project’s progress under these two

Outcomes. Further, the risk mitigation strategies identified were either partially deployed or were ineffective. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>

### ***Effectiveness***

The project's performance against the evaluation criterion of Effectiveness is as per each Outcome:

#### Outcome 1: National policies strengthened and implemented to enhance the governance of labour migration in Nepal.

The key achievements under this Outcome include development of a monitoring and reporting framework on labour migration; however, the NPC has not used this framework so far. The project further developed a national level data collection strategy as part of the process to set up mechanism to monitor SDGs, which is currently under review by the NPC. Further, the project has partnered with the GOALS project to conduct a national survey on recruitment cost borne by migrant workers in partnership with the National Statistics Office (NSO).

#### Outcome 2: Bilateral and regional mechanisms strengthened to improve Nepali migrant workers' access to better jobs.

The key achievements under this Outcome include identification and assessment of six new labour markets for low skilled workers, technical assistance provided to MoLESS in developing Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMA) and tracking of policy changes in CoDs and its related information dissemination amongst the migrant workers. The project conducted a detailed labour market study and shortlisted six countries, i.e. Portugal, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, New Zealand and Thailand, of which the GoN has approached the first three countries for BLMA.

#### Outcome 3: Nepali diplomatic missions provide more efficient and effective support services to Nepali migrant workers

The significant achievement under this Outcome relate to development of operational guidelines for the missions in the CoDs. The operational guideline was developed under the leadership of Joint Secretary, MoFA with the participation of the MoLESS and the ILO and included an intensive exercise of capacity gap assessment by visiting select CoDs.

The project partnered with NRNA, PNCC and GEFONT to deliver outreach services to the more than 51,000 migrant workers in

Malaysia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries in partnership with Nepali missions, which was also aligned with COVID-19 response.

Outcome 4: The GoN has effectively engaged with regional and global policy dialogues on labour migration.

The Outcome level results relate to effective participation of the senior MoLESS officials in the different regional policy dialogues like Colombo Process and Abu Dhabi Dialogue. The project also contributed to several policy adaptations in the area of labour migration and also supported publication of Labour Migration Report 2020 and 2022. The project undertook research, lobbying and advocacy to promote gender sensitive labour migration governance.

Contributory factors of the key achievements under the four Outcomes

The key contributory factors towards results under the four outcomes include one team approach of ILO migration projects in Nepal and greater coherence with other projects and stakeholders; formal ownership of the MoFA to develop operational guidelines; partnership with migrant support networks, organisations and technical institutions; and, donor's flexibility in fund allocation and project's duration.

Key challenges that affected project's performance under four Outcomes

The key challenges that significantly affected project's performance include COVID-19 pandemic related disruption; changes in the political landscape during the course of implementation leading to changes in priorities of the government; transfer of key officials; lack of formal agreement with the government partners like MoLESS and NPC; perception amongst some of the key officials that ILO is an international NGO; and change of national project coordinator in the middle of the project.

*Adaptation to changes due to COVID 19*

The MiRiDeW project supported the government repatriate migrant workers as part of outreach activities under Outcome 3 and also worked to enhance their access to information, shelter and food.

The project also supported studies to assess the impact of pandemic.

#### ***Efficiency of resource use***

The project had a lean team which worked efficiently, however, a more dedicated and intense engagement of a senior ILO functionary with the expertise of partnership building was required to create buy-in and ownership at the highest levels of the government.

Project's overall efficiency w.r.t timeliness of implementation is less than satisfactory considering that a significant number of outputs are yet to be delivered even after the project receiving additional 23 months of extension till 30 June 2023.

The project's budget utilization rate is 82 % wherein the majority of the spending is on COVID-19 response and outreach services.

However, in other Outputs and Outcomes wherein partnership with government is involved, project has a very low delivery rate, which is in consonance with the physical progress and results achieved.

#### ***Efficiency of management arrangements***

The project design had envisaged formation of a project steering committee with participation of the government, however, this committee could not be formed due to complexities related to engagement of two Ministries, i.e. MoLESS and MoFA and also because of already existing DWCP steering committee. Also, there was no formal agreement or MoU with the government agencies to deliver results under specific Outcomes. These factors affected the project's progress significantly due to lack of accountability from the government's side. Within the ILO, the roles and responsibility were clear to the project team as well as to the country office including leadership, which contributed to the results achieved.

#### ***Impact***

As most of the outputs under each outcome are yet to be achieved, accordingly overall impact of the project at this stage cannot be fully assessed. However, the project outcomes have the potential to significantly impact migrant worker's access to services in the CoDs. The outreach activities as part of the COVID-19 response was able to enhance awareness amongst the migrant workers related to their



rights in CoDs and it also reduced gap between the workers, the migrant support networks and the embassies. The project also had some impact on the culture of the departments as they now value role of preparations and technical analysis before participating in regional and global forums.

**Sustainability**

The tools developed under the project have high potential of sustainability, however, they will need to be made part of the government’s system through order, notification, or an Act. The enhanced capacities of worker organizations, diaspora organizations and civil society actors to institutionalize support services to migrant workers have been integrated into their systems and have high orientation to sustainability. The policy advocacy forums supported by the project have high chances of sustainability.

**RECOMMENDATIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES**

**Main findings & Conclusions**

**Recommendation 1:** ILO Nepal must support GoN to prioritise the key issues highlighted by the MiRiDeW project and include them in immediate action plans.  
**Recommendation 2:** ILO must devise strategies to deliver its comparative advantage in an integrated manner in the country level projects for political buy-in.  
**Recommendation 3:** Phase 2 must formalize partnership with government through mechanisms like MoU and project advisory committee.  
**Recommendation 4:** ILO must consider the following specific recommendations while designing the phase 2 of the MiRiDeW project.  
The ILO must consider the phase 2 of MiRiDeW as capitalisation phase where the focus must be to complete the ongoing activities and build upon the successes of the phase 1. The specific measures that the ILO must undertake are the following:  
1. ILO must form a Phase 2 project designing committee and include MoLESS, NPA, MoFA, SDC and the technical experts as members.



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. The phase 2 design must focus on narrowing down the scope of the project to a maximum of three outcomes.</li><li>3. Under Outcome 1, the phase 2 must complete the outputs started in this phase for e.g. planned recruitment cost survey in partnership with NSO and GOALS project, monitoring and reporting framework.</li><li>4. Under Outcome 2, the project must support the MoLESS in signing MoUs with potential CoDs as identified in the phase 1 and develop a toolkit to conduct rapid market survey and labour market assessment based on the experience of the phase 1. This toolkit must detail out the methodology as well as resources required.</li><li>5. Under Outcome 3, the project must continue with institutionalisation of the operational guidelines.</li><li>6. Under Outcome 4, the project can focus on supporting the government for Labour Migration Report and gender sensitive labour migration governance.</li><li>7. All the knowledge products must be converted into briefs and also be translated into Nepali for its wider use.</li><li>8. The log-frame of the project must include assumptions and risks and their mitigation plan for all the outcomes.</li><li>9. The project design must also consider partnership with other stakeholders like other ILO projects, other UN and non-UN labour migration projects and technical agencies like NHRC, UN Women, CMIR and CESLAM.</li></ol>
<b>Main lessons learned and good practices</b>	<b>Lessons Learned</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Formalisation of the partnership is an essential condition for creating ownership amongst the partners.</li><li>2. Reporting against the SDG indicators on the issue of labour migration requires significant investment and coordination to fill data gaps.</li><li>3. Joint outreach services by the migrant support networks and missions can help in enhancing migrant worker's access to better services by the missions in CoDs.</li><li>4. Community media can contribute significantly to create large-scale awareness amongst the migrant workers in a cost effective manner.</li></ol>



5. Knowledge products should be converted to user-friendly briefs in the main language of the country.
6. The log-frame of the project must highlight risks, assumptions and mitigation strategies under all the result areas.

#### **Good Practices**

1. Lobbying and trust building at the highest levels including political leadership to create ownership of the project.
2. Partnership with the diaspora organisations for outreach services and COVID-19 response in CoDs.
3. Engagement of community media platforms in the CoDs leads to wider dissemination of messages amongst migrant workers.
4. Donor's support for COVID-19 response in alignment with one of the project outcomes.
5. Partnership with national expert research and other civil society organisations for increased efficiency.
6. Synergies and coordination between the ILO migration projects and teams enhanced their effectiveness and efficiency and avoided duplication.
7. Leading the gender subgroup in the MGN contributed to policy advocacy for gender sensitive labour governance.