

## **Topic: Effects of climate change and pandemic on Nepali migrant workers and their families**

**Muna Sunuwar, Republica English Daily**

When I was volunteering at an anti-trafficking organization called Samrakshak Samuha Nepal (SASANE), the role of climate change in human trafficking was a topic that we discussed frequently. It was from that time; the dots of human trafficking began to spread in the chart of my understanding regarding the issue. Nepal is highly dependent on agriculture with more than 60 percent of the population directly involved in it. The rate used to be higher in the previous years. With the rapid decline, the question arises as to where are the people now who were once engaged in farming? The answer is- they took an exit to foreign employment.

Malaysia and gulf countries like United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait are major destinations for Nepali migrant workers. The trend of going abroad for employment opportunities is growing so fast that it is as if one person from one Nepali household is out for foreign employment. Unfortunately, many migrant workers are not paid the promised amount by employers. This ends up affecting women directly who are, in most of the cases, are entrusted with running the household.

As a correspondent at Republica, an English Daily, I raised some issues revolving around Nepali migrant workers especially during COVID-19 pandemic. Remittance from Nepali migrant workers has a fair share in Nepal's economy. However, the issues of migrant workers are often overlooked by the government.

The ever-growing concern of climate change has not only affected the Himalayas of Nepal but the people residing in the country. With melting glaciers and disruption in regular weather change, the ecosystem of agriculture has been harshly affected. Floods and landslides have become extreme and have displaced portions of population in many places. Similarly, drying of water sources because of deforestation has forced indigenous population to opt for migration in search of alternative water resources for survival.

Following these incidents, people migrate to urban areas just to find out that the indigenous skills they have about agriculture don't earn them living. Thus, they decide to go for foreign employment in hope of good earning to ensure a good life for their families.

The story I intend to prepare will revolve around the vicious cycle of fateful events Nepali migrant workers have been going through. Not only will the story question the government agencies of their negligence over the issue, but it will also address the issue and try to do

justice to the affected population. It will shed light into the scenario and pinpoint what is missing in the picture.

The research-based story will bring migrant workers' and their families' experiences forward. For this, I am prepared to reach out to the families of migrant workers and question stakeholders about their position in this matter. As a media practitioner, I am willing to carry out an investigative study on this important social issue with an aim to bring positive changes and draw stakeholders' attention.

If managed properly, foreign employment can be a boon to Nepal and if continued to be neglected as it is now, it might expose the country to a threat as young people account for most of Nepali migrant workers.