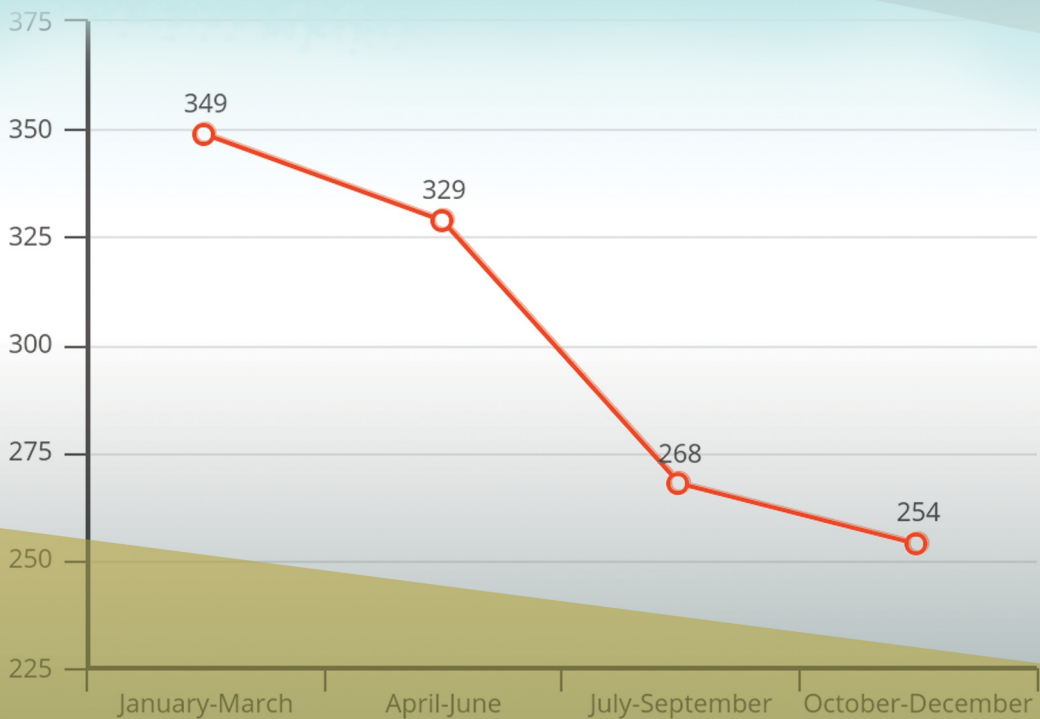


Annual Media Monitoring Report 2017



Foreign Labor Migration News in Nepali Media

Annual Media Monitoring Report 2017

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Centre for Social Change (CSC) is pleased to publish its annual media monitoring report 2017 highlighting the coverage of foreign labor migration related news published in 10 selected mainstream newspapers and online portals from Nepal between the period of January-December 2017. Foreign labor migration being one of the significant issues in modern Nepal, including the uprising concerns associated with it, the issues of foreign labor migration have been one of the most consistently covered content in both digital and print media. The news coverage in the media ranges from individual stories of success or struggle, to national and international attempts and initiation of regulation and improvisations. Through this the public can gather enough insights regarding foreign labor migration enabling them to make a reasonable analysis of the issue. With a watchful eye on the media about foreign labor migration, various aspects of the phenomenon can be traced and analyzed in comparison to the existing policies and programs associated with them, enabling the possibility of necessary changes to be made for the welfare as well as rights of aspiring, existing, and returnee migrants. Given this fact, this report is an attempt to understand the most recent trend of foreign labor migration in Nepal and also to capture some of emerging issues associated with foreign labor migration.

CSC would like to thank all researchers, supporters, and well wishers who contributed to prepare this report.

Kathmandu
June 2018

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1. Introduction

Nepal is known as an agricultural country due to its dependency on its cultivable lands for its economy. However, since the past two decades with no significant advancement in the agriculture sector and rampant increase in the population, people have started to look for alternative sources of income and livelihood. Foreign labor employment seems to be one of the major alternatives for many Nepalese these days. With the availability of diverse work opportunities and globalization erasing the borders of nations, people now are no longer limited within their geographical surroundings and have more options to explore beyond their own territories. In the context of Nepal, the prevailing poverty, limited choices and opportunities of employment, alongside the changed attitude of youth to diversify their occupation beyond the existing traditional job opportunities has resulted in the increased number of people seeking for foreign employment. In the last 20 years alone, more than four million Nepalese have migrated for job opportunities in more than 110 countries. According to a report published by the Ministry of Labor and Employment of Nepal in 2014/15, more than 3.8 million people had obtained a permit to travel abroad for foreign employment in the period between the fiscal year 1993/94-2014/15: this is almost 14 percent of the current population of Nepal (GoN, 2016). Among the growing population heading beyond the border in search of better economic opportunities, about 65 percent of them are reported to travel to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Malaysia, making Nepal one of the biggest providers of labor force to these countries. These massive outflow of labor forces, however has now established foreign labor migration as a backbone of national economy in terms of remittance. According to the Nepal Rastra Bank, the remittance economy has hiked up the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country from 0.5 percent in the early 1990 to 11 percent in 2005/06. Similarly, the World Bank indicator shows that the remittance occupied 31.28 percent share in national GDP in 2016. This popularity of foreign labor migration can be put into perspective by the fact that currently 56 percent of the total households in Nepal run on the remittance.

The contribution of remittance on the national economy seems to paint a favorable picture of foreign employment as a gold mine of opportunities, bringing prosperity to both the nation and its citizens. Though, remittance has certainly contributed in uplifting the living standards of a significant rural population, it has certainly come with a cost. The bitter reality of foreign labor migration is often gut-wrenching, especially amongst those migrating to gulf countries for employment. Cases of exploitation, abuse, violence, fraud, and even death are highly prevalent in today's labor migration context.

The struggle of foreign labor migrants starts even before they leave and continues to add

up even after their return back home. Keeping aside the centralized system of labor migration process that forces people from every corner of the country to mandatorily visit the capital to get anything done, the aspiring migrants are very vulnerable to cases of fraud even before they leave the country. Annapurna Post, a national daily newspaper on 3rd December 2017 reported that there were already 794 cases of fraudulent registered at the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) within the first four months of fiscal year 2016/17. Amidst 985 recruiting agencies in operation, and lack of proper monitoring and regulation, it is of no surprise that the numbers of fraudulent cases will go much higher by the end of this fiscal year.

The plight of migrant workers does not end with dodging the fraudulent attempts of manpower agents and agencies at the national border. The labor migrant workers often find themselves being the victims of unpaid wages, unlawful dismissals and detentions, forced overtime, denial of access to medical treatment, and much more in the countries of employment. In addition to working till exhaustion without any basic facilities, countless workers are subjected to threats of sexual and mental abuse, violence, and workplace mishaps and accidents pushing them to the verge of physical and mental disability to live a decent life. According to the Foreign Employment Promotion Board of the Government of Nepal, a total of 4,322 cases of death were reported during 2008-2015 alone, where 4,235 victims were male and 87 were female migrant workers. Similarly, 493 total cases of physical disability during foreign employment have been reported during the same time.

The other trouble amongst Nepalese labor migrant population is the challenge of re-integration in their community after foreign employment. The huge disparity in opportunities to invest in diversified source of income, and overall lack of employment opportunities seem to push the returnee migrants to the same path of foreign employment, despite its harsh reality.

Putting aside the vagueness of purpose behind the jurisdiction of Ministry of Labor regarding foreign employment at the initial phase, it has been 20 whole years since the establishment of Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), an authority solely devised to look after all the affairs and activities of foreign employment. Despite the timeline of over two decades, the DoFE has failed to manage the foreign employment process, putting the lives of many migrant workers in jeopardy. The status of foreign employment is still poor and needs lot of work at both policy and grassroots level. The governance of labor migration in Nepal is not exemplary, and there are definitely more things to improve than those to keep intact. Furthermore, to understand the existing status of labor migration in Nepal and its gaps, it is essential to gain an insight into the dynamics of the phenomenon. With limited access to government information and researches, media has become one of the best means to scour information from.

Throughout the history, online and print media have played a pivotal role to bring forth different issues of concern among the public. The media has been instrumental in keeping

the public informed about the ongoing issues.

Foreign labor migration being one of the significant issues in modern Nepal, including the uprising concerns associated with it, the issues of foreign labor migration have been one of the most consistently covered content in both digital and print media. The news coverage in the media ranges from individual stories of success or struggle, to national and international attempts and initiation of regulation and improvisations. Through this the public can gather enough insights regarding foreign labor migration enabling them to make a reasonable analysis of the issue. With a watchful eye on the media about foreign labor migration, various aspects of the phenomenon can be traced and analyzed in comparison to the existing policies and programs associated with them, enabling the possibility of necessary changes to be made for the welfare as well as rights of aspiring, existing, and returnee migrants.

From the above details we can draw the conclusion that the issue of foreign labor migration is critical in Nepal. However, there is a significant lack of study on the subject matter. Compared to other agendas such as gender, human rights, health, livelihoods, and sanitation very few organizations are working in this sector. Additionally, very few resources are available for comprehensive field study on the subject of labor migration. With limited information accessible on foreign labor migration, media can be regarded as one of the most reliable and consistent sources of information to gain an insight into this matter.

The restoration of democracy in 1990 paved a way for an expressive media in Nepal. This not only allowed the coverage of the most sensitive issues, but also enabled the public to be well informed, and aware about the issues of the past. Media has played a vital role in shaping public perception, and serving as one the greatest tools to bring forth changes in society through advocacy. Inclusive public opinions and articles, regular follow up on a phenomenon, and satires through means of cartoons have been widely utilized to caution the concerned authorities about the particular subject matter. It has also urged the public to speak against or for the issue. Through advocacy and awareness media has held an influence in policymaking, including change for the melioration of the society. This same approach can be implemented to bring positive changes in the case of foreign labor migration.

In a country where governmental and non-governmental research institutions and think tanks are weak in national policy making process, media has served as bridge between people and policy makers with the flow of authentic information for informed policy-making process in the country. Similarly, the role of Nepali mainstream media to provide feedbacks on policies can be highly valuable in the context of strengthening and improving migration governance in Nepal. The mainstream Nepali media has adopted their strong reporting bit over the past few years, and in this regard, a close look of Nepali media from foreign labor migration point of view is considered as an important task to be done to support the evidence based policymaking in Nepal.

Therefore, considering the role of media in building public perception as well as influencing the policymaking process in the country, Centre for Social Change (CSC) has adopted media monitoring as one of the effective instrument to evaluate the progress as well as understand the initiatives taken by the government, non-government agencies, and private sectors in addressing the problems associated with foreign labor migration through policy and programmatic interventions. This report further focused on to identify the volume, trends, and patterns of foreign labor migration as reported by the Nepali media, and eventually understand the dynamics and direction of foreign labor migration in the context of Nepal.

2. Objectives of the Report

The general objective of the report is to analyze the changing dynamics of foreign labor migration in Nepal with respect to the attempts made in its governance over an interval of a year. The specific objectives are as follows:

- a. To assess the stronghold of labor migration as a relevant issue among various mainstream media of Nepal, and trace the changes occurring in foreign labor migration of Nepal.
- b. To examine the overall attempts of governance of labor migration based on media coverage, and analyze them in reference to the existing policies and programs.

3. Methodology

A comprehensive analysis of trends and pattern of news coverage related to foreign labor migration in the mainstream print and online Nepali media has been selected as one of the major tools to monitor the progress towards the effectiveness of migration policies and governance in Nepal. It is assumed that the more positive and progressive news related to foreign labor migration are covered in most of the mainstream media, the better migration policies and governance in the country to protect and promote the rights of migrant workers, and the members of their families.

This report is based on foreign labor migration related news coverage from January-December 2017 in the selected Nepali newspapers and online portals which have been considered to have high readership in Nepal. CSC has begun the media monitoring task since January 2017 covering a total of ten news outlets, of which four of them are in Nepali,

four in English, and two online portals in Nepali language. The Four Nepali national daily include Gorkhapatra, Kantipur, NagarikDainik, and Annapurna Post. The four English daily include The Rising Nepal, The Kathmandu Post, Republica, and The Himalayan Times. And, the two online portals selected for monitoring purpose include Onlinekhabar and Setopati. Due to the time and resource constraints, other daily newspapers and online media has been excluded from this monitoring process. Thus, the findings of this media monitoring report are limited to the ten news outlets mentioned above. Similarly, due to the time and resource constraints, CSC did not focus its efforts on assessing the validity and reliability of each media coverage through alternative sources. Thus, the news, articles, and editorials found in the selected media are taken as it is for the analysis purpose.

One of the important aspects of media monitoring is to assess which foreign labor migration related theme(s) are significantly covered by media and which are not. CSC through its internal assessment has identified 13 different themes related to foreign labor migration highly pertinent to assess the effectiveness of migration policies and governance in Nepal. These thirteen categories include: (a) State services to migrant workers and members of their families, (b) Function and efficiencies of government agencies, (c) Migration policies, programs, treaties, and institutions, (d) Recruitment agencies, (e) Women and foreign labor migration, (f) Migration and human trafficking, (g) Problems faced by migrant workers, (h) Death of migrant workers, (i) Reintegration challenges of returnee migrant workers, (j) Success stories of current as well as returnee migrant workers, (k) Remittance, (l) Cost of labor migration, and m) others.

CSC appointed two full time staffs to go through the selected newspapers and news portals on a daily basis to put together different news in the defined thematic categories, highlight the key points raised in each news source, and prepare the quarterly reports for understanding the latest trends, patterns, and dynamics of foreign labor migration in Nepal. This annual media monitoring report comes as final product of a year-long intensive work.

4. Key Findings

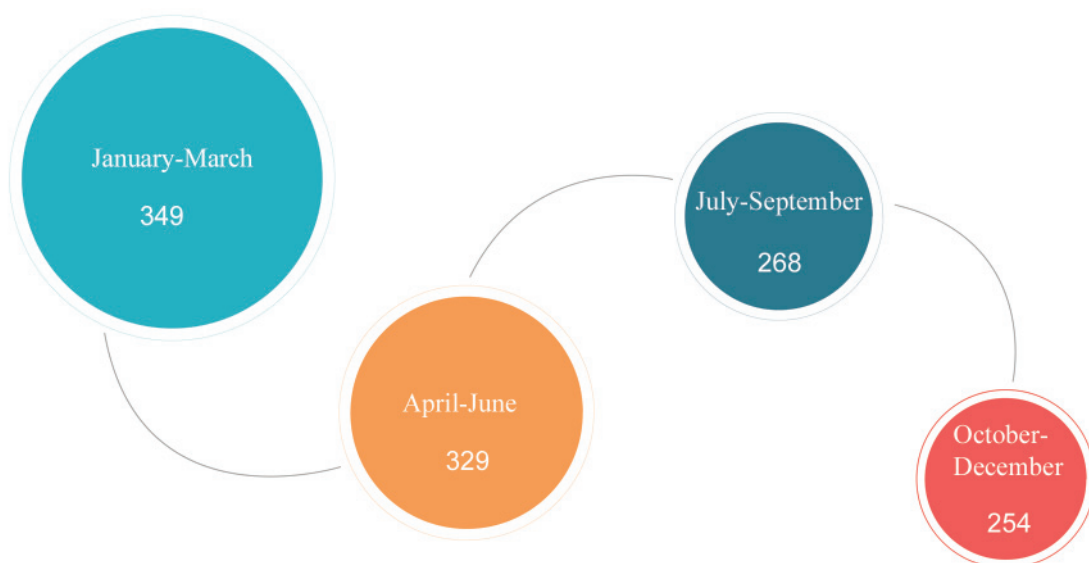
A year-long media monitoring provided handful of information reflecting on the current scenario of foreign labor migration in relation with the roles played by different stakeholders to shape the existing realities. This section will present that information in a defined order. It starts with the general overview of news coverage particularly focusing on the total news covered, and the trend followed while covering those throughout the year. This section then moves on to the comparison of news coverage as per the types of media. The subsequent section shed light on the news covered by individual news media

in a year. After going through media specific news coverage, the section further focuses on thematic news coverage and highlights. Lastly, the share of selected news media in coverage under each theme is discussed. In this particular section, special attention is paid towards the types of news prioritized by different news media. This way a bigger picture of the major findings is presented.

4.1 Overview of total news coverage

In the year 2017, total of 1200 news related to the foreign labor migration were reported in 10 different news portals monitored for this study. Out of 1200, there were 1133 news, 52 articles and 15 were editorials which account for 95, 4 and 1 percent of the total respectively. Though the percentage share of the articles and editorials on the issue are considerably low, even in general it is an acceptable fact for a news media to have high number of news than articles and editorials. Nevertheless, when looked further, the average of 4 articles and 1 editorial per month were collectively reported in 10 news media. This shows that the issue of foreign labor migration is not under covered, and it is in the process of getting its due attention considering its significance as one of the major national issues.

Trend of total news coverage as per quarter



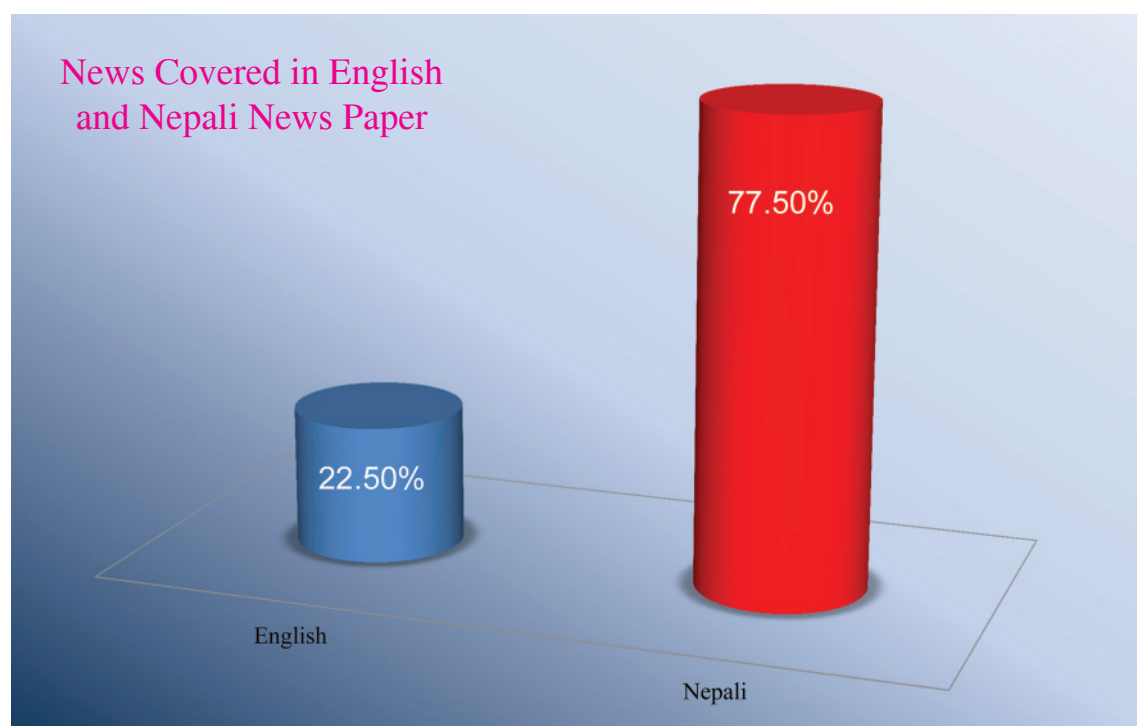
Coming to the trend of news coverage throughout the year, it shows that the number of news covered had been declining each quarter. Especially, a significant reduction in the number of news can be seen from the second to the third quarter. The difference between

the news covered in the first and second quarter was 20 and the third and fourth quarter was 14, while it was 60 in the case of second and third quarter.

This declining trend in the news coverage raises a big concern. However, this trend is reflective of various factors. During the second quarter (March-May 2017) of media monitoring, the issues and information on forthcoming elections dominated the news coverage. The country had its local level election after 20 years, so media got engrained to its hype resulting decrement in the number of news on labor migration from that of the first quarter. In the third quarter, in addition to the second phase of local election, it was also the festive season of Dashain and Tihar which took a toll in the number of news covered. Flood in Terai region of Nepal also got media attention which is also considered as another reason for the decrease in the number of labor migration related news in that particular quarter. Similarly, the fourth quarter again got affected by federal election, which was being scheduled for the first time in the country. Hence, it can be argued that due to the dominance of some other national issues throughout the year there was a gradual decrement of news coverage on the issues of labor migration.

4.2 Comparison of news coverage in English and Nepali news media

News media in Nepali language by covering 930 news have been found to cover 77.5 percent of the total news, whereas the coverage of English language media was only

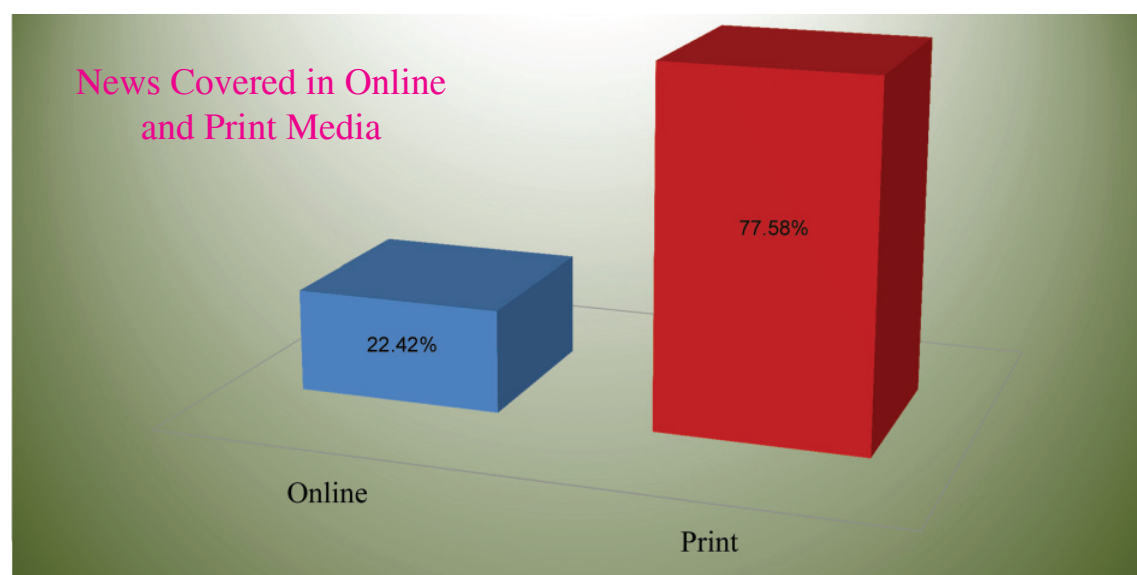


22.5 percent (270 news). However, this figure doesn't consider the fact of the ratio of news media in each category. The ratio of the monitored Nepali news media and English news media is 3:2, which means out of 10 news media, 6 were in Nepali language and 4 were in English language respectively. Hence, to avoid bias comparison we also looked at the average of news covered in each of these particular types of media. The average number of the news covered in Nepali language news media was found to be 156, while in the case of English news media it was 67. This data also reflects the fact that the labor migration news coverage in Nepali language news media is much higher than that of the English news media.

High coverage of news on labor migration in the Nepali language media than in the English language media clearly suggests that the issue is given more importance in the former case. Nevertheless, there are some factors that need to be considered. One being the English dailies comparatively have lesser number of pages, which means less space for more news coverage. Another reason behind this is also the number of readership for English dailies, which is comparatively less than the Nepali dailies. English is not the first language for Nepalese, and is not even the second language of the majority. Due to this, the English newspapers are more concerned with news gaining attention of those limited number of readers. Hence, many news concerning important issues of labor migration such as its social cost, success stories of migrant workers do not make their way in these newspapers.

4.3 Comparison of news coverage in online and print media

With 269 news coverage, the overall share of news in the online media for the year was only 22.42 percent. This makes the share of the print media 77.58 percent with the coverage of 931 news total.



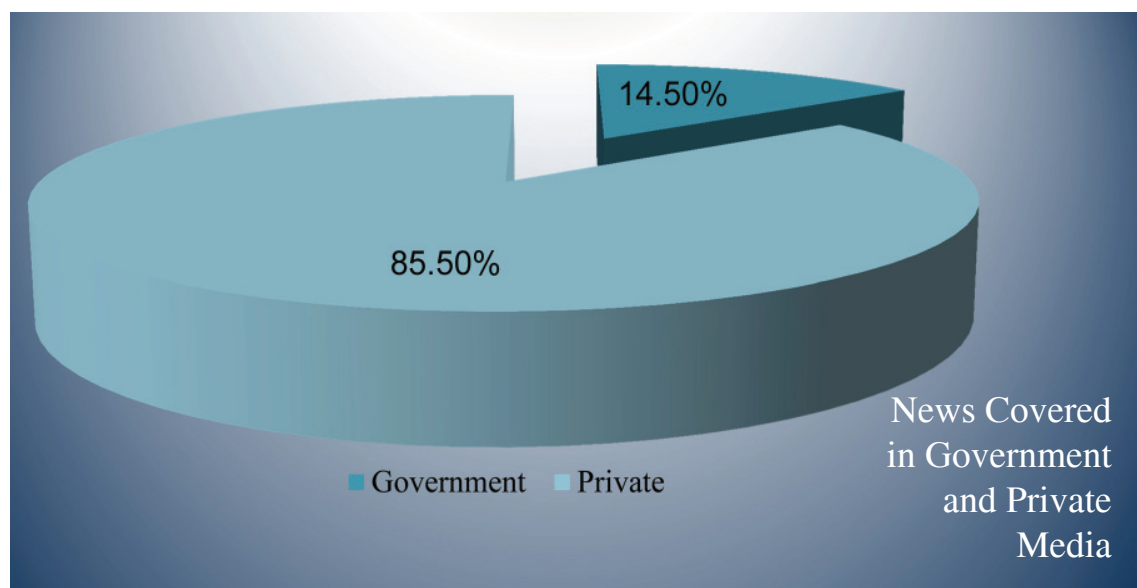
However, the online news media when considered their proportionate representation found to have covered more news in one year period. In this initiative, only two online news media are being monitored. Considering this fact the average number of news covered in the online news media was found to be 135, whereas even though with total of 8 news media outlets, the average news covered in the print media was only 118.

Here, the online media covering more news can be attributed to their 24 hours news service. Reporting every hour of the day requires them to cover more news, which might also have influenced the number of news related to foreign labor migration. Also, unlike the print media, they do not have to deal with the issue of limited space, consequently increasing their chances of covering more news in general.

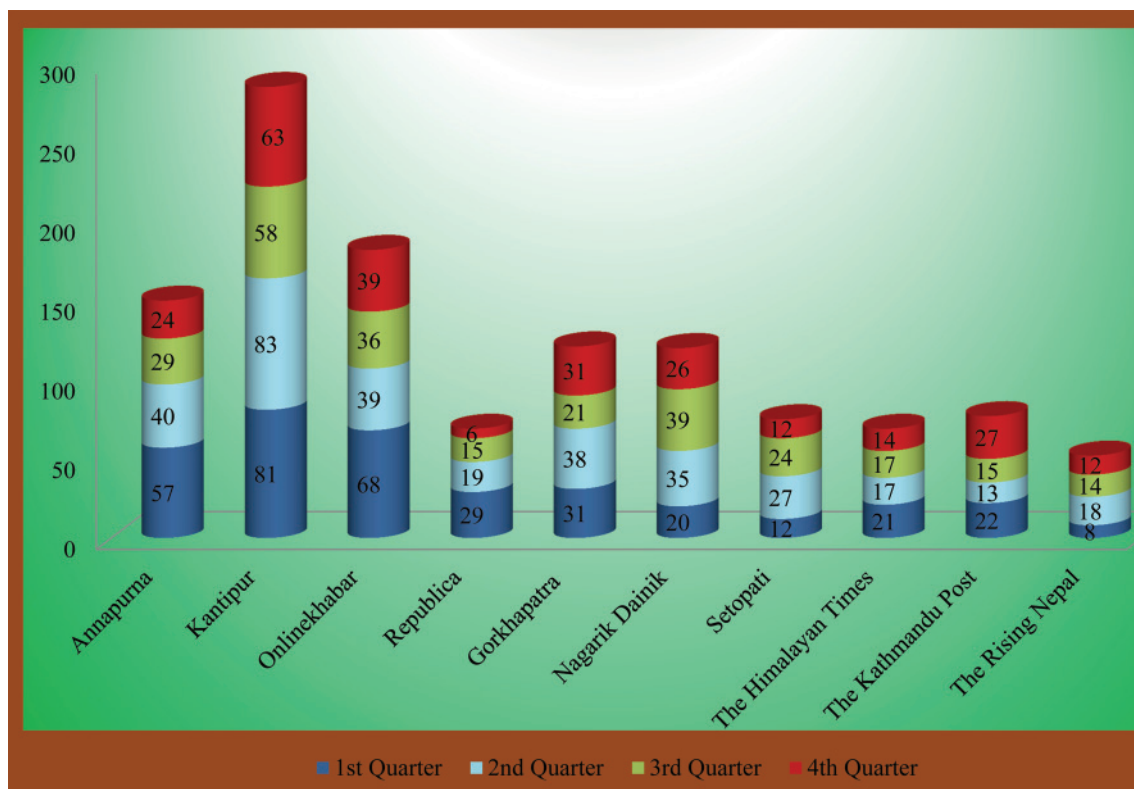
4.4 Comparison of news coverage in government and private owned media

The two government-owned national dailies with 174 covered news shared 14 percent of the total news coverage. This accounts for 86 percent of news coverage (1026 news) by eight privately owned news media.

Similarly, the government owned news media in average had 87 news covered in the year 2017, whereas in the case of privately owned news media annual average news coverage was 128. Both the data (with and without consideration of ratio of their representation) reflects the fact that privately owned news media covered more labor migration related news in 2017. The received data shows that despite being one of the significant national issues in the present context, the government is paying less attention towards foreign labor migration.



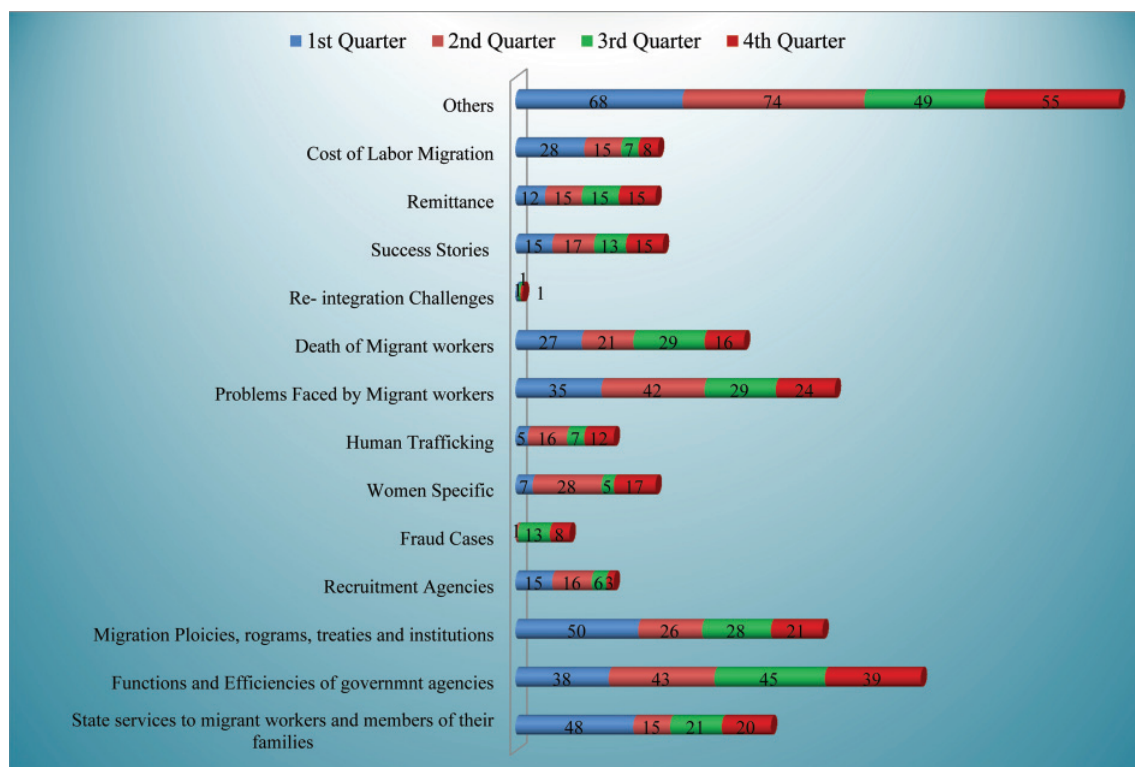
4.5 News coverage by individual news media in 2017



As shown in the figure above, throughout the year (in every quarter of media-monitoring) Kantipur daily has the highest news coverage. The total news covered by the daily was 285, which counts to 23.8 percent of the total news covered in the area. Following Kantipur daily is Onlinekhabar with a total of 182 news. However, Onlinekhabar's coverage after the first quarter declined. Similarly, subsequent decrement is observed in the case of Annapurna post (which is in third position) as well. The Rising Nepal here is the news media with the least coverage on foreign labor migration news. With 52 news, it has only 4.33 percent share in the total news covered.

4.6 Thematic news coverage

Among 14 categories, it was the category of 'others' which had the highest numbers of news (20 percent of the total news). It is followed by 'functions and efficiencies of government agencies' with 14 percent coverage. The third category making to the top three positions is 'problems faced by migrant workers' with 11 percent of the total news. Category with the least coverage of news is that of 'reintegration challenges' (0.25 percent of news) followed by 'fraud cases' with 1.83 percent of news. In the third place, there are



two categories, ‘recruitment agencies’ and ‘human trafficking’ with 3.33 percent coverage of the news. However, it should be noted that the particular category of ‘fraud cases’ was an addition made after the first quarter. Earlier, the fraud cases were recorded under ‘recruitment agencies’ as most of the found cases then were about fraud committed by the recruitment agencies.

Additionally, the figure above also shows that the categories of ‘state services to migrant workers’, ‘migration policies, programs, treaties and institutions’, and ‘cost of labor migration’ received majority coverage in the first quarter (January-March). Similarly, ‘recruitment agencies’, ‘women specific,’ ‘human trafficking’, ‘problems faced by migrant workers’, ‘success stories’ and ‘others’ were the categories with more news coverage in the second quarter. In the third quarter, those were the categories of ‘function and efficiencies of government agencies,’ ‘fraud cases,’ and ‘death of migrant workers.’ None of the categories had majority coverage in the fourth quarter. Similarly, ‘reintegration challenges’ and ‘remittance’ had equal coverage in three different quarters.

4.7 Theme based highlights and findings

This section will present theme based news that was covered as a highlight in the Nepali media in 2017.

4.7.1 State services to migrant workers and members

In 2017, a total of 104 news were covered under this category. There has been more number of news covered in the first three months of 2017 in this theme than the rest of the months. Some of the major news covered under this theme were:

- Government's initiation of labor permit distribution through online system (*Gorkhapatra, January 13th*, pg. no. 2)
- Government to provide treatment facilities to migrant workers and their family members, including the increment of the insurance amount of migrant workers from 1.5 million to 2 million rupees in 15 critical situations (*Gorkhapatra, The Himalayan Times, Annapurna Post*)
- Government initiation providing legal support to migrant workers who are imprisoned specially in the Gulf countries (*NagarikDainik, April 5th*, pg.no. 14)
- Foreign Employment Promotion Board planning to provide skilled based training to 10,000 “would be” migrant workers, and also allocating the budget of 11 crore for the purpose (*Kantipur Daily, May 26th*, pg.no.2)
- The awarding of selective successful returnee migrant workers for starting business in their community in order to encourage more returnee migrant workers to invest in the home country (*Gorkhapatra, 2nd July, pg.no.20*)
- The initiation of rescue of Nepalese migrant workers stranded in foreign land by the Ministry of Labor and Foreign Employment (*Gorkhapatra, 3rd August, pg.no.3*)

On the basis of the news covered under this theme, it is illustrated that the Government of Nepal has initiated some of the welfare services targeting migrant workers as well as their family members. Media has covered the government attention towards the health problems and health condition of foreign labor migrant workers, along with their family members. Also, the media has strengthened the state's roles and services on the process of rescuing stranded Nepalese migrant workers in various destination countries, alongside helping illegal Nepalese migrant workers to return to their homeland safely. Though the media has highlighted the government's role and its new services for the migrant workers and their families, there is still a huge gap to be fulfilled by the government to address the significant range of problems that the migrant workers and their family members are going through.

4.7.2 Functions and efficiencies of government agencies

A total of 165 news were covered under this category out of which 58 news were with negative connotation, and 107 were with positive connotation. It is also the category with the second highest news coverage. Some of the highlights under this category were:

- Government officials from Department of Foreign Employment perceived to be involved in women trafficking with their unhealthy network with some recruit-

ment agencies (*Annapurna Post, January 2nd , pg. no.3*)

- Government of Nepal seeking description of financial transactions from the manpower agencies in order to investigate the implementation of its free visa and free ticket policy (*Kantipur Daily, March 17th , pg. no.15*)
- The government dropping Asha Lama from envoy list but withholding Sharmila Parajuli for the proposed ambassador positions in the country like UAE and Oman due to the opposition for their involvement in recruitment agencies (*Onlinekhabar, March 3rd*)
- 18 Nepalese migrant workers being rescued from Bukit Jalil camp of Malaysia in the effort from the Government of Nepal (*NagarikDainik, April 23rd ,pg. no.15*)
- Establishment of the Department of Foreign Employment Fraud Control and Rescue desk at the Ministry of Labor (*Kantipur, July 6th , pg. no.2*)
- The Director General of DoFE Bhiswa Raj Pandey was arrested by CIAA for the graft (*The Himalayan Times, November 16th , pg. no.1*)

Media has covered both positive and negative functional aspects of the government agencies. The government has been more proactive regarding rescuing the stranded Nepalese migrant workers in various destination countries, and has helped many migrant workers to return home safely. The government has been working for the welfare of the migrant workers, and is also trying to simplify the migration process by introducing new technologies. But, there are also news recorded which raise big questions regarding the efficiency and accountability of the government agencies towards foreign labor migration. Some of these were news reports on the involvement of government officials in human trafficking, running manpower agencies and the Director General of DoFE, being arrested by CIAA.

4.7.3 Migration policies, programs, treaties, and institutions

Out of total news covered, 125 news are under this category. Migration policies of both Nepal and countries of destination were recorded here. Some of the highlighted news of this category are as follows:

- Draft preparation for the amendment of Foreign Employment Act has been stranded after the transfer of the President and Secretary related to the committee (*Gorkhapatra, February 4th ,pg.no.4*)
- Qatar government's approval of a draft of law to provide legal protection to many domestic female workers for the first time (*The Himalayan Times, February 10th , pg.no 11*)
- International Relation and Labor Committee of parliament asking government to stop the process of sending domestic workers to the Gulf countries (*Onlinekhabar, April 2nd, pg. no.2, Kantipur Daily, April 6th, pg. no.6*)
- Saudi Arabian government introduced 90 days amnesty provision for illegal migrant workers, and 73 hundred Nepalese workers have been able to return to Nepal because of the provision (*Kantipur Daily, June 29th , pg. no.19*)

- The labor agreement draft between Nepal government and Jordan government has been finalized (*Kantipur Daily, July 8th, pg.no.10*)
- The compulsion of opening two bank accounts by people seeking foreign employment in the near future to ensure saving of the remitted money (*Onlinekhabar, July 14th*)
- National Human Right Commission of Nepal has asked for the amendment of the Foreign Employment Act with a strong provision relating to stop human trafficking and forced labor (*Gorkhapatra, December 13th, pg.no.25*)

Media has highlighted the new policies and programs adopted by the Government of Nepal as well as the government of the destination countries regarding foreign labor migration. The news covered demonstrates that the Government of Nepal has many policies and programs to regulate and manage foreign labor migration; however there is a lack of sustainable vision to guide and promote better migration governance. The Government of Nepal has still failed to introduce policies and programs related to reintegration of returnee migrant workers including good investment and utilization of the remittance.

4.7.4 Recruitment agencies

A total of 40 news were covered under the category of ‘recruitment agencies.’ Some of the major news covered in this category are as follows:

- Foreign employment agencies exploring new destination countries in Europe for better employment opportunities for potential Nepalese migrant workers (*The Himalayan Times, January 15th , pg.no. 1*)
- Only 660 manpower agencies submitting the description of financial transactions to the Department of Foreign Employment (*Kantipur Daily, April 18th , pg. no.2*)
- Manpower agencies claiming Department of Foreign Employment using middle-man was charging and taking huge sum of money with the condition of not advancing the investigation any further for the case of free ticket free visa (*Kantipur Daily, June 26th , pg. no.2*)
- Though the government has established a provision of ‘free visa and free ticket’ to the migrants going for work into the Gulf countries and Malaysia, it was found that many recruitment agencies has been charging them with more than 1 lakh Nepali rupees (*NagarikDainik, September 5th ,pg. no.12*)

Very less number of news has been covered under this category in 2017. The more number of news related to recruitment agencies was covered in the first half of 2017, whereas there has been decrement in the number of news covered in the second half of 2017. Media has highlighted the news related to accountability and effectiveness of the recruitment agencies in free visa and free ticket policy of the government to send migrant workers in the selected countries. Migrant workers are stranded in the destination countries due to recruitment agencies’ false information and fake job contract. The role of government

for the control and regulation of recruitment agencies is very weak, and the recruitment agencies majorly lack their accountability towards the government.

4.7.5 Fraud cases

There were only 22 total news covered in this category in 2017. Some of the major news covered under this category were:

- In Nawalparasi district, two hundred seventy six youths have become a victim of fraudulent by the recruitment agencies in the last three years (*Nagarik Dainik, March 22nd , pg. no. 17*)
- 17 youths from Udayapur district who had been sent to Saudi by Soundlines Recruitment Service were stranded in Saudi with no proper job (no job as per the agreement), and had to stay in a hotel (*Onlinekhabar , June 21st)*
- Registration of 1717 complaints of fraudulent cases in the Department of Foreign Employment against manpower companies in the first ten months of fiscal year 2016/17, out of which only 526 cases were provided with a verdict (*Annapurna Post, July 4th , pg.no.18*)
- Only a limited number of victims of foreign employment fraudulent received compensation from the manpower companies. Only 687 cases were given a compensation adding up to 9 crore 3 lakhs rupees, out of 1442 complaints for the total sum of 43 crore and 6 lakhs rupees (*Kantipur Daily , July 22nd, pg.no.14*)

As mentioned above, news covered under this category is very less. One of the factors for less reporting of the news related to fraudulent cases can be due to the lack of awareness among the victims about the government mechanism to report such cases. Such disparity in awareness leads to low number of cases reported to the government, which ultimately affects the news reported in the media.

News reports under this category show that there is an increase in the number of fraudsters. These fraudsters give false hopes regarding better foreign employment opportunities and high standard of living for their family to the individuals seeking foreign labor migration. Furthermore, mostly young girls are seen to be influenced by the fraudsters as they are less aware of the foreign labor migration process, and can be easily lured by the foreign employment opportunities these days.

4.7.6 Women specific

A total of 57 news were covered under this category during the whole year. Some of the major news covered under this category were:

- During the seven years of time period, 4,59,542 passports were distributed to the Nepalese women out of which only 2,50,000 women are reported to be migrated for foreign employment. The usage of the passport by rest of the women and their

current status are unknown (*Gorkhapatra, March 19th , pg. no.1*)

- A data obtained through Maiti Nepal stated that yearly 8 thousand Nepalese women leave their home country for foreign employment opportunities (*Gorkhapatra, January 21st, pg. no.21*)
- Domestic Workers Concern Society stated that the directive of the Parliamentary International Relations and Labour Committee's decision to ban domestic workers from going abroad for employment will rather increase the incidence of women trafficking in Nepal (*Republica, April 6th, pg.no.4*)
- 100 thousands women workers are being affected by the decision of not allowing any women for domestic work, including those migrant workers who came in their holidays (*Kantipur Daily, April 12th , pg.no.16*)

During the months April-June 2017, the news covered regarding the problems faced by the Nepalese women migrants workers in various destination countries were very much focused by all the ten news portals. The news covered also emphasized the various kinds of violence that women migrants were going through.

4.7.7 Human trafficking

With the total news covered, only 40 news related to human trafficking were covered over a period of a year. Some of the news covered under this category were:

- Involvement of DoFE staffs in human trafficking in the name of foreign employment (*Annapurna Post, January 2nd, pg.no.3, Kantipur Daily , March 29th , pg. no.9*)
- Many people being lured to good employment opportunities are taken to India and forced to sell their kidneys (*Gorkhapatra, April 7th , pg. no.4*)
- Nepalese males migrated for foreign labor employment are trafficked to Nigeria through Delhi. A total of 36 cases of men trafficking has been registered at the Central Investigation Bureau of Nepal Police in the fiscal year 2071/72 (*Onlinekhabar , April 15th*)
- The publishing of the name list of 51 agents involved in trafficking of manpower by the Nepalese Embassy in UAE (*Onlinekhabar, September 4th*)
- The involvement of the officials of Department of Immigration, the staffs of airline companies, and the security personnel at the Tribhuvan International Airport in human trafficking (*Republica, August 8th ,pg.no.3*)

There has been a fluctuation in the total news covered regarding the human trafficking and foreign labor migration. The news covered reflects that young girls, especially have become easy targets for the traffickers because of the false hope given by the agents or Manpower Company of getting better employment opportunities and fulfilling their dream of living a high standard life.

The current trend shows that sending youths through illegal channels to the various Gulf countries, alongside trafficking of young girls in the African countries and Gulf countries in the name of foreign labor migration to Africa and the Gulf countries is the new phenomenon in human trafficking. Additionally, there was also news coverage regarding organs trafficking in the name of foreign employment opportunities.

4.7.8 Problems faced by the migrant workers

There were 130 total news covered presenting the stories of various individuals facing different problems at different destination countries during foreign labor migration. Some of the major news covered under this category were:

- A Nepalese migrant worker, Prem Bahadur Rai is imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for 11 months. He claims to be innocent and has requested the Government of Nepal to rescue him (*NagarikDainik, March 5th, pg.no.21*).
- Santa Bahadur Pun urging for help for being imprisoned since last 17 years in Saudi Arabia (*Kantipur Daily, September 2nd, pg.no.14*)
- Under the campaign to look for unregistered migrants in Malaysia, 104 Nepalese migrants have been apprehended and processed for deportation with no possibility of returning back (*Kantipur Daily, July 3rd, pg. no. 12*)
- The effect of Qatar crisis has now started to surface among the Nepalese labor migrants working there. About 30 Nepalese workers have lost their jobs in Saudi Arabia who were working in agricultural business run by Qatar (*Annapurna Post, July 30th, pg. no.1*)
- Shanta Rai of Bhojpur who went to Iraq three years ago for foreign employment has returned home with a disabled body on a wheelchair. She is currently undergoing treatment. She claims that she was constantly tortured and beaten by her employer (*Kantipur Daily, December 28th, pg. no.13*)

In this category, mostly news recorded were the problems of the Nepalese migrant workers in the Gulf countries than in the other countries. News covered in this category reflects that the migrant workers become the victims of various problems in the destination countries than in the origin country. Media has given high news value to the news related to the problems or issues in the destination countries rather than the news related to the problems faced by the migrant workers in their own country. Many news recorded in this category were about the Nepalese migrants workers imprisoned in the Gulf countries as illegal migrant, and the lack of information regarding the laws and policies of the destination countries. There is also increase in the number of stranded Nepalese migrant workers in the destination countries and their airports. The Government of Nepal has given attention on the process of rescuing such stranded migrant workers, but the magnitude of the problem is very high; thus, the government should be proactive before the migrant workers leave their homeland for foreign employment in various destination countries.

4.7.9 Death of migrant workers in country of destination

There were 93 total news related to the death of the Nepalese migrant labor due to diverse causes in various destination countries within the time period of 2017. In regards to the same, the most significant news covered was a team of doctors and government personnel from Nepal visiting Malaysia to inquire the cause behind sudden death of Nepalese migrant workers (*Kantipur Daily, July 6th, pg. no.2*)

The high prevalent of deaths were recorded due to the accidents in the working place and sudden deaths of the migrant workers while they were sleeping. Due to the lack of safe working environment for the migrant workers in various destination countries, there is a high risk of deaths and accidents of Nepalese migrant workers. After the death of migrant workers abroad the families of the migrant workers have to go through a lot of hardship, and have to wait for long period of time to receive the dead body from abroad. The Government of Nepal should actively work to address these problems faced by the family members of migrant workers, including the compensation to be received by the migrant worker's family members when they die in the destination country. Unless, the Government of Nepal establish strict rules and regulations governing foreign labor migration to protect labour inside and outside the country the number of death of migrant workers in the destination countries will not decrease. The government has recently formed and deployed groups of officials to study the causes of death of migrants workers in the Gulf countries, however it still seems like the government lacks seriousness regarding the issue.

4.7.10 Reintegration challenges of returnee migrant workers

There were only 3 total news covered under this category in the year 2017. This is the least news covered category among the categories mentioned above. One of the most highlighted news covered under this category was the struggle of Dolma, a labor migrant, who returned home after being imprisoned for 10 years in Kuwait, and was financially ruined and living in a shelter (*Kantipur, July 16th , pg. no.1*)

The government's priority towards the strengthening the migration governance is very much lacking, and the Government of Nepal is just entirely focused on the regulation process of the foreign labor migration. None of the government interventions and policies that exist till date has given importance to the re-integration of the huge number of migrant workers. This has caused many problems for the migrant workers who have planned to return to the home country, and work for their family and country. The government has not only failed to create employment opportunities to control the number of youths going for the foreign labor migration but also to retain the returnee migrants back home. The government is also not working for utilizing the skills, experiences, and knowledge the migrants workers have earned from other countries to develop the country.

4.7.11 Success stories

A total of 60 news were covered under this category, which focused on the success stories of the returnee migrants. These migrants are now involved in agricultural business and are earning a good living with their families. Most of the news covered in the category defined that most of the returnee migrants workers have invested and started business related to agro sector. These news covered in various media have spread positivity for many migrant workers including those returnee migrant workers planning to do something in the country. The government's role and its support is very crucial to encourage more migrant workers to invest in their home country when they return, alongside encouraging many youths in domestic employment who are thinking of going abroad for employment opportunities.

4.7.12 Remittance

There were 57 news covered under the category of remittance. Most of the news covered on this topic is related to effective investment of remittance and the declining rate of the remittances than previous year. Some of the highlighted news were:

- Almost 44 billion rupees entered Nepal during the festive season, Dashain and Tihar. However, this amount is 13 million USD less in comparison to the last year's remittance during the same season. According to the President of Remittance Association, there is always increase in the remittance during Dashain period, however recently the rate of remittance has been decreasing (*Annapurna Post, October 12th , pg. no.13*)
- According to the report prepared jointly by the Overseas Development Institution and SWATEE, Nepal could miss its target to become a middle income country by relying heavily on the remittance income (*Republica, October 26th, pg.no.14*)
- There is still no proper management mechanism of remittance in Nepal due to which many migrant workers do not have any concrete idea on what to do with the amount of remittance they have sent, and most of the remittance money is used for domestic purpose (*NagarikDainik, July 3rd , pg. no.15*)

Despite the huge contribution of remittance in the Nepalese economy, the Government of Nepal has failed to encourage the migrant workers to manage and utilize the remittance in better ways. Currently, the trend shows that the large portion of the remittance are utilized for the consumption and supporting the family of the foreign migrant workers. Hence, there is a need of a proper government mechanism regarding the management of the remittance money, which can guide the migrant workers towards proper utilization of the remittance to receive its optimal value.

4.7.13 Cost of labor migration

This category covered 58 total news altogether, out of which 30 news were on the social cost, 25 news on the economic cost and 3 news on the political cost of foreign labor migration respectively. Some of highlighted news covered on this category were:

Social Cost

- Due to the foreign labor migration in Kaski district, there is an increase in the number of family dispute and divorce. The main reason behind is the wife of migrants workers being in a relationship with other man, and the husband of the female migrants workers in a relationship with other women (*NagarikDainik, August 12th, pg. no.18*)
- Foreign employment has led to the rise of divorce cases in Dhankuta. Out of most of the cases registered at the Dhankuta district court, majority of them are attributed to foreign employment (*The Himalayan Times, October 3rd, pg. no.6*)

Economic Cost

- In the village of Saptari, Bodebasai 5, huts are replaced by tall buildings because of the foreign labor migration (*Gorkhapatra, May 11th, pg. no.20*)
- Due to the increase in youth going abroad in search of foreign employment, there has been a shortage of manpower to run tea factories and others. Many Indian manpower are imported to carry out the activities of the factories (*Nagarik Dainik, May 10th, pg. no.19*)

Political Cost

- After exercising the voting rights in the election, many migrant workers went to India seeking seasonal employment opportunities (*Nagrik Dainik, December 1st, pg. no.28*)

There were 28 total news covered in this category from January-March 2017, whereas, in the month of April – June, 2017, 15 total news were covered. The number of news covered reached 17 in the month of July – September 2017, and the number of news covered decreased to eight in the month of October – December 2017. Many news have covered cases and impacts of the foreign migration that are seen in Nepalese society nowadays. With the increase in the foreign labor migration, there has also been direct-indirect impact on the micro level politics. As most of the youth have migrated for employment it can be claimed that there has been some impact in the election results as well. Now, the Government of Nepal should also focus and work towards, minimizing the impacts of the cost of foreign labor both at micro and macro level.

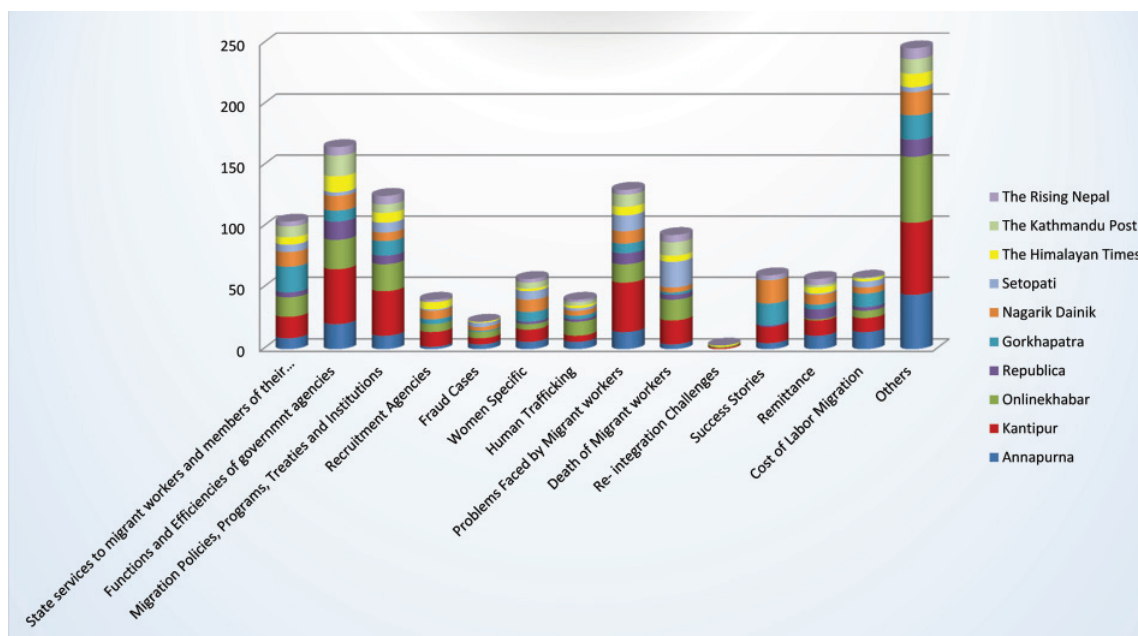
4.7.14 Others

With 246 news in total, the most coverage news among the category was covered under 'Others' during the whole year. Some of the highlighted news under this category include the following:

- The decreased rate of people going for foreign employment by 17 % in the very first month of fiscal year 2074/75 (*Annapurna Post*, August 25th , pg.no.13)
- The delay in implementation of skills test system for workers seeking employment in Korea due to difficulty in technical preparation (*Onlinekhabar*, July 31st)
- The increasing case of rampant kidney failure amongst migrant workers (*The Himalayan Times*, September 2nd , pg. no.1)
- According to the Labor and Employment Minister, the main challenge of foreign labor migration is to stop the fraud cases, and number of Nepalese youth from being the victims of such fraud (*Gorkhapatra*, December 19th ,pg.no.20)
- Marking International Migration Day, many programs were conducted in the various parts of the country, but the reformed policies and laws for safe migration remained only in the speech (*NagarikDainik*, December 19th, pg. no.15)

As signified by its name news covered under this category are those which do not fit under any of the 14 specified categories. However, some of the news covered in this section had higher significance. From this it can be attributed that in future if certain pattern of news with higher significance exist while reviewing the news a new category should be created to cover such stories.

4.8 Thematic Coverage by each News Media



The figure above shows that out of 14 categories, Kantipur daily has majority coverage of news in 6 categories exclusively. Among these too, it can be seen that significant amount of coverage is in the categories of ‘functions and efficiencies of government agencies’, and ‘migration policies, programs, treaties and institutions’ with 27 and 29 percent of the news respectively. Furthermore, the highest number of news coverage in three more categories of ‘fraud cases’, ‘women specific’ and ‘reintegration challenges’ were seen in Onlinekhabar, NagarikDainik and The Himalayan Times. Annapurna Post had the highest coverage of news (i.e. 24 percent) in the category of ‘cost of labor migration’. Similarly, Onlinekhabar, Gorkhapatra, NagarikDainik and Setopati were found to have highest news coverage in the categories of ‘human trafficking’, ‘state services to migrant workers’, ‘success stories of migrant workers’ and ‘death of migrant workers’ respectively.

Kantipur daily leading performance in covering the majority of the news in most number of categories signifies its proactive role in migration governance. Its high coverage of news related to ‘function and efficiencies of government agencies’ and ‘migration policies, programs, treaties and institutions’ strengthens this fact. Nagarik Dainik shows to have covered the majority of women specific news. Such active reporting of the daily on the diverse issues concerning the foreign labor migration can also be accounted to its established credibility and high readership. However, comparing to its share on other categories, Kantipur has less coverage of the news related to the state’s services to the migrant workers (16 percent of the total). This suggests that Kantipur is comparatively less concerned in reporting the news that presents government initiatives.

On the other hand, though Gorkhapatra has only 10 percent of the share in total news coverage, it has the highest share of news (i.e. 20 percent) under the category of ‘state services to migrant workers’. Also 30 percent of the total news related to the success stories of the migrant workers are covered by Gorkhapatra. On the contrary, when it comes to the categories such as ‘functions and efficiencies of government agencies’ and ‘problems faced by migrant workers’ it has covered only 5 and 6 percent of the news respectively.

5. Synchronized Analysis

A year worth of review on a subject is certainly not enough to generalize it in all its entirety, but it surely enables one to understand the direction it has headed from and where it is heading. The media monitoring of the foreign labor migration has provided an insight into the phenomenon making it possible to analyze the dynamics of migration governance in Nepal. Based on the review, it seems that foreign labor migration is on its own pace with no extraordinary transition just yet. Incidents of death, human trafficking, fraud, and exploitation have always tagged along with the phenomenon of foreign labor migration in the years, and with 22 news coverage of fraud, 40 on human trafficking, 130 about prob-

lems faced by migrant workers, and 93 news articles about death covered in a year alone, the seriousness on the efforts of the concerned authorities to make foreign labor migration safe and reliable becomes questionable.

The news about the involvement of government officials from Department of Foreign Employment in human trafficking (Annapurna Post, January 2nd, pg.no. 2) is only one of the many examples that reflect the seriousness of labor migrant issues amongst the concerned authorities. One might argue that an action of a few officials does not reflect an entire organization, which is a fairly valid point, but when the news of the Director General of the very organization established to work for the melioration of foreign employment-DoFE is found involved in the cases of bribe and abuse of authority, it gives space for the people to be skeptical about the integrity of the authority rather than developing trust. Given the context, it would not be an exaggerated analysis to say that the efforts of the government is lacking far beyond than the reality when it comes to improving the status of foreign labor migration in Nepal.

There is no denying that the government has taken initiatives in making foreign labour migration an easy and desirable process. Provision of online labor permit distribution, providing treatment facilities to migrant workers and their families, increment in the insurance amount of the migrant workers, providing legal support to the migrant workers imprisoned in the Gulf countries, and Foreign Employment Promotion Board providing skilled based training to 10,000 aspiring migrant workers are some praiseworthy attempts taken by the authorities to promote a positive change in the foreign labor migration.

While any attempt of improving foreign labor migration is commendable, it is also essential not to be overwhelmed by these limited efforts of the government, and to observe these changes on a broader perspective. Though the taken initiatives certainly benefit the existing and aspiring migrants, it can be analyzed that the changes made are solutions to the existing problems rather than an effort to eliminate or reduce the difficulties altogether. No significant news on improved system of regulation and monitoring within the authorities were found, which shows that though the government is willing to work towards filling the existing gaps present at a larger scale, they are still very nominal effort to fill the holes within the system. Additionally, while signing of the drafts of labor agreement with newer countries, provision of free skilled based training to aspiring migrants, and other similar attempts extend the possibilities of employment for Nepalese youth seeking economic growth, it is also important to question whether the government sees foreign employment as an easy way out to its own inability of providing proper opportunities of employment within the country.

Overall analysis of foreign labor migration

Foreign labor migration is one of the emerging discourses in the context of Nepal. Many Nepalese youths are working as foreign labor migrant workers in various countries in the

world. Today, in many rural villages it is very hard to find a single household whose family members have not gone abroad in search of employment opportunities. The number of Nepalese youth who have placed foreign labor migration as their first and last priority for employment and living is continuously increasing. Along with the increase in the number of youths leaving homeland for foreign employment, there has been increase in the magnitude of the problems caused due to it in the society. In the context of Nepalese society, various new dimensions of foreign labor migration are seen such as social cost, economic cost, and political cost.

On the basis of news covered through monitoring of 10 news portals in one year, the real picture of the foreign labor migration as well as the current situation of Nepalese migrant workers can be defined easily. There were 130 news covered which demonstrated the various problems that migrant workers are going through in their country of origin as well as in the country of destination, including the high number of deaths of the migrant workers in various destination countries. There are so many problems related to the foreign labor migration that the efforts and initiation of the Government of Nepal is not sufficient. Many loopholes exist in the regulation, control, and monitoring part of the migration governance of Nepal. The number of news covered regarding foreign labor migration support the fact that the Government of Nepal lacks preparation, and has no effective policies and programs to address the challenges that may arise in the near future due to foreign labor migration. The present migration governance is more focused in the smooth regulation of foreign migration than the promotion of safe foreign migration for Nepalese youth. Foreign labor migration if managed and controlled well is considered as one of the opportunities in the context of Nepal. The government should identify the weakness of the migration governance of Nepal, and put in efforts to improve foreign labor migration as one of the strong assets for prosperity and development of the country.

Positive aspects of foreign labor migration

The Government of Nepal has worked to address the problems of foreign labor migration, and to provide easy access for Nepalese migrant workers to various governmental services. Despite the number of problems that still exist in foreign labor migration, there are number of policies and programs introduced by the government to minimize the problems and risks of foreign labor migration.

The Government of Nepal has made labor agreement with Jordan, Oman, United Arab Emirates and Malaysia where the numbers of Nepalese migrant workers are high to ensure their fundamental rights and their protection in the destination countries. The government has also planned to have labor agreement with the remaining countries. The Government of Nepal has signed an agreement with the Government of Israel for sending Nepalese women migrant worker as caregivers. The government has announced free health facilities to the migrant workers as well as their family members considering the health problems faced by the migrant workers, and their notable contribution in the eco-

conomic development of the country. The government is providing compensation to the family of migrant workers who die in the destination countries during the employment to support the family members after their death. Similarly, there were also many news covered highlighting the effort of the government to rescue and return stranded migrants workers in the destination countries including the illegal migrants workers in the Gulf countries facing many problems and wanting to return to their home country.

Additionally, there are number of news that highlight many successful stories of the migrant workers who have returned to their country, and have initiated agro based business utilizing their experiences and skills gained while working in the foreign countries. These news have given small hope to many youth as well as the migrant workers who want to return to their country and invest their income, labor, and skills back at home. The government has also awarded returnee migrant workers who have been able to establish successful business to encourage more migrant workers to do the same.

Analysis of the problem

In the context of Nepal, the foreign labor migration is itself one of the major problems. There are many dimensions of problems which are associated with the foreign labor migration. The major problems identified by this study are that the migrant workers face diverse problems throughout the migration cycle. There are many news reported defining the problems that are faced by the Nepalese migrant workers when they reach to the destination countries. Most of the migrant workers come from rural villages where they lack proper information regarding the migration process. They are unaware of the laws, policies, culture, and language of the particular destination country where they migrate. This indicates that most of the migrant workers are not well prepared before leaving their country. This is one of the reasons behind migrant workers facing problems while working at the destination countries. The high numbers of Nepalese migrant workers imprisoned in the Gulf countries due to various reasons, including the high number of youth who are stranded in the destination countries and airports are some of the examples of problems faced by migrant workers in foreign lands.

While following the news covered on policies introduced by the government, one thing that we can draw upon is the haphazard way of the government introducing policies that fail to envision the impact of those policies. This also clearly point outs the lack of capability/ willingness of the government to deal with the impact led by such policy implementation. Temporary ban on traveling to the Gulf countries in tourist visa because of series of incidents of human trafficking to different countries via Tribhuvan International Airport can be accounted as a good policy introduced by the government (April 7, Republica, Kantipur, Annapurna Post). However, around 100 thousands women workers are being affected by the decision of not allowing any woman for domestic work, including those migrant workers who came in for the holidays (April 2017, Kantipur). This reflects the unplanned decision making or incapability of government to envision its impact upon

the lives of the migrant workers as well as their dependent family members. There are many policies, programs, treaties, and agreements done by the government to ensure safe foreign labor migration, and to protect the rights of the migrant workers. But most of them exist only on paper, and the practical implementation of these policies and programs are very poor.

The issues of women migrant workers are found to be more distressing. A data obtained through Maiti Nepal, which was highlighted in the news, showed that yearly 8 thousands Nepali women leave home country for foreign employment opportunities. Similarly, the news also shed light on the increasing trend of Nepalese women migrant workers abroad committing suicide. Even inside the country, the societal disgrace towards female on both the sides- one who has returned from foreign migration, and the other who has lived in the country without her husband is highly prevalent. The women migrant workers go through a lot of undesirable situations throughout the migration cycle. Many individual cases of the women migrant workers facing various forms of violence from their employers in the Gulf countries were also highlighted by the news portals.

Another key problem identified on the basis of the data is the increasing cost of the foreign labor migration in the Nepalese society. Nowadays, the society has witnessed varieties of social cost like divorces, less guidance to children during their years of physical and psychological growth, increasing cases of dowry especially in Terai region of Nepal and many more due to the foreign labor migration. There is a huge impact on the economic and political cost of the foreign labor migration in the growth and development of the society and country. The government should focus more on these issues and address these problems as soon as possible to minimize the impact of the cost of foreign migration.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Besides the occasional rise and fall on the number of people heading for employment abroad, the foreign labor migration of the country is as existent as it was a few years ago. In juxtaposition of the incidents and policies that could result in a decrease of migrant workers to certain countries, there is also the possibility of new destinations that will provide the same opportunities. This will help maintain the stronghold of labor migration as one of the biggest phenomenon of the country, which is unlikely to change in the near future without almost overnight economic transformation of the country. While the problems and prospects can be kept in check through effective and timely monitoring and regulation, the attitude remains the same which keeps the phenomenon from evolving into what it has aspired for. The newly formed structures of the government can serve as an opportunity of improving the governance of foreign labor migration through regional

solutions to national problems, but there is also the possibility of the process becoming more chaotic and complicated.

Foreign labor migration still being one of the top choices of the economic sources in Nepal, the apathetic attempts of improvisation might keep the problems at the bay momentarily, but it cannot serve as a long term solution in an effort to improve the existing status of the phenomenon. While the government displays their effort through amendments in policies and introduction of welfare programs and facilitative provisions occasionally, a sincere effort of their implementation, however is still lacking. There is lack of policies formulated and programs designed that are directed towards the welfare and securing the rights of migrant workers, but the condition remains the same in the absence of their effective execution and implementation. Despite being associated with migrant workers and labor migration, the agendas of government authorities, recruitment agencies, and private sectors seems to disperse, bringing them almost to a state of competitiveness rather than consolidation. The government needs to look at foreign labor migration as more than just a social phenomenon affecting the national economy, the recruitment agencies as a business, and the private sector organizations as a thematic area of social welfare. The vastness of foreign labor migration extends from issues of basic human rights to shaping international relations and everything within, and thus demands a co-operated attempt of the government, NGOs, and recruitment agencies to make it desirable, and to gain their respective benefits.

The process of foreign labor migration is not only limited to Nepal, as there are numerous countries in Asia alone that follow the trend. The government needs to look beyond the national borders for answers as there are many countries with respected status of labor migration. Philippines for instance is considered to have the process figured out, and serves as a role model for countries following the same path. While it would be foolish to assume that the replication of an ideal model will bring in results overnight, it can surely be considered as a blueprint to set an effective process in accordance with one's own circumstances. It has been at least 25 years, if not more, that Nepal has been sending people to work abroad, and in this duration the classification of labor has always remained "un-skilled" or "semi-skilled." The failure of the government to produce skilled labor and provide sufficient opportunities at home weakens its bargaining power in the global market, forcing it to agree to the provisions of minimal benefits. It is essential that the government pays attention to generating labor force that are capable of taking care of themselves, rather than sending inept to the field and attempting to rescue them later.

The media can also be considered as an effective means in improving the status of labor migration. While the role of media has always been pivotal in bringing forth the existing issues and incidents of social, economic, and political importance before the general public, they can also be instrumental in ushering the necessary changes. In addition to coverage of the news related to foreign labor migration, dissemination of information of importance could help raise awareness among the public at a wider scale given its

extended reach. As media could easily reach almost every nook and cranny at the quickest amount of time, a role beyond the messenger could be really beneficial to the people. For instance, people can know about the changes being initiated in foreign employment policies referring to the news sources, but they remain oblivious to the specifications of the changes being made, and how it will impact those seeking employment abroad in absence of easy access to those policies. Media can be effective in bridging this gap between knowledge and information ensuring that people are not just aware but well-informed about critical issues.

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