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An IOM doctor teaches a local person a proper way of wearing mask in Bhimdatta municipality, Sudurpaschhim Province (27 August 2020). The person is also a key informant of IOM's ongoing population mobility mapping (PMM) activities.

Overview

A steady increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases in Nepal has been reported in recent weeks, forcing some local governments in various parts of the country including the three districts in Kathmandu valley to impose complete movement restrictions in the respective areas. The Federal Government of Nepal has eased the nation-wide lockdown with a few preventive measures in place. As of 31 August 2020, the number of total cases stands at 39,460 with 17,822 active cases and 228 deaths.

The number of returns from India has slowed down significantly, and according to the COVID-19 Crisis Management Committee (CCMC), a total of 55,146 Nepali migrants have been repatriated as of 31 August. As of 17 August, the Government plans to bring only 500 migrants from abroad per day, of which 300 would be based on recommendations by diplomatic missions and 200 under the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund repatriation programme.

The Government has recently endorsed a plan to cover

return transportation costs of vulnerable migrant workers who had gone for foreign employment through regular channels. The challenge of reintegrating returnees into the national labour market and creating work opportunities that matches skills and interests of returnees as well as needs of national economy lies ahead.

To address this situation, IOM Nepal, in coordination and collaboration with partner agencies, has been supporting the Government to ensure that returnees are included in all aspects of COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts.

IOM's approach is aligned with the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan and, in Nepal, it comprises six thematic areas: 1) Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE); 2) Surveillance; 3) Point of Entry (POE); 4) Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM); 5) Protection; 6) Socio-Economic Recovery. Planned and ongoing activities are described in the sections below.

United Nations Socio-Economic Response Framework (UNSERF)

The global UN Socio-Economic Response Framework (UNSERF), as part of the UN's response to COVID-19, is designing the UN approach to socio-economic response and recovery over the next 12-18 months. The UNSERF is divided into five pillars: 1) Health, 2) Protection, 3) Economic Response and Recovery, 4) Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration, and 5) Social Cohesion and Community Resilience.

The UNSERF builds upon comprehensive consultations being conducted by UN agencies, which will shape the design of the Framework and all subsequent efforts.

IOM co-leads the Social Protection Sub-Group together with UNICEF under the Protection Pillar, and is the lead agency for Migrant focused consultations.

IOM is also supporting the Economic Response and Recovery as well as the Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration Pillars.

Key stakeholders for the UNSERF include national, provincial and local governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), most affected and vulnerable groups, the private sector, academia and research institutions, and development partners.

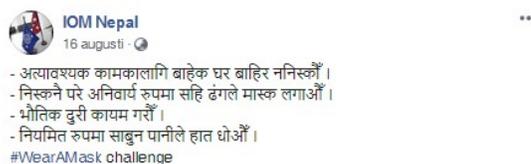


I. Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

IOM has been promoting the #WearAMask challenge in social media, encouraging the public to continue to use masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

On 18 August, a video message from an IOM Migration Health Physician on Home Quarantine protocol based on the protocol endorsed by the Ministry of Health and Population was shared through social media.

Joining the global #RealLifeHeroes campaign to mark the World Humanitarian Day 19 August, IOM shared testimonies of Nepali humanitarians working for the migrants.



Narbada Sorali Magar has been fighting against human trafficking and modern slavery since last ten years.

Associated with Shakti Samuha, and directly engaged in support to the COVID-hit vulnerable returnees migrants, Narbada says, "reintegration of Nepali women returnees is not easy and straight forward". "Further to socio-economic challenges that male returnees too go through, women returnees have to face social stigma", she adds.



Above: IOM Nepal Facebook post for the #WearAMask Challenge (16 August 2020).

Left: Testimony published by IOM for the #RealLifeHeroes campaign (19 August 2020).



2. Surveillance

Following the completion of a rapid phone survey, IOM has published the results in the report '[Returnee Migrants-focused Rapid Assessment on Impacts of COVID-19 and Preparedness and Response Plans of Local Governments, Nepal](#)'. The rapid assessment covered 730 municipalities of all 77 districts. The objective of the survey was to obtain baseline information on returnee migrants, along with the challenges they could face in the public health and socio-economic spheres following the pandemic. Chief administrative officers, information officers and health coordinators were the respondents for the assessment.

Main findings include:

- Over 30,000 people were under home quarantine. The monitoring of home quarantine was primarily carried out by health workers (70%).
- 32% of the municipalities had reported stigmatization and discrimination related to COVID-19.
- Only 22% of the municipalities had provision to systematically retain migration data, which in turn has affected the designing and planning of migration sensitive plans and policies.
- 72,133 migrants belonging to 209 municipalities had requested assistance in returning to their respective municipalities.
- At the time of the survey, 23% of the municipalities did not have plans for reintegrating returnee migrants, while 77% had draft plans that included a focus on reintegration.

IOM is currently implementing the Population Mobility Mapping (PMM) project, as part of the COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan in Nepal (2020). The PMM approach is based on the mapping and consequent analysis of the dynamics and characteristics of population mobility. Its aim is to identify vulnerable locations and areas to be prioritized for public health interventions during health crisis, in this case specifically, COVID-19.

Activities have officially started in Sudurpaschim Province on 14 August 2020. A two-day training (14 and 15 August) was conducted in Dhangadi municipality for the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) team that will be supporting IOM in rolling out field activities. As of 31 August, focus group discussions (FGDs) and field observations have been completed in Dhangadi and Bhimdatta municipalities. The same activities are undergoing in Dasharathchanda municipality and are expected to be completed by 6 September.

The PMM is expected to be implemented in additional six municipalities, three in Province 5 (Nepalgunj, Krishnagar and Siddharthanagar) and three in Province 1 (Biratnagar, Mechinagar and Suryodaya). The collected data will allow to empower the Government of Nepal, the communities and stakeholders for the outbreak preparedness and response to limit the spread of COVID-19 and prevent the introduction of any other infectious diseases, as a direct result of human mobility.



An NRCS collaborator is locating on the map the sites identified by key informants during the FGD (Bhimdatta, 24 August 2020).



3. Point of Entry

The development of a **POE Assessment Tool** is underway and is comprised of a checklist for data collection. The checklist is twofold, containing a baseline assessment as well as a COVID-19 preparedness assessment. IOM has already approached the Ministry of Health and Population and shared with the COVID-19 Crisis Management Center.

The baseline assessment gathers data on the geographical and physical attributes of the POE, human resources,

infrastructure and resources available, volume of migrant flows and the presence of medical personnel. The COVID-19 preparedness assessment gathers data on screening processes (communication and border coordination) and screening operations (including capacity, equipment, logistics, access to PPEs and standard operative procedures).



4. Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

IOM is constructing eight multipurpose evacuation centres through the 'People to People Support for Building Community Resilience through Recovery and Reconstruction in Nepal (P2P)' project.

The centres in Bhimeshwor municipality in Dolakha district, and Changunarayan municipality in Bhaktapur district have been officially handed over to local authorities. The centre in Neelkantha municipality in Dhading district, has been finalized, and the remaining centres in Chautara Sangachowkgadi municipality in Sindhupalchowk district, Bungmati municipality in Lalitpur district, Shankharapur municipality in Kathmandu district, Gosaikunda municipality in Rasuwa district and Gorkha municipality in Gorkha district are under construction.

The buildings will be used as coordination hubs by the municipalities as part of their **disaster preparedness and response** efforts including response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the onset of disasters, the centres will be used to provide shelter for displaced people with priority given to the most vulnerable, including pregnant and lactating women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly.

In times when no disasters or emergencies are prevalent, the buildings will serve as venues for community and municipal activities, including women and youth groups, community-based trainings, recreational pursuits, information dissemination and income generating activities.

The P2P project is funded by the Royal Thai Government.



Finalized multipurpose evacuation centre in Bhimeshwor municipality, Dolakha district (5 August 2020).



4. Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)

Activation of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) was discussed in an inter-cluster meeting held at the Ministry of Home Affairs on 12 July 2020. Following the completion of the [DTM Baseline Assessment](#), IOM initiated the DTM Site Assessment Round 1 which was conducted from 6 August until 22 August in five selected districts, namely Sankhuwasabha in Province 1, Sindhupalchowk in Bagmati Province, Myagdi in Gandaki Province, Gulmi in Province 5 and Jajarkot in Karnali Province.

The DTM Site Assessment Round 1 covered 29 sites in nine municipalities, where 1,066 households and 5,467 displaced individuals are residing.

The Site Assessment results show gaps in the areas of Information and Communication, Shelter and NFI, WASH, CCCM and Food Security. Main findings include:

- 62% of the site residents have access to information on relief distribution, while 31% do not have any access. Almost 7% of the population reported unknown status on it.
- 79% of the sites do not have a Site Management Committee in place.
- 51% of the displaced population in the sites are female and 49% are male.
- 34% have received cash assistance.
- 54% are residing in tents on open ground, 34% are residing indoor and 12% in makeshift shelters.
- The top five most preferred non-food items among the displaced population are: blankets, CGI sheets, mosquito nets, tarpaulins and clothes.
- 41% of the sites report 100% access to electricity, while 31% report no access.
- 38% of the sites report 100% access to cooking facilities, which 10% report no access.
- 59% of the sites have no drinking water treatment methods in use.
- 79% sites have no referral systems for gender-based violence (GBV) survivors.
- 52% of the sites report there are people without any legal documentation residing there.
- 31% of the sites depend on food aid, and in 24% of the sites there is a need of using own cash to access food.
- 93% of the sites have no supplementary feeding to pregnant and lactating women, or to children.

The [DTM Baseline Assessment](#) was conducted from 15 July until 24 July.



Landslide in Takam village, Myagdi district. © Gopal Sharma, Chief Executive Officer, Dhaulagiri rural municipality, Myagdi. (20 July 2020).

The 'Regional Asia Shelter Forum', initially planned for three days in November 2020, in Nepal has been postponed for April 2021 considering the uncertainties and spike of COVID-19 active cases in the country. The program is being planned in coordination with the National Reconstruction Authority, Department of Urban Development and Building Construction and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority. Considering the request from the regional shelter forum group, a half day virtual session will be conducted in November 2020 to keep the momentum going and also to bridge the gap between the previous year's event and the upcoming 2021 event forum.



5. Protection

IOM as the thematic lead for Migrant's Protection under the National Cluster participated in the Joint Programming for Gender-based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE). Technical Working Group meetings were held on 18, 19 and 24 August, led by UNFPA and engaging other relevant UN agencies.

IOM raised the need for interventions concerning protection of returnee women migrants and their communities, which includes direct support for immediate protection services and long-term socio-economic reintegration assistance.

IOM also co-leads the Social Protection Sub-Group with UNICEF under the Protection Pillar of the UNSERF.



6. Socio-Economic Recovery

Through activities in the socio-economic response thematic area, IOM is contributing to three Pillars of the UNSERF: Pillar 2) Protecting People, Pillar 3) Economic Response and Recovery, and Pillar 4) Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration.

Through the project “Immediate UN Response for Coherent Safeguarding the Livelihoods of People Made Most Vulnerable by COVID-19 in Nepal”, supported by the [UN COVID-19 Multi Partner Trust Fund](#), immediate assistance was provided to 200 most vulnerable returnee migrant workers, of which 167 are returnee women migrant workers.

The project is coordinating recovery support to the returnee migrants and their families in three municipalities: Arjunthara in Jhapa district, Dharan sub-metropolitan in Sunsari district and Dhankuta in Dhankuta district. The support includes seed fund and non-cash support (including agriculture tools and appropriate technology such as machines, equipment, materials) to targeted vulnerable migrants and their families.

IOM has been providing technical assistance to the National Planning Commission in conducting a rapid survey with migrant workers in identifying their return intention and reintegration plans. Similarly, IOM is closely coordinating with the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security in conducting skills mapping of the returnee migrant workers.

IOM has joined UN agencies for the Secretary General's call for proposals for the UN Multi Partner Trust Fund project Gender Responsive Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods Recovery in Nepal (GREEN). The project objective is to contribute to a resilient and inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19 secondary impacts through livelihood improvements to stabilize the local economy and food security. Target beneficiaries of the project include women-headed households, daily wage workers, unemployed and returnee migrant workers, their families and socio-economically marginalized households.

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