



Quarter of Nepalis Still Hungry During Pandemic

A year into the Covid-19 crisis, Nepalis have more food but still suffer under-nutrition



Nepal, April 12 —

Nepalis continue to suffer from pandemic-induced food insecurity even as Nepal sees the first signs of the second wave of Covid-19.

A new report released last week shows that 16.8% of households have inadequate food consumption, and nearly 2.7% had insufficient food stock to meet their needs, 43% of children between 6-23 months did not meet the minimum recommended dietary needs.

The survey was conducted in December 2020 by the UN World Food Programme

(UN-WFP) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, with support from the Australian government. It is the third in a series of nationwide surveys to assess the impact of Covid-19 on household food security in Nepal. The first two rounds were conducted in April, and August 2020.

The survey covered 4,416 households from all seven provinces, and was collected through live telephone interviews.

The highest prevalence of food insecurity, as measured by poor nutrition, was found in Karnali Province, accounting for 4.7% of households,



From RC's Desk

Nepal is at a critical juncture. Hospitals in major cities are at capacity and have even needed to turn patients away. In this time of crisis, the UN supports and will continue to support Nepali in the response to COVID-19. The Prime Minister and I had a meeting, where we discussed how the UN can even further intensify efforts to support the country's COVID-19 response. The Prime Minister called for our support for procuring essential health commodities but to also facilitate stronger psychosocial support services for the public.

I visited Teku Hospital and my heart broke as I saw people being treated outside the hospital due to lack of space inside. However, I am comforted by the fact that we are all doing everything we can to make sure that this does not continue. We are working with the Government and the Humanitarian community to

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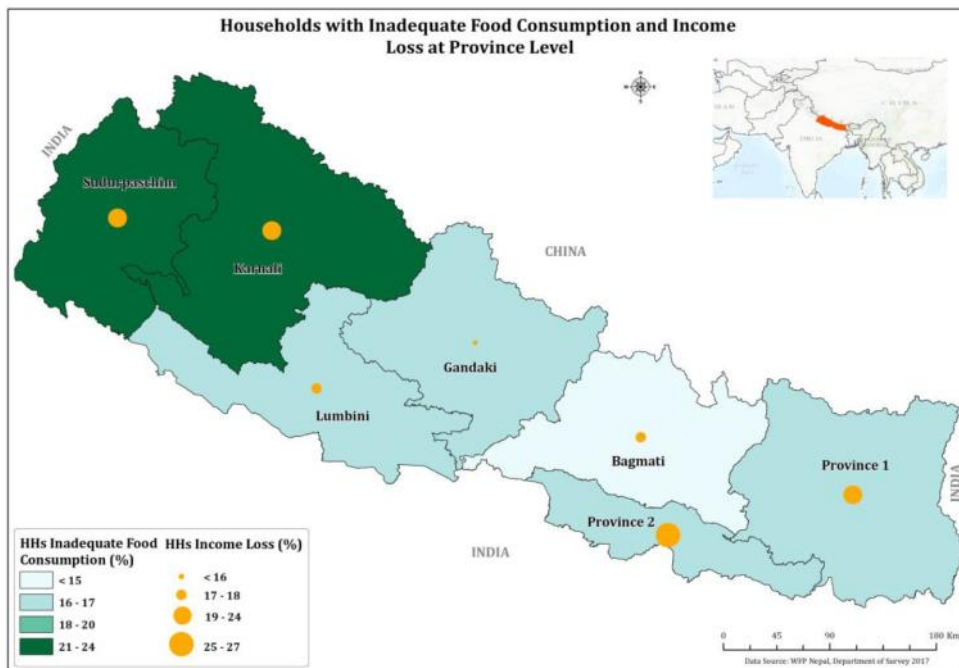


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followed by Province 2 (3.8%), Gandaki (2.7%) and Sudurpaschim (2.5%).

Families have adopted negative livelihood coping strategies to address food shortages such as borrowing money, harvesting immature crops, selling livestock, household assets, or even house and property.

The good news is that the food security situation has been gradually improving, with a smaller proportion of households consuming inadequate diets in December 2020 compared to August and April 2020. More than 3 out of 4 respondents reported having food stocks, of which nearly 50% had more than one month's worth of food stock.

Pandemic offers chance to revive farming, Krishna Paudel

"The findings from the survey indicate gradual improvements in terms of the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on food security and livelihoods. Yet, the aggravated conditions persist and continue to affect Nepali households," states the report.

"The impact of the Covid-19 crisis on job loss and income reduction remains notable and can further put pressure on income generation and livelihoods. Such prolonged exposure to adversary conditions, together with the upcoming lean season, can, in turn, lead to further risk of food insecurity."

Easing of restrictions and opening of economic activities, as well as recently harvested summer crops and assistance from various government and aid agencies, are likely the reasons for the improvement in food security.

However, analysis of the survey data shows that there is a deepening of food insecurity in areas that are chronically more vulnerable like western Nepal.

In fact, more households remain food insecure during the pandemic than five years ago. In December 2020, 17% of households had inadequate food consumption, but in December 2016 the figure was 15%.

In the survey, households with low education levels, a chronically ill member, female-headed households, and households living in rural areas were found to be more food insecure.

Similarly, loss of income was the largest among large and medium traders (48%), remittance recipient families (46%), followed by daily wage labourers in agriculture and cash crop producers (33%). A total of 25% of non-agriculture daily wage labourers reported having a loss of income source followed by 11.6% agriculture-related daily wage labourer. ***

respond to the crisis. In this edition, we learn of the efforts of the UN in the past two months including on the receipt of the first consignment of the COVID-19 vaccine doses through the COVID-19 COVAX facility; IOM's effort at the Indo-Nepal border entry points; and UNHCHR's successful advocacy for refugees to be included in the national vaccine programmes amongst others.

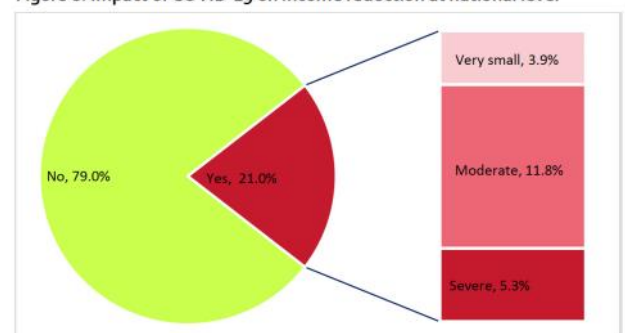
Though these months have been challenging, the UN has proven its ability to provide a timely and effective response during crisis. The humanitarian cluster system has been activated and the UN is providing support across the country in responding to this second wave of the pandemic.

Please, take care of yourselves and your family members. Please, follow the procedures for staying safe – using a mask, maintaining physical distance and frequently wash your hands/ use sanitizer.

Figure 10: Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on loss of income source by province in April, August and December 2020



Figure 8: Impact of COVID-19 on income reduction at national level





Nepal Among the First Countries in South Asia to Receive COVAX Shipment

Kathmandu, March 7 —

Nepal received its first consignment of COVID-19 vaccine doses shipped through the COVAX Facility, a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO, made possible through generous donor support from governments, international organizations, foundations and the private sector.

The first COVAX shipment containing 348,000 doses of AstraZeneca 'Covishield' vaccines manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), together with 350,000 syringes and 3500 vaccine safety boxes arrived in Kathmandu before being distributed to provinces and municipalities across the country.

The delivery of COVAX-procured vaccines to Nepal is part of a historic step towards ensuring equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally, in what will be the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history.

The goal of the COVAX Facility is to supply Nepal with enough doses to vaccinate 20% of the population depending on funding

availability. Under the first COVAX allocation, the COVAX Facility will deliver 1.92 million vaccine doses to Nepal by the end of May 2021, in support of the Government of Nepal's nation-wide vaccination campaign.

COVAX-supported vaccines provide a critical contribution to the Government of Nepal's National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP) target to vaccinate roughly 22 million people, among them refugees, migrant returnees and other migrant populations. With the generous contribution of the Government of India, Nepal was able to commence the vaccination campaign and to date, 429,705 people have been vaccinated.

The COVAX Facility is generously funded by partner governments, including the Governments of Australia, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union as well as foundations and corporations.

Representatives of the COVAX technical and funding partners joined the Minister

UN Resident Coordinator for Nepal Ms. Sara Beysolow Nyanti handing over the first consignment of COVAX at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu to Honourable Minister for Health and Population Mr. Hridayesh Tripathi.

Photo: WHO

of Health and Population, His Excellency Hridayesh Tripathi, in welcoming the global COVAX contribution to Nepal's COVID-19 vaccination efforts at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu.

Development partners congratulated Nepal for being among the first countries in the world to have launched COVID-19 vaccination efforts in January 2021. They reiterated their solidarity with Nepal, as exemplified by the arrival of the first COVAX vaccine contribution.

[View story online: https://www.who.int/nepal/news/detail/07-03-2021-nepal-among-the-first-countries-in-asia-to-receive-covid-19-vaccines-from-covax-facility](https://www.who.int/nepal/news/detail/07-03-2021-nepal-among-the-first-countries-in-asia-to-receive-covid-19-vaccines-from-covax-facility)



Entry Points – Block the Virus but Ensure a Humane Movement

Kathmandu, April 9 —

“Many staffers of the hotel in Delhi, India where I was working started testing COVID-19 positive. We were told we were not required to work at the hotel anymore,” said Resham Dawadi, 37, from Kailali district of Sudurpashchim province. “The hotel owner had promised to pay my remaining salary but every time I called him for it he had all excuses to make. So, rather than catching the virus while waiting for the money, I decided to leave,” he said. Resham was seen queueing at Gauriphanta point of entry (PoE) of Kanchanpur district for health screening conducted by the Nepalese health officials around mid-April.

With recent surge in COVID-19 cases in India, a huge number of Nepalese migrants are returning home mainly through the land border points. Most of the entry points have recorded return of around 400 to 700 migrants per day since around

second week of April, while it is believed that many migrants use unofficial routes to avoid long queue and health screening process at the official points.

Nepal shares a 1770 km long open land border with India. Nepal’s COVID-19 Crisis Management Center (CCMC) on 30 April has decided to shut all the border points with India except 13 of the 35 entry points.

International Organization for Migration (IOM) has assisted in establishing health desk infrastructure and supplies at various PoE locations.

Earlier in August to October 2020, IOM conducted Population Mobility Mapping (PMM) exercise in total of nine municipalities of Provinces 1, Lumbini and Sudurpashchim with the aim to understand population dynamics and identify the priority communities and locations that are at higher risk of potential spread of diseases and other health threats as a direct result of human mobility.

Nepalese migrant returnees from India in queue for health screening at Gauriphanta entry point on 9 April 2021.

Photo: IOM

During the process over 800 individuals were consulted through face to face interviews and 45 focus group discussions which includes local communities alongside the local authorities.

The PMM has come up with few recommendations which requires urgent attention:

1. Establish health screening stations at PoEs as well as all other priority locations with high population mobility such as transport stations, market and entertainment centers and places of worship.
2. Set up mechanism to record and track people’s movement, especially their origin and destination at PoEs and transport stations. The



Nepalese migrant returnees arriving at Gauriphata entry point on 9 April 2021.

Photo: IOM

information is indispensable to trace any affected case, in the event of an outbreak.

3. Invest in capacity building of health infrastructure.
4. Focus on awareness raising activities among communities and authorities as they lack knowledge of potential risks of infectious disease such as COVID-19 and preventive measures for transmission.
5. Conduct capacity building activities for health, immigration and security officials designated at PoEs and leadership training for traditional healers in order to enhance their health practices.

IOM, jointly with the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division of the Health Ministry, carried out feasibility assessment between August to December 2020, in all 14 identified POEs by the government for entry and exit of travelers across the border. This feasibility assessment was carried out to

understand the ground reality in terms of POE operation, challenges and needs assessment and also to coordinate for the establishment of health desk. This also assessed the overall situation of the infrastructures, availability of human resources, medical logistics and capacity of the available human resources in terms of screening and managing health desks. This assessment helped to revise the previously approved health desk prototype and establish at various locations.

Similarly, IOM, in coordination with concerned departments of the Ministry of Health and Population, has developed a one-day orientation session plan with orientation materials for frontline workers at PoEs targeting both health and non-health officials such as immigration, security and custom officials. Orientation sessions will be rolled out as soon as the situation eases.

According to an IOM study “Status of Nepali migrant workers in relation

to COVID-19” conducted in August – September 2020, about 200,000 Nepali migrant workers in India were reported to have returned to Nepal just before the national lockdown enforced in March 2020. The Ministry of Home Affairs reported that 700,000 migrants returned home from India during the lockdown, with thousands stranded at the Nepal-India border. The report also indicates that the majority of returnee migrant workers from India were residents of Karnali and Sudurpashchim provinces, where there is desperation in livelihoods as the economic conditions in these regions are generally precarious.

Reaching the Unreached: COVID-19 Vaccinations in Jumla

Health workers reflect on the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations in Nepal's far-western region, and the role of the cold chain – strengthened with UNICEF support – in bringing vaccines to remote communities



Jumla, March 7 —

Nanda Lal Rawat has spent his entire life in remote Kankasundari in Jumla District in Nepal's far-western region. And he's not the first in his family to have done so.

"We have been here for so many generations, I couldn't tell you how far back it goes," he says.

Such a deep-rooted connection to this place and its people was a big part of what had led him to become a healthworker. Today, he is the in-charge at the Malikabota Health Post in Kankasundari, where he works with his team to provide essential health services to the community.

That role became all the more important when the COVID-19 pandemic began its spread around the country in early 2020. Although Kankasundari's geographic isolation initially appeared to work to its advantage, limiting as it did foot

traffic from outside, the possibility – and the fear – of an outbreak was always there, particularly as community members who were working in countries like India began to head back home.

"There was so much uncertainty at the time about the disease, with all kinds of rumours going around, creating panic and anxiety," Nanda says. He and his team worked to allay these fears and concerns as far as they could with the information they had, and kept up maximum vigilance towards new arrivals.

Fortunately, Kankasundari has so far been spared the brunt of the pandemic – not a single case of COVID-19 has been seen in the area. Still, Nanda says it's important not to be complacent. "We know that if an outbreak happens here, it will be very difficult to contain," he says.

And so, when the Government of Nepal launched the vaccination campaign in late January this year,

COVID 19 vaccine transporting from Nepalgunj to Jumla.

Photo: UNICEF

with healthworkers given first priority, Nanda's relief and pride knew no bounds.

"Being put in the first priority group made me feel like our efforts and sacrifices as health workers was being recognized," he says. "I felt very validated."

Having gotten vaccinated himself, Nanda was eager to see vaccines reach the community. On 7 March, the second phase of the campaign began, targeting elderly persons over the age of 65. With this, Nanda and his team leapt immediately into action, pushing out PSAs through loudspeakers, mobilizing female community health volunteers to go door to door with messages, even calling eligible senior citizens on the



phone to urge them to come get the vaccine.

One of these was 81-year-old Chaitee Rawat. “I’m very excited to go get the shot,” she said, as she got ready to head out to the health post, “Why wouldn’t I be happy to get the vaccine?”

Over the two days that vaccinations ran for at the facility, 120 elderly people from the community like Chaitee arrived to get inoculated. “It was great to see that our efforts to convince them had not gone in vain,” Nanda says.

Maintaining an effective cold chain

The delivery of vaccines to remote places like Kankasundari relies on an effective ‘cold chain’, which refers to a series of coordinated events in temperature-controlled environments to store, manage and transport vaccines. Ever since the beginning of routine immunization efforts in Nepal, UNICEF together with global health partners like Gavi have been supporting the Government of Nepal to assess, expand and strengthen its cold chain capacity, so that children and

families around the country can have access to life-saving vaccines.

As part of UNICEF’s support – which also includes technical and logistical backing – cold rooms and vaccine refrigerators have been installed at different facilities at the federal, provincial and local levels, and vaccine cold boxes and carriers provided for safe transportation to vaccination sites. In 2020 alone, UNICEF installed 290 pieces of cold chain equipment in different facilities nationwide. Plans are also in place to procure and install an additional 910 pieces to address still-existing gaps in select areas. All these efforts are now proving critical to the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

“Given the difficult terrain in this part of the country, it’s a long process to bring vaccines in; it takes days of travel by air, by road, and in some places by foot,” says Indra Kala Tamang, Health Officer at UNICEF Nepal.

Indeed, before reaching Kankasundari, the vaccines were first transported to the provincial vaccine store in Nepalgunj from Kathmandu, then flown to Jumla

airport. They were then dispatched via road to the district vaccine store, then onto the sub-store at Pandugufa – both facilities equipped with refrigeration units installed by UNICEF – before being packed into cold boxes and carried to the Malikabota Health Post on the backs of porters.

“It’s truly gratifying to see how UNICEF’s support to the cold chain at different levels is being used in this vaccine drive to reach far-flung communities like this one,” Indra Kala says.

That very same cold chain will also be used to store, transport and distribute vaccines received through the COVAX Facility, a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO, made possible through generous donor support from governments, international organizations, foundations and the private sector. Nepal received its first consignment of COVID-19 vaccines - a total of 348,000 doses - that were shipped through the COVAX facility on 7 March 2021, in support of the Government of Nepal’s nation-wide vaccination campaign. ****



Vaccination in progress.

Photo: @Santosh Kumar Chaudhary

Nepal Becomes First Country in Asia Pacific to Vaccinate Refugees Against COVID-19

Beldangi, March 19 —

Laxmi Maya Regmi, 72, a refugee from Bhutan, never thought that she would need a vaccination at her age. But on 19 March, she was among the first refugees to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at a settlement in Beldangi, in eastern Nepal.

“I didn’t want to miss this opportunity. I am very happy now,” she said, after receiving her first dose. “I had heard that old age people like me were more exposed to the disease. I feel safe now.”

Nepal was the first country in the Asia Pacific region to provide COVID-19 jabs to refugees through its national vaccination rollout. The refugees at the settlement were vaccinated as part of the second phase of that rollout, which started on 7 March and targets people over the age of 65.

The country kicked off its vaccination campaign on 27 January after the Indian government donated one million doses of Covishield, the India-produced version of

the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. In the first phase, frontline health workers, sanitation workers, hygiene workers and security officials were vaccinated.

Local authorities, refugee leaders and security officials set up a temporary vaccination centre at the refugee settlement and as of April-end, some 859 refugees had received vaccinations against the virus across the country. More refugees will be enrolled in the vaccination programme as the government receives additional supplies of vaccines.

Nepal hosts nearly 20,000 refugees, mostly Tibetans and Bhutanese with arrival dates in 1959 and in the early 1990s respectively.

Since the onset of the pandemic, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has been working closely with other UN agencies and government authorities to advocate for the inclusion of refugees in COVID-19 preparedness and response plans.

“The Government of Nepal has shown exemplary leadership for public health

responses by including refugees in the national vaccination plans and rollout,” said Carolin Spannuth Verma, UNHCR’s Representative in Nepal.

Nepal reported 323,187 confirmed COVID cases and 3,279 deaths as of 30 April 2021, according to a data released by Ministry of Health and Population.

“The risk of COVID-19 is the same for all. It doesn’t matter if you are a refugee or not,” said Shrawan Kumar Timilsina, the Chief District Officer of Jhapa, in eastern Nepal where the country’s two refugee settlements are located. “Protecting the life of all people is our priority.”

Bhakti Prasad Baral, 83, fled Bhutan in 1992 and is now living in Beldangi settlement. He said that he felt “lucky” to get the vaccine.

“It was really difficult to endure what was going on because of the virus,” said the octogenarian, who works as a Hindu priest in his community. “I have no words to thank the Government of Nepal for paying attention to older persons like us.”



WHO Nepal Hands Over Health Emergency Operation Centers to MoHP

Province 1 and 2, March 25 —

The World Health Organization (WHO), Country Office for Nepal, handed over one national Health Emergency Operation Center (HEOC) and four Provincial Health Emergency Operation Centers (PHEOCs) in Province 1, 2, Bagmati, and Lumbini to the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP). The MoHP, the Ministries of Social Development, the Health Directorates of the provinces, and WHO, Country Office for Nepal, have collaborated closely in the setup of this nationwide network of HEOCs.

The establishment of the HEOCs around marks a key step towards strengthening of communication and coordination for effective public health response which is a compliance requirement of the International Health Regulations (2005).

In accordance with the IHR (2005), additional measures such as strengthening

the legal frameworks, plans, and policies; establishing HEOCs and telemedicine centers at national and provincial levels; formation of Emergency Medical Deployment Teams (EMDTs); and the creation of a hub satellite hospitals' network covering the country, have also complemented Nepal's efforts in strengthening emergency preparedness and response.

A report, Health Emergency Operation Center Network of Nepal – The Voyage and the Vista, was also released which vividly highlighted the steps that were taken by the HEOC network of Nepal to strengthen the national health emergency risk management capacity for a resilient health system.

“As illustrated by the devastating earthquake of 2015, the floods and landslides of 2017, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Nepal is vulnerable to emergencies that pose serious threat to

health, lives, and livelihoods,” Dr. Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav, WHO Representative to Nepal said. “Hence, the HEOCs will help mitigate the adverse impacts of natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and other acute public health risks through robust preparedness, readiness, and response.”

The WHO is committed to continuing to support the efforts of Nepal to strengthen the ability to detect, assess, and respond to public health events to meet its commitments under the IHR and to reduce disaster risks while moving towards the relevant global targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

WHO's COVID-19 response in Nepal is made possible through the generous support of the Government of Azerbaijan; Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office-UK (DFID); Government of Germany; and USAID.

View story online: <https://www.who.int/nepal/news/detail/25-03-2021-who-nepal-hands-over-five-health-emergency-operation-centers-from-around-nepal-to-mohp>

ILO Nepal and CBS Jointly Release Child Labour Report 2021

The Nepal Child Labour Report 2021 is a joint publication of ILO Nepal and Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). The report, released virtually on 29 April 2021, highlights key data and analysis crucial to end child labour in the country, and reveals how the progress in human development indicators has direct impact on the status of child labour.

The report's arrival marks an important year as 2021 is 'International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour' and Nepal is one of the pathfinder countries of the Alliance 8.7 that is working to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 8.7. Though Nepal has ratified most of the key international conventions that prohibit child labour and its worst forms, the considerable number of working children and child labour shows a gap of proper implementation of laws and policies to eliminate child labour.

Nepal has experienced a decrease in child labour over the last two decades; however, this report suggests there is still a lot more to be done. Among seven million children (total children) between the ages of 5 and 17 in Nepal, 1.1 million children (15.3 per cent) were found to be engaged in child labour, a significant decline in child labour in comparison to 2008 (1.6 million).

"There has been a decline in child labour in hazardous occupations by two-third in Nepal, a significant progress in a decade. However, it's high time that we take on a coordinated approach to implement laws and policies to fill the existing gaps on child labour and child protection in the country," said Richard Howard, Director of ILO Country Office for Nepal.

"The report presents the disaggregated statistics of child labour and children engaged in hazardous work mainly by provinces, regions, sectors, ethnicity, and occupations, which will be useful to policy

makers, planners and development partners in Nepal," said Nebin Lal Shrestha, Director General of Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS).

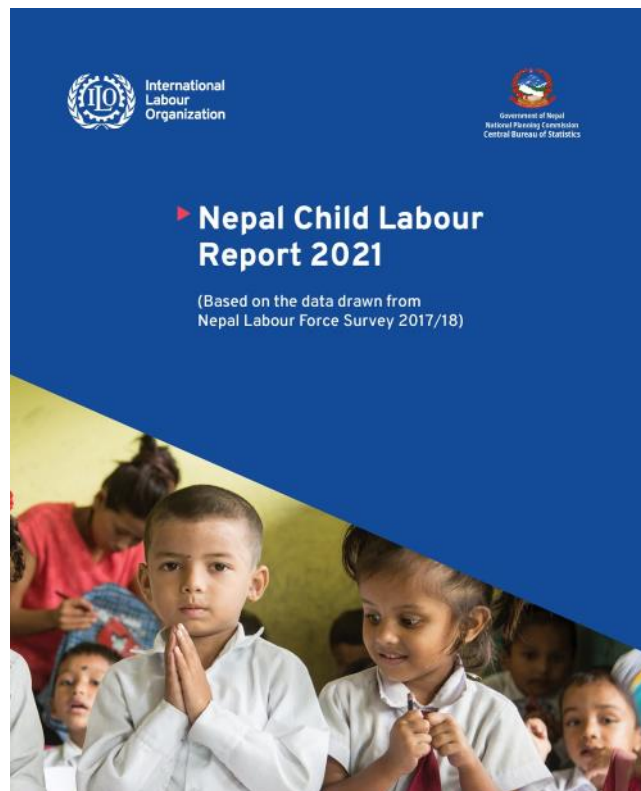
The report is published with financial support from the UK Government through the ILO-FCDO Asia Regional Child Labour Programme (ARC), which intends to reduce vulnerability to child labour and enhance protection of children from exploitation in Nepal.

Agriculture has been identified as the sector with highest number of child labour. Among the total children engaged in child labour, about 87 per cent are engaged in the agriculture sector while 13 per cent are in other sectors. The highest child labour prevalence is found among Dalit community (19.4 per cent), and Karnali province has the highest incidence (24.6 per cent).

The country has recently approved the National Master Plan (NMP)-II on Child Labour (2018 – 2028) that aims to amend and formulate national child labour policies and legislations based on evidences.

"The Government of Nepal is committed to end child labour by 2025. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, has already initiated the second National Master Plan (NMP-II, 2018- 2028) on Child Labour. This report will be helpful in the implementation and monitoring of the plan," expressed Binod Prakash Singh, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

"The findings from the report will be instrumental in the monitoring of the fifteenth periodic plan, provincial and local level plans, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other development initiatives," said Dr. Ram Kumar Phuyal,



Honourable Member of the National Planning Commission (NPC).

The study reveals that child labourers in urban areas (3.3 per cent) seem to be involved more in hazardous occupations in comparison to the child labourers in rural areas (2.9 per cent). It also reports that female children are more likely to be engaged in child labour (17 per cent) than male (14 per cent).

One of the key findings of the report suggests that parental education, wealth and assets seem to have significant impacts on children's involvement in child labour. Therefore, addressing Nepal's human development is instrumental in addressing child labour in the country. Child labour prevalence is 4.4 per cent for parents with at least the intermediate level education followed by secondary level (grade 9 and 10) education (10.4 per cent) and lower secondary level (grade 6, 7 and 8) education (12.9 per cent).

Joint report of the CBS and ILO - Nepal Child Labour Report 2021: https://www.ilo.org/kathmandu/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_784225/lang--en/index.htm

Joint press release of the CBS and ILO - Need for a rigorous effort to eliminate child labour in Nepal: <https://www.ilo.org/kathmandu/info/public/pr/>

Nepali Stakeholders Come Together to Pave Way Forward for Migration Governance in the Country



Pokhara, April 12 —

A multi-stakeholder workshop was organized on 11 - 12 April in Pokhara to discuss and plan for an implementation of the global compact for migration (GCM) in Nepal with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. Building on the country's continuing efforts in carrying out GCM activities, the workshop aimed to identify and discuss the priorities of Nepal in developing national strategy for the implementation of GCM and to contribute to the development of national strategy paper.

Addressing the event, Secretary Surya Prasad Gautam from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security said, "Only a joint efforts from all corners - from all government and non-government stakeholders - can translate the GCM objectives into practice in more

effective and timely manner." "The whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach is the only way that makes it possible," he went on to say.

The GCM is the first comprehensive UN framework on migration adopted through intergovernmental consultations and negotiations to enhance international cooperation in global migration governance. Adopted by 152 UN member states, GCM presents an important opportunity to improve migration governance at national, regional and global levels to tackle the challenges associated with present-day migration, and to enable the migrants and migration to contribute to sustainable development. GCM comprises of 23 objectives that are rooted to the SDGs covering all aspects related to migration, their implementation, and follow-up and review.

The workshop brought together range of stakeholders - various government agencies with all

Secretary Surya Prasad Gautam, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security addressing the workshop.

Photo: IOM Nepal/2021

"The UN established a network on migration at global level to support the implementation of GCM's objectives and their associated commitments to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to its member states."

Lorena Lando
Chief of Mission for the IOM in Nepal

relevant Ministries, civil society organizations, and UN- to contextualize the GCM in Nepal while sharing current progress made by Nepal for adoption and implementation of GCM.

“The UN established a network on migration at global level to support the implementation of GCM’s objectives and their associated commitments to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to its member states,” said Lorena Lando, Chief of Mission for the IOM in Nepal on the occasion. “Accordingly, the UN country team in Nepal is carrying its commitment to establish a UN network in the country to support the efforts of the government,” she added.

Migration networks are now rolled out at the regional level and in many countries. In carrying out its mandate, this UN network will prioritize the rights and wellbeing of migrants and their communities of destination, origin and transit.

Nepal has actively participated and contributed to the thematic discussion in the process and the drafting of the GCM document as an individual state and representing the

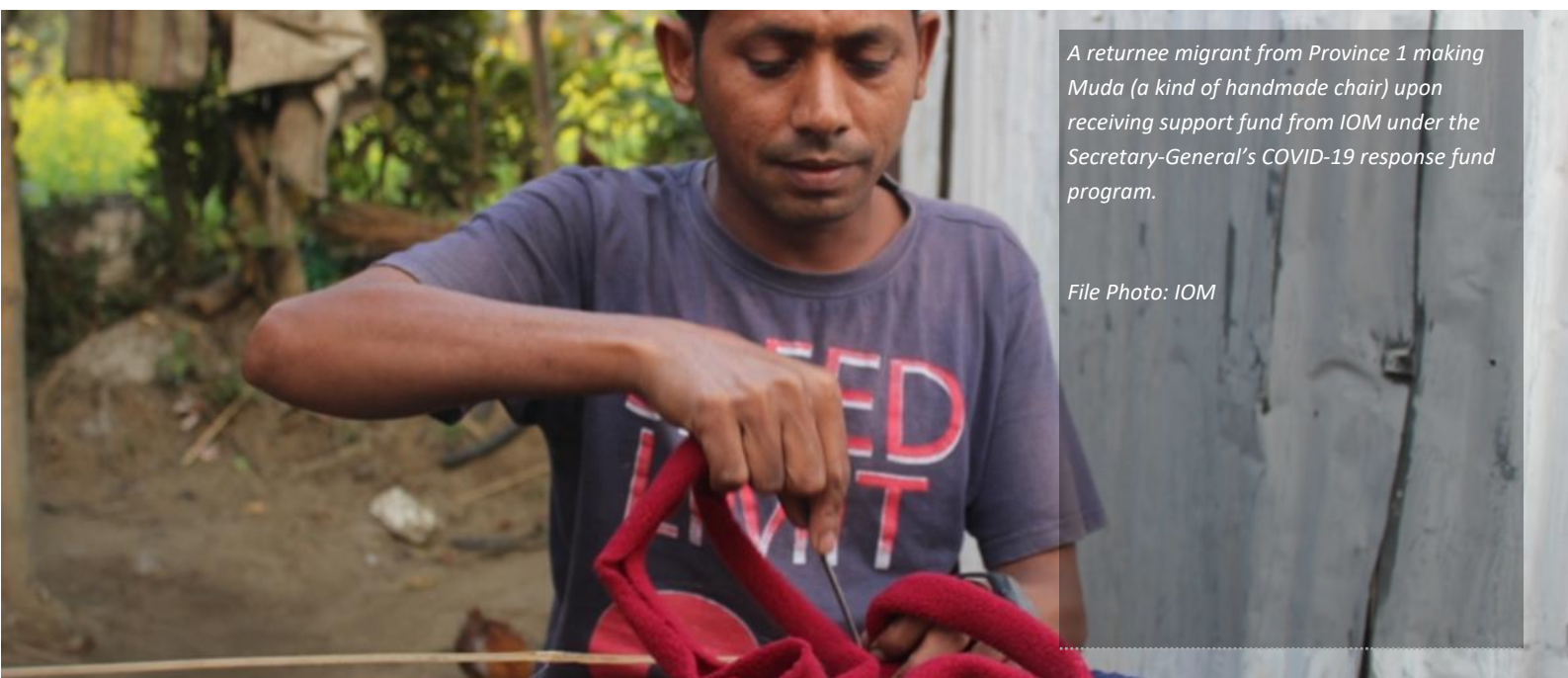
Colombo Process (CP), a regional forum of 12 Asian labour sending countries, Member State. During the Chairpersonship, Nepal led the process of drafting the CP member states recommendations to the GCM draft which was submitted to the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on international migration and co-facilitators of the GCM. These recommendations are now part of the document. Nepal was the Chair of the Colombo Process from March 2017 to April 2021 and handed over the baton to Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on 20 April 2021.

In 2020, Nepal was chosen as a champion country of the GCM implementation. Nepal also participated in the GCM national voluntary review and submitted its review based on the inputs received from the multi-stakeholder consultation held in December 2020.

Migration in Nepal has a long history and is a decisive factor in the country’s socio-economic landscape. While about 10 million Nepalese are lifetime internal migrants, more than 3.2 million are in international migration. Migration for overseas job

opportunities and for higher education are dominant purposes of the international migration from Nepal. In 2018/19, remittances sent back home by Nepalese migrants accounted for an equivalent of 28 per cent of the country’s GDP.

The constitution of Nepal 2015 recognizes the need for migration governance and regulation of foreign employment in order to make migration safe from exploitation, free and orderly to guarantee the labourer’s and migrants’ rights. Nepal’s 15th national plan and the voluntary review of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) have emphasized the positive outcomes on migration but also concerns – protection concerns, further need for consular support, sustainable reintegration of the returnee migrants and skill development. Other concerns include trafficking in persons, exploitative recruitment procedures and restrictions rather than support measures for migrants in vulnerable situations. The GCM provides a unique opportunity for Nepal to comprehensively address and to provide 360 degree view to migration in Nepal.



A returnee migrant from Province 1 making Muda (a kind of handmade chair) upon receiving support fund from IOM under the Secretary-General’s COVID-19 response fund program.

File Photo: IOM



Multiple-phase structures Samai Mai.

Photo: ©UNESCO Chair, Durham University.

2021 Season of Archaeological Investigations at Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu Concludes

Lumbini, April 27 —

Archaeologists and researchers from Nepal's Department of Archaeology, the Lumbini Development Trust, and Durham University's UNESCO Chair on Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage completed archaeological field activities (March-April 2021) at the ancient Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu.

This activity was a part of the Japanese-sponsored UNESCO project for the strengthening of the management of Lumbini. It was started following approval for a late spring 2021 Covid-19 compliant field season. The team carried out

excavations within the ancient walled city near the Samai Mai Shrine and the Central Walled Complex, a monumental palatial area identified through previous research by the team.

Close to the modern Samai Mai Shrine, the team uncovered the partial remains of an earlier phase of a temple complex located within a precinct wall built of carved and moulded bricks, similar to those found at the nearby sites of Chatradei and Kudan. Whilst the dates of these structures will only be confirmed following the scientific dating of samples extracted during the excavations, the investigations have confirmed that there was a concentration of monumental activity linked to the development of this multi-phase ritual

complex.

The Central Walled Complex at the centre of the ancient city covers an area 100 by 100 metres and is defined by a large compound wall measuring 1.50 metres across, with individual bricks measuring 0.47 by 0.30 by 0.05 metres. The team investigated the south-eastern return of this wall, which was associated with a small square structure, to identify the relationship between these two features. Their findings indicate that both the compound wall and square structure were built on the same land surface and were most likely contemporary. The square structure itself was found to have been built directly above an earlier structure of the same plan. Post-excavation analysis will help to identify the function of the later structure; nonetheless, its



construction method has been identified, with brick footings cut by postholes to allow for timber roof and wall support posts.

Excavations continued to uncover later structures identified in levels above the compound wall in the north-east corner of the Central Walled Complex. Here, the team identified later paving laid on a prepared platform, which was constructed on an earlier quadrangular building. A small square plinth with a retaining wall was also uncovered, associated with the paving and prepared platform. Although still to be confirmed by scientific dating, the paving and plinth most likely represent late activity at Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu, stretching the timing of the site's activity beyond the Gupta Period (third to ninth century CE) and into the Medieval Period (ninth to fourteenth century CE). This structure corresponds to the location of the Deva Temple mapped by archaeologist P.C. Mukherjee in the 1890s.

Monuments uncovered during this project

are being conserved for future presentation to the public. These include stretches of the Central Walled Complex's compound wall and southern tower. Furthermore, the modern Samai Mai Shrine has been repointed and consolidated, with sympathetic repairs undertaken to stabilize the monument, which has a tree growing within the structure itself.

Outside the city wall, auger profiles have been undertaken between the southern rampart and the southern industrial mound. By hand drilling cores every five metres down to natural soil, the team has been reconstructing the profile of the land below the current surface in order to investigate the depth and width of the ancient moat. Additional geophysical surveys also confirmed the presence of a large rectangular brick structure buried below the surface close to the Eastern Gate. As this area is currently used as a car park, it has been recommended that this commercial use of the land be halted as it may damage the archaeology below.

Conservation of artefacts from the excavation.

Photo: @UNESCO Chair, Durham University.

Capacity strengthening activities continued during the season, with practical training and lectures offered to Masters level students – 22 from Tribhuvan University and 16 from Lumbini Buddhist University. Due to COVID-19 restrictions on large gatherings of people, the 2021 Tilaurakot-Kapilavastu Heritage Festival is being organised online, focusing on competitions for school children. The themes of this year's drawing and speech competitions are threats to heritage in the Greater Lumbini Area for the former and the impact of the pandemic on heritage for the latter. The recordings and images from entrants will be hosted online by UNESCO.



Building of Chabahil Cooperative market built with the support of Cooperative Market Development Programme, a joint project of Government of Nepal and UNDP.

Photo: UNDP

Improving Farmers' Access to Markets

Kathmandu, May 7—

For the first time, Nepal has fully functional fruits and vegetable satellite markets that are run entirely by cooperatives, thanks to the Cooperative Market Development Programme, a joint initiative of UNDP and the Government of Nepal. The cooperative-run markets have gone online.

In 2020, the Cooperative Market Development Programme introduced two large cooperative-run satellite markets in Chabahil and Lalitpur. Built on one to two ropanis of land at major trade hubs, these markets are connected to 71 primary cooperative-run local markets in six districts around the

Kathmandu Valley -- Chitwan, Dhading, Lalitpur, Kavre, Makwanpur, and Nuwakot, which supply fresh vegetables produced by Nepali farmers. Around 16,900 farmers benefit from these satellite markets.

“The collection centre has helped us increase our sales of fruits and vegetables. We send our produce to the municipal market in Dhading or directly to the satellite market in Chabahil. We are finally getting a good price for our produce and we do not have to depend on traders anymore.” - Sabita Lamichhane, a farmer and member of the Jana



Staff replenishing vegetable items at the Cooperative market in Chabahil.

Photo: UNDP

Adarsha Krishi cooperative in Dhading.

Must Queer Art Always Be by Queers, for Queers? Musings on a Recent Comic Workshop

Author: Dia Yonzon



A creative writing professor told me during an earlier workshop in 2020 that “the world is big enough for all art that all the people create”. By the same token, I believe the world has enough space for queer artists to create both queer and non-queer content, and at times for non-queer artists to create queer content.

About the author:

Dia Yonzon (she/they), 25, is from Nepal. After completing her bachelor's in arts and bachelor's in law, she decided to take a year-off to focus on herself, and mostly to read and write fictions. Later that year, she decided to join a traineeship programme with United Nations and ended up being selected to work in UN Women Nepal. After 11 months as a trainee, she rejoined UN Women as Nation Youth UNV working in the capacity of Youth Programme Support Officer. She loves to spend her time hiking in the forest and being in the mountains.

There is increasing mainstream acceptance of queer culture, in particular in art. But how far does this acceptance go beyond the trends and convenience of the straight world? At what point does mindless mainstreaming become cultural appropriation?

All it took, as so often, was for one person to summon the courage to open up about their life. I was sitting in a zoom call with strangers, but as they told their stories and spoke about what impacted their art, I felt like I was sitting under forest foliage somewhere listening to tales from a fantasy world. As more and more people

got comfortable and started to share, it was as if a floodgate opened up of stories woven in nostalgia.

I was in the Virtual Comic Workshop for Queer Youths, organized by UN Women and other UN agencies on 24-28th June, and I was smiling from ear to ear. It hit me how much I crave spaces like this where the experience of queerness is understood and welcomed.

A year earlier, I was sitting opposite a straight cis-gendered man in a conference room bawling like a baby, as he sat stunned and visibly uncomfortable, bewildered by my queer melancholia, uncharted territory for him. As my tears dried he spoke about how I should have more self-confidence and other things which were neither helpful nor meaningful.

At that time, I thought I had cried out of disappointment, because I had convinced myself that a straight cis-gendered man might relate to my queer trans-non-binary life experience just because I once saw him post a picture of himself with painted nails. **How foolish of me?**

But after attending the virtual comic workshop, I began to understand that my tears had not been out of sadness but despair and sheer frustration; from feeling cheated and manipulated and seeing my life experience and that of other queer people turned into a mere social media trend; one where straight people take what suits them without understanding or helping the ongoing attempts to overthrow the system that oppresses queer individuals.

The four-day workshop was organized by UN Women, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the World Health Organization, facilitated by Virangana Comics, and supported by the British Council. The main goal was to bring together young queer artists from Nepal to learn about comics as a way of artistic self-expression and activism. The workshop was in line with the Beijing Declaration's principle relating to the use of media and representation.

Two important questions came up before and after the workshop – **Can comics with no elements of queerness still be included in the final collection of comics for queer youths? And can art and poetry created by non-queer artists be included in the same collection?**

These discussions were prompted by the high volume of non-queer applicants, and the few selected queer participants who decided to omit their queer experience from their final comics.

A creative writing professor told me during an earlier workshop in 2020 that “the world is big enough for all art that all the people create”. By the same token, I believe the world has enough space for queer artists to create both queer and non-queer content, and at times for non-queer artists to create queer content. However, it is key to acknowledge the need for some spaces that are exclusively for queer artists to create queer content.

It is important to understand our lives as out intersections and interactions with others. How do we see ourselves in our own right, and how in relation to others? How do we see our background - where we are now, where we want to go - and so much more? And there are things beyond our control - everyone comes with their unique circumstances in this world, over which they have no control. These individualities set some of us apart in terms of our access to resources and agency. I believe when we can see this, and when we become more aware of what spaces for art currently exist – and which don't - then perhaps we might also see the need for more representation for more queer art.

In the workshop, the central theme was celebrating queer literature and investing in young queer artists. Experts were brought in and shared their experience, participants learned more about the comic art genre, and skills to improve our comic panels to tell a more compelling story. Towards the end, when the final drafts started rolling in, we could see how different they were from the first sketches

of our ideas. Many of the participants stayed online after the official end, sharing artworks and feedback.

Was all the shared art related to queerness? No. However, the workshop and the online group that followed became a space for queer youths pursuing art to come together to help each other grow.

As a queer indigenous writer, all my writings have an element that reflects my queer indigenous life experiences, whether visible or not. What makes me feel cheated and manipulated is not that non-queer people are creating queer art or expressing themselves in non-binary manners. It is when these acts are done – often - to benefit solely those people who are non-queer and do not value the struggle of being queer.

Let us take the example of the much-celebrated Pride Month. As a queer person, I feel overwhelming joy when companies and institution show solidarity. **But how much does only changing your logo and profile picture into rainbow-colored spangle drive social norm change, if the same companies are not actively listening to and engaging with queer people?**

Coming back to queer art and the comics workshop, it is key to understand the difference between participation and ownership. Let us not forget that many queer artists and authors have risked their lives to express themselves through art. We must remember that, if we have come to a place where more and more queer content is seen in the mainstream media, it is because of their constant struggle and refusal to blend in and disappear, despite ongoing violence and hate crimes.

So, yes, when participants were being selected for comic workshop for queer youth, many non-queer youths who had applied had some frustration over not being able to participate. It is understandable. However, it is also time for queer people to claim the space and take hold of the pen for their own storytelling.



High Level Roundtable on Rethinking Malaria

Kathmandu, April 19 —

To mark World Malaria Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) South-East Asia Regional Office organized a high-level roundtable titled “Rethinking Malaria: Innovation in Service delivery for acceleration of malaria elimination in WHO South-East Asia.”

Countries across the South-East Asia Region have made remarkable progress in malaria reduction and the region has seen the steepest decline in malaria burden among all WHO regions in recent years. This achievement is consistent with the goals established by the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030 (GTS), and in accordance with the Ministerial Declaration on Accelerating and Sustaining

Malaria Elimination signed in 2017 for a malaria-free South-East Asia Region by 2030.

However, there was a common realization that attaining the regional goal of a South-East Asia free of malaria by 2030, would not be possible without a re-think in strategy and action. In this regard the high-level discussion was organized.

The meeting was attended by Dr Dipendra Raman Singh, Director General, Department of Health Services, and Dr Krishna Poudel, Director of Epidemiology and Disease Control Division. WHO Representative to Nepal, Dr. Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav, and the Communicable Disease Unit in WHO, Country Office for Nepal, also participated in the meeting.

The discussion focused on the current challenges that Nepal is facing for malaria elimination interventions namely imported malaria, radical cure of vivax malaria, governance, and program management in the new federal structure.

Dr Dipendra Raman Singh emphasized that surveillance system strengthening, and timely action responses will enhance the significant progress towards malaria elimination by 2025. Dr Krishna Poudel added that the introduction of community-based malaria testing will improve the malaria case finding among the migrant and mobile workers, as well as disease vulnerable and most marginalized populations in the country.

View story online: <https://www.who.int/nepal/news/detail/19-04-2021-high-level-roundtable-on-re-thinking-malaria-innovation-in-service-delivery-for-the-acceleration-of-malaria-elimination-in-world-health-organization-south-east-asia-region>

Photo Story: UNHCR

UNHCR Nepal handed over one newly constructed Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) equipped with intensive care facility for newly born babies at AMDA Hospital, Damak in Jhapa district in Province 1 on 10 March 2021.



UNHCR Nepal handed over two ambulances to Nepal Red Cross Society in Damak, Jhapa district and Pathari-Sanischare Municipality in Morang district in Province 1 on 18 March 2021. The ambulances will cater to the needs of refugees and the host community members in accessing health facilities in a timely manner.

As part of livelihoods support, funded by UNHCR Nepal, Bhutanese refugee women of Beldangi settlement in Province 1 in eastern Nepal received advanced tailoring training to enhance their skills and enable them to sustain themselves and their families.



On 10 March 2021, UNHCR Nepal handed over two tipper trucks to the Mayors of Damak Municipality and Pathari-Sanischare Municipality in Jhapa and Morang districts in Province 1 to ensure better access to waste management services for refugees and the host community.



A plane arrives at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu with Nepal's first consignment of COVID-19 vaccine doses via the COVAX facility.

Photo: WHO Nepal/A. Maharjan



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