

## **Pandemic returns. Complex trajectories of Nepali migrant workers aspirations and capabilities |**

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### **Abstract**

Temporary labour migration is a significant phenomenon for many men and women from South and Southeast Asia working in different parts of the world, including the Gulf. Their trajectories are often complex as they work through several intermediaries to find work abroad. This study presents this complexity based on research from Nepal, where we follow 150 pandemic returnee migrant workers from various destinations with 4 semi-structured interviews over a 2-year period (3 completed so far). For this research, we ask about migrant's reasons for migrating, their past migration pathways including routes and costs through intermediaries, their return and future aspirations. We had a representative sample with migrants from all 7 provinces of Nepal, who had returned from the Gulf Cooperation Countries (from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait, Oman), India, Malaysia, Lebanon, Korea, and Jordan. For Nepali migrants, labour migration is a male dominated phenomenon, with the GCC countries being a major destination. This was seen among our participants, 70% of whom were male and 55% of the respondents shared that their last destination country was one of the GCC countries. In the first round of interviews, even though many of the respondents had shared their aspirations to re-migrate for work, many were still in Nepal during the second interview. With 4 sets of interviews, we try to detangle issues related to their complex migration pathways, mobilities/immobilities and aspirations/capabilities of Nepali migrant workers.

### **Biography**

**Richa Shivakoti** is the Research Area Lead on Migration Governance at CERC Migration. Her research focus is on the governance of labour migration within Asia, particularly between the labour-sending states of South Asia and South East Asia and the labour receiving states in the Middle East. Her current research questions the sustainability of the circular temporary migration governance regimes in Asia. She is the Primary Investigator for a SSHRC Insight Development Grant and works with partners in Nepal and the Philippines to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on temporary migrant workers. Richa has a PhD in Public Policy from the National University of Singapore and a dual Masters in Public Affairs and Political Science from Indiana University, Bloomington. Previously, she was a research officer at Carleton University, a postdoctoral fellow at the United Nations University in the Netherlands, and a Visiting Scholar at Georgetown University.