

Governance at a Glance, Issue 4: March 2021

2021 QUARTER ONE IN REVIEW

An Exploration of the Complexities and Challenges Faced in Health, Education, and Migration Governance in Nepal

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What is the current status of Health, Education, and Migration governance? How are governance systems organized, what progress have we made, and what changes can be expected in the coming future?

Our 'Governance at a Glance' series explores these questions from a lens of key thematic areas that have or have the potential to characterize Nepal's overall development and affect governance systems. The pages enclosed in this report represent a summary of the status of key developments from the first quarter of 2021 in Nepal. To be more specific, the months of January, February, and March are within the scope of this publication. These developments are explored through an assortment of key indicators, trend analyses, official government communications, and brief discussions of likely challenges that will be faced by relevant stakeholders in each of our three areas of focus.

About GMC Nepal

Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal is a research initiative by Kathmandu-based NGO Centre for Social Change. Using a variety of investigative methods and the latest in qualitative & quantitative research tools, GMC Nepal is dedicated to strengthen Nepali democracy and empower its citizens through accurate & up-to-date information.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

Certain commonly used shorthand abbreviations are used through the pages enclosed in this document to represent names of specific organizations, projects, studies, statistical composites, and/or governmental & non-governmental bodies for brevity.

They are listed below in their order of appearance in this report:

GoN	Government of Nepal
Covid-19	Novel Corona Virus Disease, Discovered in 2019
MoHP	Ministry of Health and Population
WHO	World Health Organization
Covishield	Oxford-AstraZeneca Vaccine Manufactured by the Serum Institute of India
SII	Serum Institute of India Pvt. Ltd.
AQI	Air Quality Index
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and technology
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN	United Nations
NHP	National Health Policy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
NDHS	National Demographic Health Survey
NTF	Nepal Teachers' Federation
CSMCF	Community School Management Committee Federation of Nepal
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
CEHRD	Centre of Education and Human Resources Development
PERP	President Educational Reform Program
IT	Information Technology
NRB	Nepal Rastra Bank
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
MoLESS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
DOI	Department of Immigration
ILO	International Labour Organization
UAE	United Arab Emirates
DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment

Health Governance

Nepal's Health Sector in 2021

The Public Health sector in Nepal, and its various governance bodies, remained largely preoccupied with concerns related to the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic in the first quarter of 2021. While the month of January saw maximum media coverage and public discourse dominated by speculative news regarding the procurement of the Covid-19 vaccines, the following months of February and March were characterized by vaccination drives, concerns of mutated strains, preventative measures enforcement, and various controversies that emerged from the management of the vaccine distribution processes.

Concurrently, this quarter also had another major public health crisis unfold in the form of severely deteriorating air quality in Nepal's urban centres, especially in Kathmandu. On two separate occasions, in January and March, pollution particulates in the air increased to include Kathmandu among rankings of the most polluted cities in the world. Major causes included wildfires, vehicular emissions, transborder industrial pollution, and unfavorable atmospheric conditions. The majority of official government communications and media coverage related to the health sector revolved around these two areas of interest, each described in more detail in the sections below.

Covid-19 Pandemic Trends

The end of the first quarter of 2021 marked over one full year since the global pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th March of 2020. Since then, Nepal has undergone a number of unprecedented fundamental structural breaks, including waves of the respiratory disease outbreaks, economic turmoil, rampant unemployment, chronic poverty exacerbation, national lockdowns, and severe socio-economic effects that are likely to persist in the long term. As per the most recent official communications from WHO, as well as other national and transnational leading public health governance bodies, the Covid-19 pandemic is still ongoing and no official timeline has been established to estimate its end.

Throughout the first quarter, a number of different enforcement issues were brought to light regarding the Covid-19 preventative measures employed by the government, and their corresponding difficulties in enforcement. The multiple waves of national lockdowns in 2020 did manage to control the virus to some degree of effectiveness, as suggested by the slow rise in daily cases relative to other countries in South Asia. However, various social, institutional, and economic pressures resulted in most preventative measures being relaxed by mid-November 2020. Public health experts and various influential editorial writers posited throughout the first quarter of 2021 that the necessarily strict enforcement of these measures were almost non-existent. With the opening of schools and colleges following the official November 2020 directive, described in more detail in the Education Governance Section in this document, many former makeshift quarantine centres were closed and repurposed as local educational institution premises.



Figure 1: Daily New Confirmed Cases

Source: MoHP Covid-19 Situation Reports, Compiled by the WHO Covid-19 Dashboard Portal

One cause of major concern during the first quarter of 2021 was the dwindling number of new cases reported, which experts believe to have been a result primarily of less people opting to test for the novel Coronavirus. The graph shown above plots data obtained from the Ministry of Health and Population's (MoHP) Covid-19 situation reports, as compiled and visualized by the WHO country-wise dashboard portal. We can see a sudden fall in the number of cases following mid-December 2020. The dashboard longer uploaded latest weekly data because cases reported in MoHP's situation reports became so few and far between. While the national media persistently reported on newer strains of the Coronavirus causing outbreaks, particularly in neighboring Indian states, data regarding number of new cases became extremely unreliable given the very small number of Covid-19 PCR tests being administered from February 2021 onwards. On February 26th, national media outlet Ratopati reported that some testing centres were having concerns of PCR tests going to waste due to low levels of administered tests. Thus, the latest Covid-19 cases data that we do have is unreliable due to low sample size.

Even though other countries in South Asia, particularly in India, have continued to announce various local and state level lockdown-like temporary mandates to control the spread of novel strains of the virus, it seems unlikely that Nepal will follow suit given that the administration of the CoviShield vaccines began by February.

Covid-19 Vaccines

Amidst many months of active media speculation, fueled by discourse surrounding political agendas regarding the source-countries that were in the conversation, MoHP announced the arrival of the first batch of the CoviShield vaccine from India in late January 2021. The CoviShield brand refers to the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured locally in India by the Serum Institute, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer. At the time of its arrival, the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine was reported to have been found to be around 60-92 percent effective against the novel Coronavirus, with two separate dosages administered between four to twelve weeks apart.

The first Covid-19 vaccination drive began in Nepal on Wednesday the 27th of January, and continued in various authorized centres through mid-March. The first 1 million dosages of the Covishield vaccine was donated by India, with future shipments to be each procured following closed-door negotiations between representatives from the two countries.

There were some instances of controversy following the vaccine's deployment throughout the months of February and March, as media outlets reported a number of cases of qualified elderly candidates being rejected vaccines for various reasons. Discourse also followed after announcements that select groups of development workers and journalists qualified for the vaccine while many in the elderly and vulnerable population categories remained unvaccinated. As of this writing, procurement of further dosages of Covid-19 vaccines are in question, as factions within Nepal have rejected the CovidShield shipments following latest negotiations. As of March 24th 2021, no news regarding fresh vaccine shipments from India or elsewhere have been reported.

Air Pollution

Despite the majority of the global health governance focusing primarily on the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, its associated preventative measures, and the procurement and deployment of Covid-19 vaccines, Nepal faced a different public health crisis in the first quarter of 2021. Through a combination of nearby forest fires, garbage burnings, cross-border industrial pollutions, atmospheric conditions (especially within the Kathmandu valley) and winter air inversion, the air quality in Nepal's urban centres, particularly in the capital city, dipped to extremely dangerous levels on two separate occasions.

The first instance occurred in the second week of January. Naturally occurring winter-time atmospheric conditions trapped pollutants under a layer of warm air and high cloud against the surface of Kathmandu valley. These conditions were further exacerbated by vehicular emissions, wildfires, garbage burning, and industrial pollution. On Monday, the 11th of January, the Air Quality Index (AQI, a commonly used metric of pollutant particles in air) exceeded the hazardous level of 500, and persisted above the 300 level for another four days. Eventually, atmospheric conditions changed to lift the pollutants out of the valley bowl. Even though AQI measures remained dangerously low for the following weeks, visibility improved with changing weather conditions until late March 2021.

Once again, air quality in urban centres deteriorated dangerously, reaching yet another hazardous level of 411 on Sunday the 28th of March. Major concerns included visibility and outdoor health risks, especially for patients of Covid-19 and other respiratory diseases. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) declared schools to be shut for four days on the 29th of March due to the poor air quality. As of this writing, on March 30th, air quality has still remained dangerously poor and experts are expecting MoHP to take alleviation action soon, such as stricter enforcement of mask mandates and institution of the odd/even vehicle number allowance rule.

Key Current Challenges

1. With the paused deployment of Covid-19 vaccines estimated to resume after current negotiations are complete, the challenge of managing the procurement, logistics, distribution systems, and tracking of dosages remain one of the primary goals for Quarter 2.
 2. Covid-19 preventative measures, especially mask mandates, are even more important now due to the worsening air quality. Thus, effective enforcement of these measures are crucial.
 3. Pollution-alleviating measures within the jurisdiction of MoHP need to be deployed as soon as possible to keep harmful effects of air pollution under relative control.
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Education Governance

Nepal's Education Sector in 2021

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (UNESCO) the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted education systems worldwide, affecting an estimated 1.6 billion population of students around the world. Over nine million of these students are estimated to be studying in educational institutions within Nepal. The many forms of pandemic-induced learning disruptions, particularly school closures lasting months in a row, have been posited to show unprecedented long-term repercussions. These disruptions, despite many of the preventative measures being lifted since the declaration of the pandemic, continue to delay the progress of Nepali students and further impair the country's learning environment that has long been considered relatively unproductive and ineffective by experts in the field, particularly in public schools.

Although some educational organizations were quick to adopt innovative measures of remote learning through this period, a clear majority of schools and colleges lagged behind due to disproportionate accessibility to technological resources and skills hindering and further aggravating an already equitable access to quality education. As the expanding digital divide grew in the country, raising questions regarding the government's aptitude in understanding a heterogeneous context of Nepali students and their families, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) released a directive titled "Framework of School Reopening in the Context of Covid-19" in November 2020. This document consisted of a cabinet-endorsed set of guidelines that encouraged schools to reopen amid the pandemic, along with essential sanitary and public health guidelines requiring certain measures to be taken in the process. School sessions were allowed to resume and carry on according to their pre-pandemic schedules provided that schools secured authorization from local government authorities and installed the aforementioned Covid-19 preventative measures.

A large proportion of the media coverage and national discourse surrounding the education sector in the first three months of 2021 has revolved around the schools and colleges reopening procedures. Even though the official framework establishing guidelines directive was released publicly and communicated to educational institutions in November 2020, most educational institutions resumed academic sessions during the weeks following 1st January 2021.

Overall discourse surrounding the educational reopening process has been mixed in both contextual arguments as well as coverage spaces. At the local level, many education experts across the country were opposing the national lockdowns since March 2020. Advocates and activists argued that schools were closed during the nation-wide lockdown periods in a number of rural areas where not a single case of Covid-19 had been reported. It was thus believed that the lockdowns made the student-citizen body worse off, as employment opportunities dwindled and learning environments became disrupted. Newer studies have connected lockdowns to disproportionately high long-term drop out rates, especially for girls, as many girls became engaged in household work during the lockdown periods and never returned to schools at all. On the flip side, an opposing narrative observed in various editorials and media opinion pieces expressed that the country was not yet ready to begin the reopening of schools in November. Given the uncertainty caused by rising number of cases, many schools began officially reopening after the Covid-19 vaccines began being deployed to certain vulnerable groups.

Government Guidelines on Reopening Schools

As mentioned in the previous section, MoEST released the 'Framework for School Reopening in the Context of Covid-19,' with an endorsement from UNESCO, on November 5th 2021. Due to various reasons, including uncertainty regarding rising Covid-19 cases at the time, media backlash following the guidelines, and education institutions' immediate unpreparedness to follow the proposed preventative measures, it took another few months for schools and colleges to reopen at scale. The fine details of the fourteen-page document is outside the scope of this report, especially given how much speculation has followed about its ineffective enforcement.

Some of the major highlights of the guideline are outlined below.

- Authorization was sanctioned exclusively to local governments to assess Covid-19 transmission risks within their own communities and internal contexts in order to arrive at a decision whether to allow schools to reopen or not. It was reported by journalists in the field that while the reopening guidelines themselves were exhaustive, not much guidance was provided to local governments to assess risks, leading to inconsistencies between different local government bodies in the first-wave of school re-openings.
- Co-ordination was mandated with each respective district's Covid-19 crisis management centre before individual school re-opening risks were officially assessed by the local government.
- Standard public health security protocols were included within the directive as recommended by the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) and were mandated to be strictly followed to disinfect institutional buildings, as many public school premises were used as quarantine and isolation facilities.
- Blanket authorization was granted to local level governmental bodies to decide on how the modalities in the reopened school sessions would be conducted after resuming operation. A few key examples of alternatives included running sessions in different shifts spread out throughout the days or weeks, opening schools on alternate days including weekends, and allowing a limited number of students under a rotation system as the school staff adjusted to the new Covid-19 preventative measures upon re-opening.

As select schools and colleges hastened to re-open as early as December 2020, and students reentered their familiar premises after many months of unexpected disruptions, uncertainties causing doubts around if schools should have been re-opened at all prevailed. Without proper surveillance of institutions' commitment and capacity to protect students from the pandemic's public health risks, students and teachers continue to be exposed to the lurking threats of Covid-19.

Currently, reliable datasets revealing the actual magnitude of the pandemic's impact on the education sector of Nepal are not yet available for analysis. Thus, research institutions and media outlets alike have largely relied on anecdotal accounts to determine the status of preventative measures – currently believed to be largely negligent in many public schools.

Other Notable Developments in Education



Figure 2: Learning Continuity Program's Campaign Image
Source: UNICEF

Learning Continuity Program

In January 2021, MoEST partnered with Nepal Teachers' Federation (NTF) and Community School Management Committee Federation of Nepal to launch the 'Learning Continuity Program' in coordination with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Centre of Education and Human Resources Development (CEHRD). The program and its associated eponymous campaign aimed to engage schools, caregivers, local governments, and students themselves with guidance on public health protocols for safe school reopening and promotion of alternative educational modalities. Emphasizing on the role played by parents and educators, the tools shared by

the program focused on lowering dropout rates and promoting education among marginalized students from remote areas, along with ensuring a re-entry into pre-pandemic student life that is as smooth as possible for students and families.

Calls for New Applications to the President Education Reform Program

Coinciding with schools and colleges reopening across the country, the President Educational Reform Program, first introduced in the fiscal year 2019/20, called for new school-year applications on January 2021, aiming to alleviate the pandemic-era financial stresses for students by providing daily meal provisions, necessary stationery material, and promotion of Nepal as a higher education destination among aspiring undergraduates. Despite the unfortunate timing of the program starting months before the pandemic, and its weak implementation that followed, it is starting to catch momentum again in the reopening context. Its total budget of Rs. 5.10 billion is also currently planned to be used in the construction of data centres for infrastructure, inclusive educational institutions, and IT labs.

Key Current Challenges

1. Given the lack of adequate implementation of MoHP and MoEST's Covid-19 preventative guidelines in the context of the schools being reopened, ensuring the health and safety of students, educators, and staff is still the main concern in the education sector.
2. A February 2021 letter by MoEST requested MoHP to prioritize teachers and educational institutions' staff for vaccination against Covid-19 as essential personnel after schools reopened. The delegation was led by prominent unions, civic organizations, and private school governing organizations. Yet, educators and school staff have not yet been designated as eligible vaccination recipients unless they meet age requirements.
3. As MoEST and associated bodies readjust to pre-pandemic education sector governance activities, careful consideration must be paid to programs and campaigns aiming to re-introduce the thousands of students back to traditional school life, especially girls who dropped out during the pandemic period.

Migration Governance

Nepal's Migration Sector in 2021

The Covid-19 outbreak and the various waves of worldwide disruption that followed pertaining to the mobility of people have severely challenged the ongoing development trajectory of migration in Nepal. Not unlike other countries around the globe, Nepal also saw unprecedented shocks and sudden changes in both domestic and migration patterns. Since March of 2020, much of the migration governance effort has been razor-focused on addressing Covid-19 disruptions related needs of migrants abroad, repatriation causes, and instances of public health and human rights abuses faced by Nepalese citizens in the context of the pandemic. Throughout this past year, Nepal has experienced disproportionately higher inverse internal migration, as more citizens working in urban areas elected to go home largely due to unemployment. On the flip side, there has also been a sharp decline in international migration, particularly among students and labour migration aspirants, due to travel restrictions and stability uncertainty caused by the pandemic. Since 2021, while much travel has resumed following revisions of Covid-19 preventative measures, emerging threats of new mutant strains of the Covid-19 virus has remained a key reason for migration flows not being able to bounce back to pre-pandemic volumes.

As per most recent data obtained from the archives of Nepal Rastra Bank, the total number of Nepali workers opting to take legal employment approval for foreign work decreased by 75.9% from mid-August 2020 to mid-February 2021 compared to the same period in the previous year. Curiously, this time period overlaps with the declaration of the Covid-19 pandemic in the previous year, thus reflecting the latest fiscal year data being the first full year of disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Still, other indicators suggest that overall migration levels in Nepal have remained broadly stable in contrast to other South Asian countries. Notwithstanding short-term fluctuations observed in the data due to travel restrictions, migration still remains one of the major drivers of the national economy of Nepal. Despite extreme economic shocks observed throughout the world, Nepal still received a sizable chunk of its GDP, as Rs. 567.70 billion flowed in till mid-February 2021 from citizens abroad. While the overall effect of the pandemic is still significant in migration flows, the relative stability and weightage of economic contributions from migration has remained comparatively stable thus far.

In the first quarter of 2021, various push and pull factors remained challenging migration patterns observed in the pre-pandemic times. Chronic levels of poverty, increased unemployment rates, lack of availability or creation of formal employment opportunities, and higher aspirations of better livelihood opportunities are among the common concurrent issues pushing Nepali citizens towards international labour migration. It has been reported that pandemic-era aspiring potential migrants largely belong to age groups between 20-50. Resultingly, outsourcing of this active population directly affects the national development of Nepal. Thus, given the current pandemic context, wherein elderly population are considered to be exceptionally vulnerable, it is perhaps a double-hurdle for national development as young and active populations to be seeking residence elsewhere.

In order to develop a deeper understanding of migration nuances in Nepal, the Government needs accurate and up-to-date evidence collection mechanisms. Advocacy and activist circles have been vocal about the lack of emphasis on migration as one of the prioritized mainstream policy areas, which has resulting in a lack of rich database management and over-reliance on anecdotal evidence.

International Migration at a Glance

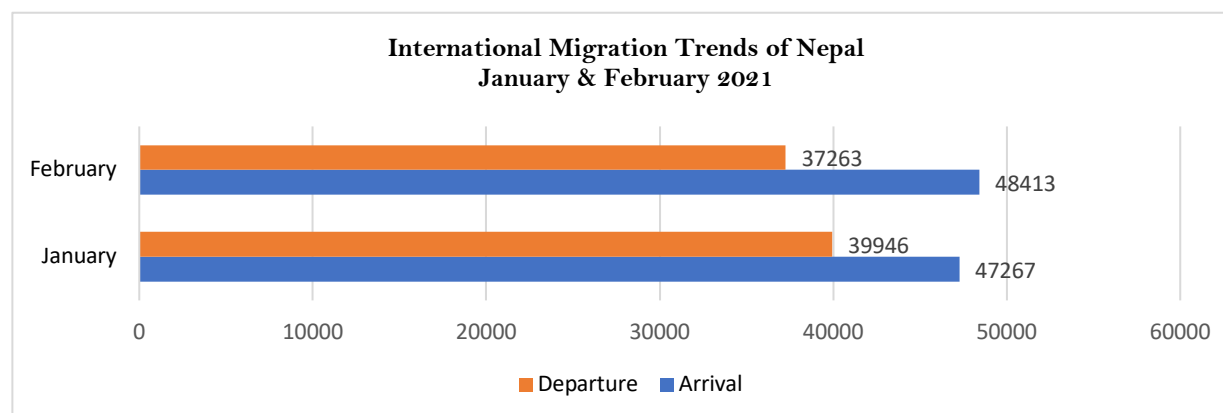


Figure 3: Arrival & Departure Report Details
January and February 2021, DOI

The pair of clustered bar graphs shown above represent arrival and departure record data for the months of January and February 2021, according to the Department of Immigration archives. The dataset for March 2021 was not yet available for analysis at the time of this writing. We can deduce from this primary data that emigration volumes were higher, with a total of around 95 thousand, compared to immigration volumes, which summed up to an estimate around 77 thousand for the two months. The observed change over this period was driven mostly from decreases in work opportunities, with issues related to foreign education and family also making an impact. Ongoing travel restrictions have forced potential migrants to change their travel plans, which, in many cases have been made after many years of meticulous funds saving and planning. Thus, it is not entirely out of the scope of expectations that as travel restrictions are loosened, immigration volumes are remaining stable despite threats of newer strains of the Covid-19 virus discouraging many aspirants. Moreover, the prerequisite of Covid-19 vaccination requirement before departing for destination countries have also contributed to the decline in what the number would have been otherwise. As more citizens are becoming vaccinated, experts predict that migration volumes will also thus gradually grow.

Foreign Employment

The data shown in the section above can be better understood from the point-of-view of labour aspirations by analyzing labour approval data for the time period alongside arrival and departure records. In the first quarter of 2021, nearly 43,482 citizens have received labour approvals. The month of Falgun, which falls between mid-February to mid-March, saw the highest number of approvals with a total of 19,808 documents passed during this time period alone. Experts have posited that the reopening of travel restrictions, ensurance of health provision through newer migrations mandates, and new labour reform laws in the GCC countries have driven this growth in the recent weeks.

However, a few topics of concerns were raised in the mainstream media during the waves of labour reforms that have been announced since the pandemic was declared. Most notably, concerns regarding a potential free visa policy and financial strain caused by migration associated recruitment fee were discussed in 2021. The delay in demand letter verification processes and the country-wide suspension of labour mobility in South Korea, a destination country that has been growing in popularity for aspirants, contributed further to the feeling of haphazardness and uncertainty associated with pursuing foreign migration, even after the lifting of major travel restrictions. Economic costs unique to aspiring migrants

such as debt bondage were also raised as concerns for aspirants during these times of unprecedented health and financial risks.

Similarly, due to a number of serious anecdotal accounts of bitter experiences during Covid-19, which was also spread by the media through various outlets throughout the first few months of 2021, aspirants have been cautious about pursuing opportunities. These included stories of poor social protection in destination countries, harassment and mistreatment of women, and instances of human rights abuses. A notable and much-discussed newly proposed policy requiring women under the age of 40 to present permission familial and local government office's consent to travel alone also discouraged female aspirants from pursuing migration options. The line graphs below show monthly labour approvals for Poush, Magh, and Falgun 2077, where this sharp difference in male and female foreign labour participation is reflected quite clearly.

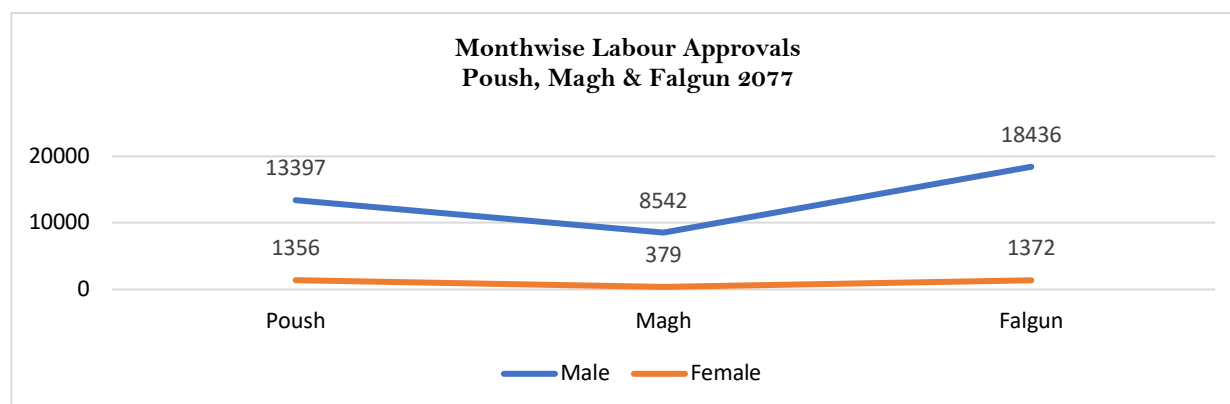


Figure 4: Monthwise Labour Approval Records Poush, Magh, & Falgun 2077, DOFE

Internal Migration at a Glance

The impacts of Covid-19 have been severe on international migration flows. Although there was a significantly higher volume of inverse migration observed during the pandemic-period, with citizens moving from urban to rural areas, daily wage workers and seasonal migrants' mobility towards urban areas in the first quarter remained comparatively low. There has been no comprehensive peer-reviewed study exploring the mechanism behind the observed trends in inverse migration yet, but experts and media personnel have posited that familial caretaking responsibilities, uncertainty of travel restrictions, unexpected unemployment, and illness or death of family members are key reasons.

Mobility towards urban areas, on the other hand, were affected by the same mechanisms, along with a few additional uncertainties. Concerns surrounding the social protection of vulnerable groups, increased discrimination experienced by ethnic minorities during periods of unemployment, and no guarantee of finding a job in urban centres also contributed to inverse migrants staying in their rural homes for prolonged amounts of time. Unfortunately, the issues faced by internal migrants have become largely sidelined by researchers and the media alike, as more of the news coverage has revolved around international migration flows picking up, especially after the availability of the Covid-19 vaccines for certain groups. Such passiveness in efforts related to regulation, monitoring and management of internal migration can potentially lead to other such systemic issues in times of future crises.

Media Trends Observed

While reviewing the first quarter of 2021 in totality, a number of different trends and progress markets come to light. Most optimistically, the Government of Nepal has been steadfast in its efforts to continually bring reform towards migration-related activity, and to strengthen and transform currently prevailing migration acts, laws, and policy drafts both in terms of institutional arrangements as well as through evidence-based problem solving. Many expert opinions and editorials during the first few months of the pandemic being declared had made recommendations that the disruptions and travel restrictions presented a unique opportunity for public personnel to review and rethink migration related policies. Although much is left to be desired, strong emphasis on policy and institutions observed in GMC Nepal's media monitoring exercise suggest that internal workings had also agreed with this notion.

Firstly, Nepal strengthened its bilateral relationship with Israel by signing a Memorandum of Understanding aiming to directly promote and support labour deals, particularly for caregiver jobs. This agreement also pointedly promoted safe participation and healthy mobility of Nepali youth in foreign labour markets, which was seen and celebrated as a positive precedence to set during the pandemic period. On the one hand, the MoU restricted the monopoly of recruitment agencies, and on the other, it guaranteed a minimum wage for Nepali migrants at the destination.

The Social Security Organization under the Government of Malaysia, Nepal's topmost popular foreign migration destination in the past few decades, was established to promote and campaign for the protection of the rights of Nepali labour migrants residing in the country. The Nepali consular desk and diplomatic embassies in the GCC board and 12 other destination countries including Romania have now coordinated with the Department of Foreign Employment in Nepal, strengthening their formal ties in the process. This particular agenda aimed at fostering the online system of receiving labour permits while also contributing to allowing legal pathways for undocumented workers to legalize their statuses. Internally, the Prime Minister Employment Program for Youth Employment also took off and is currently active in various locations throughout the country. As part of the aforementioned structural reforming of migration policies, the Right to Employment Act 2018 was also amended for the second time. As a whole, these initiatives are naturally not perfect individually, but they all aim to promote better labour migration governance in the long run.

Key Current Challenges

1. The Government of Nepal has been accused of seeming insensitively reluctant to protect the rights of women migrants. The travel bill proposed this quarter, described in detail above, led to widespread frustration among the public and has fueled a lack of trust in currently ongoing structural migration and labour reform efforts.
2. Governmental initiatives are still reported to lack a wide range of mass awareness, which directly prevents aspiring and current migrant citizens, especially those already in destination countries, from receiving clear and up-front access to newer provisions.
3. Although not strictly a migration-specific issue, the lack of adequate access and systematic dissemination of the Covid-19 vaccination has directly caused a lot of uncertainty for migrants.
4. Although a step in the right direction, efforts aimed at the localization of employment centres are reported to be ineffective and unhelpful, presenting a need for further investigation.
5. The Prime Minister Employment Program has also similarly been reported to be ineffective in inspiring active youths to elect working in Nepal over foreign labour options.

References

Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal works with and/or relies on a number of partner organizations, open data sources, government and quasi-government institution reports, policy-briefs, multi-lateral organization reports, and mainstream/independent media houses – including digital, print, and audio/video content producing publications for information.

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1. Constitution of Nepal
2. International Labour Organization
3. National Planning Commission
4. National Law Commission

Health Governance:

5. Ministry of Health and Population
6. World Health Organization
7. WHO Covid-19 Dashboard (MoHP Situation Reports Compilatoin)
8. World Bank
9. Ratopati
10. Kantipur Daily

Education Governance:

11. Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
12. Ministry of Finance
13. National Population Census
14. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
15. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
16. President Educational Reform Program, MoEST

Migration Governance:

17. Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security
18. Department of Foreign Employment
19. Department of Immigration
20. The Kathmandu Post
21. International Organization of Migration
22. International Labour Organization
23. Nepal Rastra Bank

Credits & Acknowledgements

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