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Impact of Covid-19 on Workers & Employment in Nepal

(Based on Desk Review & Key Informant Survey)



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1.

An Overview of Covid-19 Pandemic at the End of July

1.1. Historical Back Look - World and Nepal

Pandemics have been horrifying killers in the past if we go into the depths of the pages of history worldwide. Still and never, human history will forget the black death of 14th Century caused by Plague. From 1340 to 1352, altogether 13 years of tourism of Plague from China to Europe was an open dance of death, like *tandab nritya*. In the beginning of 14th Century, there was famine and at the end of first half there was plague-attack turn by turn against humanity. Almost half of the European population more than 30 million lives were lost at that time.

However, the communicable diseases existed even during hunters-gatherers days before the real start of human civilization. When agrarian life was in initial phase of domestication of animals and plants around 12000 years ago, epidemics like malaria, TB, influenza, leprosy, cholera, small pox etc. came into human life. Looking into the later phases, leprosy, cholera, malaria and smallpox had victimised South Asian life before Buddha's birth which are exposed indirectly by old epics of Ramayan, Mahabharat & other religious books. Similarly western literature exposes the sufferings caused by Malaria, TB, Influenza, Leprosy, Small Pox, Plague etc. before Christ and afterwards.

When epidemic goes beyond border and covers large geographical areas, then it becomes pandemic. The first in record in the western world is Plague of Athens at 430 BC which lasted for 5years with a death toll estimate of 100,000 covering a broader area of Athens, Sparta, Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia (www.history.com and livescience.com). We can enlist epidemics and pandemics after Buddha and Christ as follows:

- Antonine Plague of AD 165-180 with death toll of 5 millions in Roman Empire
- Cyprian Plague, AD 250-271, More than 1 million death From Ethiopia to Northern Africa, Rome and Egypt
- Justinian Plague, 541-542, Death of 50 millions, From Middle east to western Europe start from Palestine & Byzantine throughout Mediterranean
- 11th Century widespread Leprosy in Europe
- Bubonic Plague known as Black Death, Famine followed by Plague 1340-1353 from China & Asia to Sicily & Europe, Half of the population of Europe as much as 30 million people lost lives.
- Colombian exchange, 1492-1532, Arrival of Spanish and European explorers in Caribbean & Americas; small pox, measles & bubonic plague passed on to & destroyed 90% of indigenous population in Americas around 56 million people.

- Cocolizti epidemic, 1545-1548, Viral fever, a kind of typhoid, death of 15 millions in Mexico & Central America
- Great Plague of London, 1665-66, 20% population of London destroyed, more than 100,000 human lives, plague followed by a great fire also. Thousands & thousands of cats & dogs slaughtered as cause of epidemic.
- Great Plague of Marseille, France, 1720-23, more than 100,000 deaths
- Russian Plague, 1770-72, Death of 100,000 in Moscow
- Philadelphia epidemic of Yellow Fever, 1793, death toll 5,000.
- Cholera pandemic, 1817, First of 7 cholera pandemics in last 200 years, From Russia to British soldiers and passed on to India, Spain, Indonesia, China, Japan, Italy, Germany, America and Africa. Over 1 million death in Russia and 150,000 in other countries
- Cholera Pandemic, 1820, Asia covering India, China, Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines and Gulf. Death toll above 100,000
- Cholera Pandemic again 1832, from India to Egypt, Russia, Europe and to New York America, 7,000 deaths only in Berlin, thousands and thousands of people left New York. (Elena, March 11,2020)
- Plague from China to Hongkong and India, 1855-1860, more than 15 million deaths
- Cholera victimised New York in 1873 again (Elena, March 11,2020)
- Fiji measles pandemic, 1875, Fiji & Australia, 40,000 people died
- Russian Flu of influenza virus, 1889-90, from Russia to Europe and beyond, 1 million people died
- American polio epidemic, 1916, mainly in New York city and USA, Death of more than 6,000 children
- Spanish Flu, 1918-20, altogether 500 people infected by influenza virus and 100 million died across the world, 675,000 only in US. Death more than that in World War First
- Asian Flu, 1957-58, China, HK, Singapore and USA, death toll of 1.1 million of which 116,000 in USA
- Cholera pandemic 7th, 1961, from Indonesia to Asia, Africa and latin America (WHO website, Global Epidemics and Impact of Cholera, March 12, 2020)
- HIV/AIDS pandemic, 1981- still ongoing, started from west Africa in 1920. Death of nearly 35 millions

In 21st century in the beginning, covering the two decades, Humankind has faced SARS (2003), H1N1 Influenza known as Swine Flu (2009-10), MERS (2012), Ebola (2014-16) and Zika Virus (2015) as fatal virus diseases against lives. Human-to-Human transferability of virus-diseases is difficult to handle/control in spite of advanced medical research and life saving technologies. The ongoing Pandemic of Novel Corona virus, the COVID-19, at the end of 2nd decade, as being witnessed these days, is more offensive challenging the achievements of science and technology of the current era.

In Nepal, being situated in a far corner, before the modern era, the epidemics or pandemics from outside world could not travel easily. Two closest neighbour and highly populated countries China and India have faced a number of epidemics and pandemics, but Nepal did not have to face those in past. Due to lack of transportation and difficult topography, the virus-

caused diseases were mainly localised in few places in Nepal. Cholera, Malaria, Small pox and Tuberculosis were the terrible monsters of the old days in Nepal.

220 years back from today, Baby Girvan was just at 5 years of age, when small pox expanded its wings in Kathmandu valley. In order to save the would-be king Girvan from infection, the father king ordered the security force of the country to send out of the Kathmandu valley every family with babies and kids who still had no symptoms of small pox. Every house was searched and forced to cross out Kathmandu valley resulting into thousands of families mostly of Newar community to resettle themselves in outside districts, some to east and some to west. It was the idea of the king and his courtyards that whoever had survived from small pox would create no risk and who could not survive had already finished, hence pushing out those not yet infected would naturally minimise the risk of infection to the would-be king Girvan.(Power Media)

Box 1: Infectious diseases in Nepal

The first recorded cholera was in 1823 in Nepal which has remained much frequent. It is estimated that 20% of Nepali population is always at cholera risk during rainy season. Largest cholera outbreak was in 2009 in mid western region (now Karnali Province) with 30,000 cases and death toll of 500. Also mentionable is the cholera among children in July-September 1994 with 694 cases.

Nearly 390 million people get Dengue infection every year as estimated by World Health Organization in 2013 (Science news, 2019). Dengue outbreak in Nepal was first in 2006, which became frequent with cases every year mainly in rainy and summer season. A total 9,000 people were diagnosed in 2019

By Tuberculosis, 5000 - 7000 people are still dying every year in Nepal with 45,000 TB patients in an average.

Although eradicated in past, Malaria has returned back, for instance malaria fever cases in 2012 in Nepal were 2857. Considering the threat, WHO had alarmed Nepal in 2014 that three quarters of Population was at risk.

Leprosy has been ignored by the people and the state in recent three decades, it is slow and silent, still victimising human life, as an example there had been 4565 cases in Nepal in 2008-09.

HIV-AIDS terrible at the end of 20th Century has been one of the most dangerous disease, which for example caused 4722 deaths with 50,288 confirmed cases of infection in 2011.

Japanese encephalitis has been another fatal epidemic which caused 126 deaths in 1995 and 118 in 1996. During 1998-2003, total cases were 8874 with death of 1264 patients, the fatality rate at 14.2%. Highest number was in in 1999 with 2924 cases of Japanese encephalitis. Covering a comparatively long period, during 1978-2005, there were 26,667 cases with 5381 deaths.

Viral Influenza as a giant killer claimed 820 lives in Nepal in 2015, worst affected were jumla and Kaalikot of Karnali province, though people suffered by the disease in other parts of the country, too. Swine Flue and Bird flue also created horror among the people. Chicken pox, small pox and measles were common in past. Mainly during the aftermath of disasters, viral fever, dengue, diarrhoea, dysentery, jaundice, typhoid, cholera etc. show their jaws and paws.

(Based on articles and news - Thapa, ResearchGate; Pach & Bhattachan IVI; Science news.com; Journal of Nepal Health Council)

Various calamities came, victimised and retired from Nepali lives. Land slides and floods are frequent, this year more damaging with a casualty of more than 160 persons within a month. Earthquakes of 1934 and of 2015 were most damaging both in loss of wealth and loss of life. Equally horrifying are virus diseases and infectious ones.

Incomparable to past, the present crisis of virus attack is unique and terrible. This pandemic launched by Novel Corona Virus - 2 named by WHO as Covid-19 may prove to be the hardest hitting one in our Nepali history, too.

1.2. Figures of Infection, Death and Recovery

Among the Corona family virus-diseases, active in the latest two decades were SARS and MERS. SARS killed 774 in 2002-03 and MERS 858 in 2012, where infection was in total less than 10,000. Control of the two was comparatively easier and spread was not worldwide. Like wise the latest H1N1 Swine Flu Pandemic of 2009-10 generated in Mexico and spread all over the world infecting around 1.4 billions with a death toll of 150,000 - 575,000 was unnoticed to ordinary people and there was no havoc like this created by Covid-19.

Unlike others, Novel Corona virus -2 is quite different in speedy infection and fatal action horrifying the entire human civilization and health care systems. It was first noticed in China on November 17, 2019 and Wuhan city became the first victim. But the virus moved so fast all over the globe that all preventive and care systems remained less effective compared to the need & expectations. In February, WHO officially named it as COVID-19.

Before going into the impacts of the pandemic and policies undertaken to deal with the extreme adversities, we may have a look at the statistical figures, which reflect the critical conditions being faced by the people, authorities and the nations. Figures of latest 4 date-points the last day of 4 months have been considered with a view to make the study simple.

Geographical Beginning point of the Novel Corona journey was Wuhan China at the end of 2019 and hence it was more or less controlled by China in the first quarter of 2020. Thus the rate of infection has tended towards a stable zero level in China, only additional 39 cases in May and 30 cases in June. Contrary to China, Europe and America could not control the speedy infection of the virus. Brazil, Mexico and Peru have been most affected in July. Africa is slowly gaining speed in infection spread, South Africa being the topper from African continent. After Europe and America, Covid-19 gained speed in South Asia in the second quarter. The infection has been 50 times higher in India from March 31 to July 31, whereas it is 17 times higher in Pakistan and 31 times higher in Bangladesh in the same 4 month-period. Nepal was at a very low number on April 30 at 57, but gained high speed afterwards, the number of infected persons being 346 times higher on July 31 though it is not so big in terms of number and still much less compared to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Table 1).

Table 1: Novel Corona Infection in Selected Countries

Country	Apr 30	May 31	Jun 30	July 31
USA	1,069,294	1,821,822	2,696,797	4,653,065
Spain	239,639	286308	296,351	335,602
Italy	205,463	233019	240,578	247,537
France	166,420	188625	164,260	186,573
UK	165,221	274762	312,654	303,181
Germany	162,123	183411	195,399	210,112
Turkey	120,204	163103	199,906	229,891
Russia	106,498	405,843	647,849	839,981
Iran	94,640	151466	227,662	304,204
China	82,862	83001	83,531	84,292
Brazil	80,246	501,985	1373006	2,613,789
S. Africa	5,350	30,967	144,264	482,169
Mexico	16,752	87,512	220,657	416,179
Peru	33,931	155,671	282,365	407,492
Chile	14,885	94,858	279,393	353,536
Columbia	5,949	26,688	95,043	286,020
Sd. Arabia	21,402	85,261	190,823	275,905
India	33,610	189717	582,482	1,690,546
Pakistan	16,117	69,496	209,337	278,305
Bangladesh	7,667	47,153	145,483	237,661
Nepal	57	1672	13,564	19,771

(Source: WHO WorldSource: Worldometer from Google)

Table 2: Death by Covid-19 in Selected Countries

	Apr 30	May 31	Jun 30	July 30
USA	62,208	105668	129039	155,721
Italy	27,967	33415	34,767	35,141
UK	26,097	38489	43,730	46,119
Spain	24,543	27125	28,355	28,445
France	24,087	28771	29,813	30,254
Belgium	7594	9467	9,747	9,840
Germany	6518	8602	9,041	9,221
Iran	6028	7797	10,817	16,766
Brazil	5541	28872	58,406	91,377
Netherlands	4795	5956	6,113	6,147
China	4633	4634	4,634	4,634
Mexico	1569	9,779	27,121	46,000
Peru	943	4,371	9,504	19,021
Russia	1,073	4,693	9,320	13,963
Columbia	269	853	3,223	9,810
Canada	2,996	7,073	8,566	8,932
Chile	216	997	5,688	9,377
S. Africa	103	643	2559	7,812
India	1079	5390	17,322	36,497
Nepal	0	8	29	56

Source: WHO Worldometer from Google

Death by Covid-19 is terribly high in number though the ratio of death to infection is not so terrible. Death has become zero in china in the latest months of June and July, whereas, the number of deaths is the highest in US from 62,208 to 155,721, which is 22.9% of the total 678,911 death worldwide. Share of different countries in total death toll as well as number of infected persons and recovery is also comparable (Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage Share of Top-10 countries in Infection, Recovery & Death, (July 31, 2020)

Global	Infection 17,587,164	Death 678,911	Recovery 11,009,944
1	USA : 26.45	USA : 22.93	USA : 20.76
2	Brazil : 14.86	Brazil : 13.45	Brazil : 16.56
3	India : 9.61	UK : 6.79	India : 9.90
4	Russia : 4.77	Mexico : 6.77	Russia : 5.79
5	S. Africa : 2.74	India : 5.37	Chile : 2.96
6	Mexico : 2.36	Italy : 5.17	S. Africa : 2.81
7	Peru : 2.31	France : 4.45	Peru : 2.57
8	Chile : 2.01	Spain : 4.18	Mexico : 2.47
9	Spain : 1.90	Peru : 2.80	Iran : 2.39
10	Iran : 1.72	Iran : 2.47	Pakistan : 2.34

Source: Calculation based on WHO Worldometer

Death caused by Covid-19 in India is also very fast near to double the number. Though the infection is much faster in Russia, but number of death is in a low rate. Anyway, setting eyes in a global frame and looking at the percentage, the picture of Covid-19 Death is in narrow range of 3.86% to 7.06% of the total number of Covid-19 patients. Now it has come to a low level of 3.86% at the end of July.

Before gaining speed, it was 4.36% at the end of third week of March as an average of the entire first quarter, which slightly increased to 4.88% on the last day of first quarter the 31st of March 2020. In mid April the death percentage was at peak 7.06% and then declined slightly to 6.67% at the end of the month on April 30. May and June followed a declining trend to down at 4.86% on equal footing to that in March. However, there were encouraging decline in some countries compared to increasing rate in some others. Nepal suffered 29 deaths from a zero death position of March within the 2 months period, but now almost doubled to 56 deaths at the end of July.

Though the death rate is very slow to decline, rate of Recovery is fast and satisfactory in spite of no particular medicine developed yet. It is observed that recovery in first quarter was at a lower rate, but gradually recovery rate has increased stride by stride from 21.3% in March 31 to 54.6% on June 30 and to 62.6% on July 31.

Table 4: Global Status of Infection, Recovery and Death by Covid-19

Date-Point	Infection	Recovery	Death
Mar 24	392,508	103,396 (26.34%)	17,150 (4.36%)
Mar 31	809,413	172,522 (21.31%)	39,566 (4.88%)
Apr 15	2,033,452	495,586 (24.37%)	129,843 (6.38%)
Apr 30	3,256,832	1,028,686 (31.58%)	230,244 (7.06%)
May 15	4,584,012	1,735,836 (37.86%)	305,786 (6.67%)
May 31	6,207,052	2,769,377 (44.61%)	372,005 (5.99%)
Jun 15	8,036,812	4,152,681 (51.67%)	436,471 (5.43%)
Jun 30	10,483,463	5,723,120 (54.59%)	510,048 (4.86%)
July 15	13,543,014	7,911,124 (58.41%)	583,293 (4.30%)
July 31	17,587,164	11,009,944 (62.60%)	678,911 (3.86%)

Source: Calculation based on WHO Worldometer, Recovery data of few countries like UK, Sweden not available.

March 24, 2020 has been taken as the initial point from Nepali point of view because Lockdown in Nepal started from this date. On March 24, the total infected number was nearly 400,000, but within the week it doubled to be higher than 800,000. Within one month of April, from 800,000, it reached 4 times higher to 3.25 millions. One can take a silent sigh of relief that within May it was nearly double to 6.2 millions, not 4 times higher like that in April. Likewise in June compared to May, it is less than double, not close to double, i.e. from 6.2 millions to 10.48 millions. In July, of course, the number of infected person reached to 17.58 millions from 10.48 of June 30 indicating a declining rate of increase. While looking the numbers in a 4-month time frame of March-July, infection reached to 17.58 millions from 0.8 millions, an increase in totality by 21 times. Rate of recovery has increased significantly higher than that of every period of the 4 months and death rate declined to a minimum level compared to previous periods.

The multiplying number of Covid-19 patients worldwide shows clearly that, in spite of preventive measures of social distancing, use of Masks, PPEs, sanitizers, hand-washings, stay-homes and a total lockdowns, Covid-19 spread could not be controlled. Thus, Humankind is facing and passing through the reality and a horrible picture of the extremely difficult virus-disease compared to the past history of civilization.

At the end of June 2020, comparing the South Asian figures with global figures, it is evident that South Asia shares 9.41% of the total infection, 9.15% of the total recovery and 4.75% of total death. Number of persons infected is less in comparison to the larger population of South Asia, however it is fast spreading. Death rate is slightly lower or it can be considered more or less at same level i.e. 4.75% of South Asia in comparison to the global death rate of 4.86%. Recovery rate 9.15% is very slow in comparison to 54.59% of the global rate observed as Covid-19 is in expanding phase in South Asia. Once the rate of spreading infection becomes slow, we can expect recovery will be better in number and proportion.

Table 5: South Asia at the end of June 2020

Country	Infection	Recovery	Death
India	582,482	345,070	17,322
Pakistan	209,337	98,513	4,304
Bangladesh	145,483	59,624	1,847
Afghanistan	31,517	14,131	746
Nepal	13,564	3,194	29
Maldives	2,337	1,927	9
Srilanka	2,047	1,711	11
Bhutan	77	44	0
South Asia	986,844	524,214	24,268

Source: WHO Worldometer from Google

Country wise situation is of highly varying character. Bhutan has a full control with zero death position and a recovery rate of 57% as indicated (Table 5). Maldives and Srilanka with smaller death rate, of 0.38% and 0.53%, show a very high recovery rate of 82.45% and 83.58% respectively of the total number of infections. On the other hand, India has the highest death rate of 2.9% compared to others, but its recovery rate is also higher at 59.2%. Pakistan is at 2% death rate and a recovery rate of 47%, whereas Bangladesh has a low death rate of 1.2% and recovery rate of 40.9%. Afghanistan has a death rate of 2.3% and recovery rate of 44.8%.

Table 6: South Asia at the end of July 2020

Country	Infection	Recovery	Death
India	1,690,546	1,091,018	36,497
Pakistan	278,305	247,177	5,951
Bangladesh	237,661	135,136	3,111
Afghanistan	36,675	25,509	1,272
Nepal	19,771	14,399	56
Maldives	3,719	2,568	16
Sreelanka	2,814	2,391	11
Bhutan	101	88	0
South Asia	2,269,592	1,518,286	46,914

(Source: WHO Worldometer from Google)

However at the end of July, the share of South Asia In the total number of Infected & recovered persons and the death toll has been 12.90%, 13.70 % and 6.91% respectively, a clear indication of significant increase in Infection, death and recovery. Increased share of recovery is a good sign, but fast spread of infection and increased death has made the situation worse. The situation in Maldives, Srilanka and Bhutan is in control, but in other countries including Nepal situation is worse and most alarming. Comparing the death and recovery rates, though the death toll is increasing with fast infection spread in India, the death rate is slightly declined from 2.97 % to 2.15% and recovery is increased from 59.% to 64.53%. In Pakistan, death rate has slightly increased from 2.05 to 2.13%, similar in Bangladesh the death rate is increased insignificantly from 1.2 to 1.3%. The recovery rate on the other hand, both in Pakistan and Bangladesh has increased significantly from 47.2% to 88.81% and from 40.9% to 56.86% respectively.

In case of Nepal death rate at the end of June was low at 0.2%, but recovery was also slow at 23.5%. Now at the end of July, the death rate has been same at 0.2 % in spite of alarming increase in infection. Likewise, recovery rate of the confirmed Covid-19 patients has increased significantly from 23.54 to 72.82%.

Nepal has witnessed most of the cases asymptomatic. In spite of positive in PCR testing, symptoms of Covid-19 in most of the cases have not been seen and after a long time in isolation & treatment without feeling sickness, the persons infected have recovered. But now in July after the end of Lockdown, symptomatic cases are increasing mainly in the metropolitan city of Birgunj and associated districts. Birgunj is the major trade-point of Indo-Nepal border with highest volume of export and imports. The danger of Corona spread is being witnessed in cities of high population density mainly capital city and Biratnagar in east, Birgunj in Mid-terai and Nepalgunj in western Terai. Biratnagar, Birgunj and Nepalgunj have declared lockdown again on their own before August. Government has already requested children below 12 and persons at 60+ years of age through Ministry of Health & Population on July 31 strictly to stay at home.

The situation of Covid-19 infection in Nepal reveals that the first sufferers of Corona infection are the Nepali workers working in various states of India. After Lockdown in India from March 25, internally migrated Indian workers who lost jobs started to return to their homes from various states, Nepali workers in the same situation started to move towards Nepal. Even from Mumbai, a very long distance, Nepalis started journey on foot to Nepal. India and Nepal had agreed in the beginning of Lockdown to maintain the migrant workers in their places or at border points by providing food and shelter. But later on, this understanding between countries could not work and workers started to enter silently from numerous points of open border in hidden ways. Government of India opened train services for their workers to facilitate back home and through the train, or by other possible vehicles, Nepalis also gathered in border points everywhere. Full fledged Sealing of borders was disturbed by the increased flow and from humanitarian as well as nationalist point of view; Government had to respond them in a flexible way. So government issued new orders and Security forces had finally to facilitate them. As the flow of these workers was in large number, the local authorities could not manage them into limited space of quarantine centres and also corona infection testing at the border point. Hence they became the carriers of corona virus. In Later days mainly in July, the number has declined and manageable in local level.

The Health ministry record shows that overwhelming majority of the Covid-19 patients are those who entered Nepal from Nepal-India borders. Tracing/tracking those in the contacts of infected persons and testing is going on with a number of managerial & technical difficulties. Still Covid-19 has not gone into community level, but the risk is more and more visible in the month of July, when mobility of people for different objectives including work started to gain speed.

Similarly, Nepalis both migrant workers and NRNs have been air lifted by Nepal government in coordination with Embassies from third countries mainly Gulf, in June in a planned and scheduled way. Hence the flow of Nepalis from third countries seems less risky from the infection point of view. Though the number of Nepalis in contact with Embassies to enter Nepal by air from abroad seems more than 1 million, Government of Nepal, in the first phase, had

declared to bring 25,000 Nepalis on priority basis from abroad by air, of which more than 27,000 in three stages have already reached Nepal. They have been sent in holding centres in Kathmandu valley and then to quarantines in concerned Provinces (home-quarantine also). Now second phase of air-lifting is also started. On the last day of June and July, actual covid-19 situation in Nepal may be compared (Box 2 / Box 3) as follows:

Box 2: Covid-19 Situation in Nepal, June 30, 2020

Total infected persons :	-	13,564 (Men11936, Women1628)
Below 10 years of age	-	420
11-20 years of age	-	2,895
21-30 years of age	-	4,995
31-40 years of age	-	3,176
41-50 years of age	-	138
51-60 years of age	-	503
61-70 years of age	-	148
71-80 years of age	-	35
Above 80 years of age	-	8
RT-PCR Testing	-	228,341
RDT Testing	-	300,620
Persons in quarantines	-	53,070
Person in isolation and treatment	-	10,341
Persons recovered & discharged	-	3,194 (Men 2917 Women 277)
Death by Covid-19	-	29

Source: Based on Daily Updates of Ministry of Health & Population, Nepal Government

Box 3: Covid-19 Situation in Nepal, July 31, 2020

Total infected persons :	-	19,771
Below 10 years of age	-	776
11-20 years of age	-	3,833
21-30 years of age	-	7,419
31-40 years of age	-	4,662
41-50 years of age	-	2,008
51-60 years of age	-	742
61-70 years of age	-	255
71-80 years of age	-	60
Above 80 years of age	-	16
RT-PCR Testing	-	375,416
RDT Testing	-	312,402
Persons in quarantines	-	12,111
Person in isolation and treatment	-	5,316
Persons recovered & discharged	-	14,399
Death by Covid-19	-	56

Source: Based on Daily Updates of Ministry of Health & Population, Nepal Government

Among the Nepalis outside Nepal, infection, recovery and death is very high compared to those within Nepal. On April 26, the number of Nepalis outside Nepal under Corona infection was 1983 in 24 countries, out of which 59 lost their life and 434 recovered. Looking at the information, June 22 records show that 26,402 Nepalis in 55 countries were confirmed as infected by Corona Virus. Nearly 40% have recovered more than 10,000 in numbers. However, 130 persons living in 13 countries including UK, USA, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Ireland, Japan, Turkey, Netherlands and Sweden have lost life due to Covid-19 (Nepali Sansar, USA). The death rate of Nepalis outside Nepal was at 0.49 %. At the end of July, Nepalis in 38 countries have been found infected, but large number has recovered. Death toll has increased to a total of 189 persons including 25 in India (NRNA website).

2.

Impact on Work & Workers

2.1. Situation in General

Pandemics and wars or wide-coverage natural calamities not only cause large number of deaths, but also produce economic shocks, livelihood problems, unemployment, hunger, inequality and crimes, which follow an uncertain course of extreme sufferings during and after the pandemic/war/calamities.

The severe and immediate impact is on economic activity causing recession and crisis everywhere. The survey at the end of May conducted by Indian Society of Labour Economists has derived the conclusion that loss of employment is the immediate impact of Covid-19. The survey and the follow up virtual conference on June 8-9, conclude that there is 25% decline in GDP having witnessed a 12.4% decline in entire Indian economy. Industrial sector came down by 54%. Altogether 80% jobs in urban economy and 54% in rural economy have been affected, naturally most of it was casual (Economic Times, June 11, 2020). The lockdown to prevent Corona infection was announced by Nepal and India simultaneously on March 24 by Nepal and on March 25 by India. Hence the severe effects have also gone towards the same direction. With Lockdown as a stand-still position, naturally the first and fully visible impact is in workplace and the first burden is on casual workers, leaving them under the heavy stress of livelihood of hand-to-mouth. Then just after the week, the mobility of workers from their workplace towns/cities towards back-home villages was a common phenomenon both in Nepal & India. This back home tendency of the workers is not limited to domestic mobility, but also to trans-border mobility.

The long-term impact may be visualised in lower economic growth and rise in inequality which needs adequate & serious address.

The AFL-CIO national trade union centre of USA, the worst-hit country by the Corona Pandemic, has estimated that 365 million jobs will be lost within second quarter of 2020. (AFL-CIO website). ILO estimates that 305 million full time jobs will be lost in the first half of 2020 (ILO Newsroom).

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During the intensifying Covid 19 crisis, unemployment and job-loss may be witnessed through reduced working hours Forecast and revised near to actual in 2nd quarter of 2020 compared to the last quarter of 2019.

Table 7: Reduced Working hours Forecast in Second Quarter 2020

World	10.7%	Africa	9.5%
Lower-income countries	8.8%	Americas	13.1%
Lower middle income countries	11.4%	Arab States	10.3%
Upper-middle income countries	9.9%	Asia & Pacific	10%
High income countries	12.2%	Europe & central Asia	12.9%

Source: UN Policy Brief, June 2020 based on ILO Nowcasting model

Table 8: Reduced Working Hours Revised in Second Quarter 2020

World	14.0 %	Africa	12.1%
Lower-income countries	11.1%	Americas	18.3%
Lower middle income countries	16.1%	Arab States	13.2%
Upper-middle income countries	12.6%	Asia & Pacific	13.5%
High income countries	13.9%	Europe & central Asia	12.9%
		South Asia	17.9%

Source: ILO Nowcasting Model, ILO Monitor 5th Edition, June 30

Though partially economic activities have been restarted in whatever possible way in every country, still the productive activities are under-capacity utilization. Another reflection can be observed in the share of young workers in job-loss. The proportion of Young People aged 18-29 who lost their work after lockdown caused by Covid-19 is around 1/5th of total job-losers

Table 9: Share of young workers in job-loss

Global	17.1% (Women 16.1% Men 18.1%)
Low Income Countries	19.1%
Lower-Middle Income Countries	18.3%
Upper-Middle Income Countries	14.3%
High Income Countries	19.3%

Source: ILO Monitor, May 2020

Looking at another issue of employment, we see that a total of 38 % workers nearly 1.25 billions globally are at high-risk sectors. There is high risk of being unemployed in Accommodation & Food services in hospitality industry, Real Estate, Manufacturing, various services in Wholesale & Retail Trade and Automobile Services & Repairing. Risk is medium-high in arts & entertainment, recreation & related services and transport & storage services. Risk is low in education, human health & social works, Public administration & defense, compulsory social security and utility services. Risk is low but of medium level in agriculture, forestry & fishing, Mining & quarrying, Construction and financial services including insurance.

High risk and medium risk sectors are labour intensive and engage millions of workers who are low-skilled and low-paid. Coverage of MSMEs is basically these low paid low skilled workers (UN policy brief, June 2020).

During the lockdown and partial lockdown, large number of MSMEs have come at the point of collapse. Collapse of MSMEs means not only loss of income to millions of the workers, but also adverse effects on banks and financial sectors and even cooperatives. MSMEs are the real engines in economies not only in developing/LDCs, but also to a larger extent in developed countries. As we have seen in recent decades, the giant & multinational enterprises contribute less, but harvest large undue profits. Covid-19 has immediate effects on MSMEs and hence on work & employment of millions of workers.

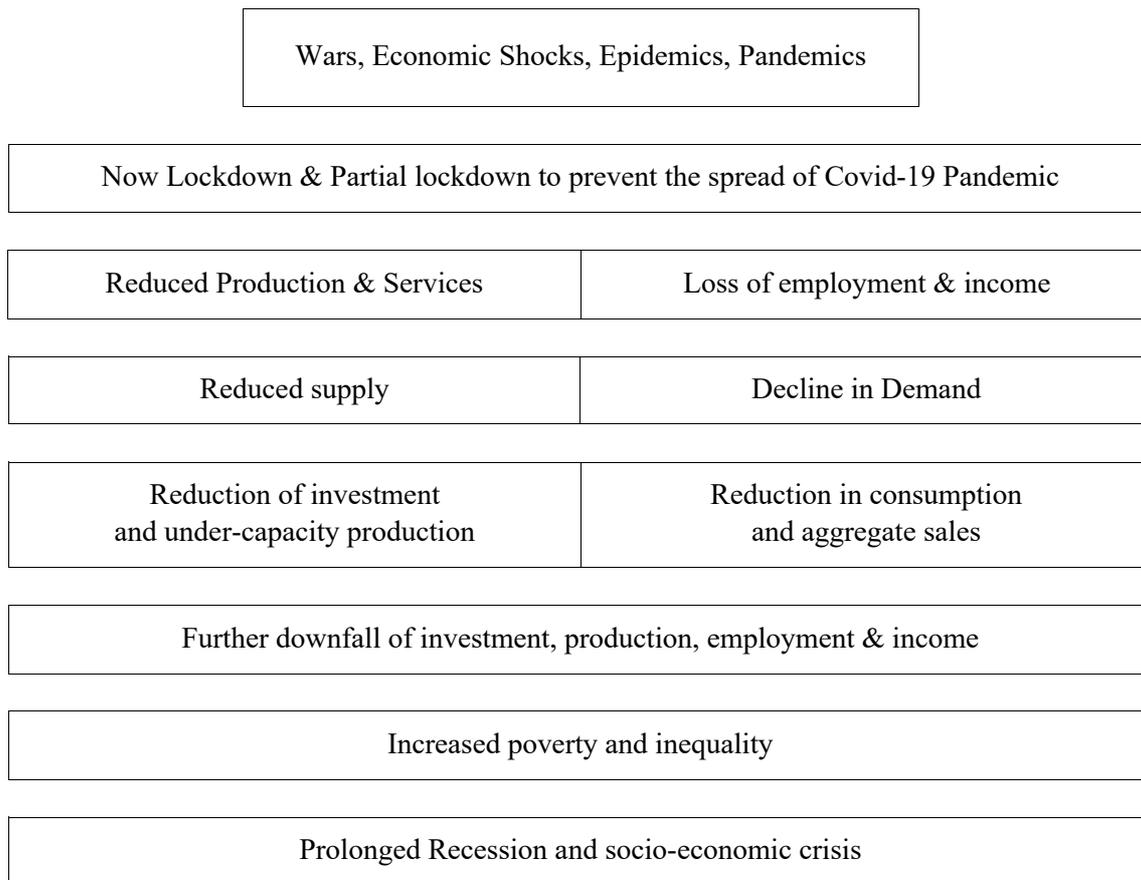
MSMEs have closer links with works in informal economy and home-based productive activities. Informal Economy workers, mostly casual & piece-rate workers, majority of women workers in low income services, care workers, domestic workers are the first sufferers of the covid-19 worldwide. Hardship is centred also on an estimated total of 67 million domestic workers across the globe, where 80% are migrant women workers and 75% are informal ones (UN policy brief, June 2020). They are at high risk of Covid-19 as well as the risk of job-loss and non-payment of wages. Among these workers, young persons and mainly young women & girls are vulnerable ones. Impact on woman workers is definitely high compared to men as gender differences play roles everywhere.

Besides, oldage people are at extreme health risk of corona infection in addition to income-related risks. Others in labour market, vulnerables are workers with disability, indigenous peoples, internally displaced peoples, slum dwellers, landless settlers and urban/rural working poor. The working poor in precariousness in so many diverse areas of irregular work fall first on the trap of hunger.

Countries, companies and workers shifted their work in a few months period to remote teleworking to the possible extent. Remote visual meetings have become common. Thus economic activities increased in digital platforms. A considerable proportion of work worldwide has become home-based and household-centred. In High income countries, ILO estimates reveal that 27% of workers could work remotely from home (S.Hayter, ILO). In those countries, naturally it has created an opportunity to workers to share meals regularly (instead of occasionally in past) with their families as well as for better child and elderly care. However, the situation in developing and least developed countries is different.

A common phenomenon in historical perspective is the increase in inequality as a result of wars, economic shocks and pandemics. The result is always a considerable volume of reduction of employment and income; the chain-effects are as follows:

Chain of Effects



In the crisis, state intervention through financial assistance to businesses and relief & welfare to individuals & Households will be extremely necessary, but state treasury will be weak due to downfall of tax & non-tax revenue. Hence public debts and international solidarity & cooperation become inevitable.

Looking towards the ongoing side of work and employment, Digital transformation of work and workers working from home, where geographical distance is kicked off, may create a situation of more inclusion of older and experienced workers, but at the same time, it may exclude opportunities for young workers. Likewise, the impact on geographical polarisation of income in favour of income equality or in favour of inequality is yet to be seen in future. It cannot be said with conformity whether this teleworking and increased home-based, household-based character of work will become common in normalised situation after the end of this unusual abnormal period of pandemic.

A sense of isolation being witnessed these days exposing workers and working families to risks of depression & mental health is also highly visible both in LDCs and advanced & developing countries. For instance in case of Nepal, the number of suicides has been found 1498 during March 24-June 20, 2020 as the official record of Nepal police has exposed. It is 30 percent higher than that in the same period last year.

2.2. The Case of Nepal

Complete lockdown was started from March 24, one week in the beginning and then extensions again and again. Now it is extended up to July 22, 2020, however locked down was eased for economic activities after 1 month and more relaxed from June 15, 2020. Only the movement of people is under restrictions and public transport is still not opened. By maintaining social distance and other safety measures based on the guidelines of Government, production, services, trade and distribution system are functioning. But business is heavily affected. The worst situation is in tourism sector including, hotel, restaurant, catering, travel-trekking-rafting, Airlines, mountaineering etc. Earnings from tourism declined to NRs. 600 million during mid April - mid May 2020 compared to 5.7 billions in the same period last year. Likewise Earnings from exports during mid April - mid May 2020, have been NRs. 3.3 billions, whereas it was 8.7 billions in the same period last year (Kathmandu Post Daily June 29, 2020).

A rapid assessment study reveals that the average monthly income of MSMEs in Nepal during the 2 months of Lockdown has a record fall down of 95% and that 3 in every 5 employees lost the job. Nearly 80% of MSMEs temporarily closed their operation. In a gender frame, 28 % of men and 41% of women lost their jobs due to Covid-19 & lockdown. Those who did not loss the job have been under pay-cuts and lay-offs (UNDP, May 26, 2020).

In manufacturing as a whole, FNCCI has recently informed that industries in the current situation can work up to 50% of their full capacity due to constraints in availability of inputs. Demand for commodities and services is low as people have postponed the consumption and use of non-essential items. As demand for commodities and services has declined, the demand for labour in most of the sectors of employment has gone down creating job-loss & income-loss in the fold of majority workers. Import is also declined, though food items and essential consumption goods of daily use are more or less at the same level. Import of petroleum products is decreased, however cooking gas import is more or less in constant flow. Distribution system through wholesale and retail trade is functioning properly, however the distribution system concerning relief by the 3 levels of government federal, province & local are less efficient.

Most affected households are those of wage workers in informal economy both casual daily workers and piece-rate workers. Most of the transport workers related to goods delivery are not among the job-losers, but those in human transport services like bus, taxi and other vehicles are job losers and suffering ones. Construction workers, market porters, hill porters, street vendors are other groups suffering hardships under lockdown. Especial groups like Oldaged, disabled, pregnant and orphans are additional sufferers in households of working masses. (Key informants)

In number, the most affected households as identified by the provinces are as follows:

Table 10: Most Affected Households and Relief package during Lockdown

Province	No. Of Affected HHs	HHs with First Relief
Province No. 1	327,736	90% (294,962)
Province No. 2	568,574	80% (454,959)
Bagmati	369,500	85% (314,075)
Gandaki	111,475	95% (105,901)
Province No. 5	183,969	90% (165,572)
Karnali	93,096	70% (65,167)
Sudurpaschim	127,348	90% (114,613)
Total No. of Households	17,81,698	85% (15,15,249)

Source: Calculation from GoN & WFP, Food Security & Vulnerability Update 3, May 6, 2020

The statistics may not have covered all 753 local bodies, the number of most affected households due to lockdown may be slightly higher nearly to 1.8 millions to the maximum extent out of a total household of Nepal around 5.4 millions. At a glance one-third of the total households are affected ones. From the number of most affected HHs at a glance, it can be estimated that 8-10 million population of the total population of Nepal may be in the category of most affected groups, which indicates that around One-Third of Nepali population falls in the most affected category.

The relief package consisted of Rice, pulse, oil, salt, potato, sugar and soap-cake sufficient for 10-20days differently in different local bodies. In Some places, second package of relief is also distributed. Similarly, NGOs and social/political volunteer groups, cooperatives and trade unions have also managed to provide some relief package of food items. Local bodies and various social groups have also managed direct meal distribution to the returning workers & their families on the way-back-home. However, after 6 weeks, from the beginning of May, relief and food assistance activities have almost stopped, there may be few unnoticed exceptions in local level.

With relaxed lockdown, some HHs may be in a better position by returning to their previous job or by joining a new job, whereas some of the households previously not affected may become a part of the most affected pool.

Besides, there are considerable number of HHs which were dependent on remittances previously, but with the pandemic, remittance sender member has returned with almost empty hands. The number of returnee Nepali migrant workers from India has already crossed 600,000. Most of them are working poor in informal economy of India and also seasonal workers. So these HHs may be affected badly by the crisis. In addition to them, the migrant Nepali workers in the third countries are nearly 3.5 millions, considerable number among them has lost job & income and significant number is waiting for back-home. Thus it seems that large number of HHs with dependence on remittances has to suffer more hardships in days to come within 2020 and 2021.

Considering the 15% drop of remittances in the current Fiscal year as estimated by NRB, 14% drop as estimated by World Bank and 18% drop as estimated by CBS (Kathmandu Post Daily,

June 29, 2020), more or less the same, there may be significant effects on income, consumption and demand of the Households.

The shock to tourism industry and foreign employment will have vital impacts in Nepali economy even after several months of restoration of normal conditions. Recovery does not seem easy to proceed on just after lockdown and control of Pandemic.

The growth rate of Nepali economy may come to a low more or less around 2% compared to 6.7% of the last year. As the economic activities have gone towards an abrupt downward fall caused by Lockdown, rise again will not be easy. Hence the ultimate and immediate effect is centred on loss of jobs, employment and incomes of the people. Altogether 3.7 million workers are at-risk and 1.6 to 2 million jobs are likely to be disrupted in Nepal which is divided into complete job-loss, reduced working hours or underemployment and reduced wages. As estimated, 1.3 million jobs for men covering 30% of the male workforce of 2018 and 631,000 jobs for women covering 24% of the female workforce of 2018 are disrupted within the lockdown and aftermath (ILO, Briefing Note, 2020).

3.

Policy Responses and Actions

In order to lessen the impact of COVID-19, ILO has recommended 4-Pillars of Action (ILO Monitor, 27 May 2020) to address all possible issues of economy, work, workplace, workers, livelihood and working families:

Pillar 1: Stimulating the economy and jobs

This pillar involves actions of the governments concerning active fiscal policy, accommodative monetary policy, lending & financial support to specific sectors including, of course, health sector.

Pillar 2: Supporting Enterprises, Employment and Incomes

This pillar 2 prescribes the extension of social protection for all, implementation of employment retention measures and the providing of financial, tax & other immediate reliefs for enterprises.

Pillar 3: Protecting workers in workplace

This Pillar 3 is related to direct measures like strengthening OSH, adopting of work arrangements such as teleworking, prevention of discrimination and exclusion, providing health access for all, expanding the access to paid leave etc.

Pillar 4: Using Social Dialogue between government and workers' & employers' organizations to find solutions to the problems

This Pillar 4 consists of strengthening the capacities & resilience of the organizations of workers, employers, and government as well as the institutions & processes for Social dialogue, collective bargaining & labour relations.

In addition to the pillars, ILO has prescribed proactive policy actions in 3 areas - 2 may be considered short-term and the third as long-term:

- Providing immediate support for at-risk workers, enterprises, jobs and incomes
- Ensuring a comprehensive approach to returning to work
- Creating decent & protective jobs for a green, inclusive & sustainable future

Based on the immediate national needs, emergency to deal with the corona crisis and also with focus on the 4-Pillars of ILO Recommendations, most of the Governments have responded seriously and sincerely. Among the policy responses and actions, it is witnessed that 170

countries have allocated \$9 trillions for fiscal structure plans. Mentionable are wage subsidies, Direct income support to the working people, cash transfers as emergency income grant, temporary public employment programmes in cleaning/disinfection/sanitisation, Deferred payments, tax-related reliefs, MSME focussed programmes, targeted policies/programmes for hard-hit groups, sectoral policies for hard-hit sectors/sub-sectors etc. (UN Policy Brief, June 2020)

Selected country responses based on ILO website and response of Nepal government have been summed up below:

3.1. Neighbourhood

The two close neighbours of Nepal, who have locked us by land-borders, have been the large playground of Novel Coronavirus-2. We are facing the problem in between China as the origin point of Covid-19 and India, the global 3rd in fast inspection after USA and Brazil. The first quarter of 2020 was the most difficult period for China and the second quarter terrible for India. The policy response of both these close neighbours is significant for us in effect and control.

India

Considering the figures of infection, death and recovery, Infection increased in India from 33,610 on April 30 to 1,690,546 on July 31 during the 3-month period and the death toll from 1079 to 36,497 in the same period, infection by 50 times larger and death by 34 times larger as exposed by the Table 1 and 2. Recovery of the infected persons on the other hand during the same 3 months is fast from 8,437 to 1,091,018 by 130 times larger. Though recovery is good, but virus spread and death toll are horrifying in spite of low in percentage increase (based on Table 1, Table 2 and worldometer).

Thus, from April 30 to July 31, the 3-month period has been very difficult for India. Looking at the trend, August may be more difficult as there is high risk of community level infection in various cities of India. In spite of lockdown from March 25, the infection of Covid-19 gained speed in June and July, and naturally economy witnessed severe adversities and slowdown. The policies and action towards recovery, life-saving, health protection, food assistance and many more demands of the bad times have been addressed by the Indian Government as follows:

- Comprehensive economic package of USD 21.9 billion targeting 800 million people under Prime Minister Gareeb Kalyan Yojana
- Allocation of USD 1.96 billions to health sector for testing, PPEs, isolation & ICU beds, ventilators and staff insurance scheme for health workers fighting Covid-19
- Direct cash transfers of USD 13 for poor pensioners, widows & disabled and USD 19.6 for 200 million poor women
- Free food ration to needy persons & families through public distribution system
- State governments to release funds into bank accounts of construction workers using cess & Construction Workers' Welfare Board
- Fund transfer of USD 26.25 per farmer under PM Kishan Yojana to 8.69 million farmers.

- 60 million employees allowed to withdraw up to 3 months' basic pay from their employees provident fund account
- State governments to arrange food and shelter for poor & needy workers including migrant workers at their place of work.
- During lockdown period, house rents not to be demanded from workers
- Advisory issued to the employers not to terminate workers, casual or contractual and not to reduce their wages during lockdown
- PPE & training for frontline health workers
- Psycho-social health helpline established
- Access to paid leave during lockdown
- 16 states announced special financial assistance package to provide cash transfer, food and shelter to disadvantaged groups & families below poverty line
- Central level trade unions in consultation and worked for humanitarian services in local level.
- In federal level, lockdown has been lifted in June by a different phrase Unlock.

Indian Government has declared free ration up to Deewali Festival (end of October) to 800 million citizens under Poor Welfare Food Scheme. People-level initiatives from social and religious organizations for food assistance to the needy individuals and families is quite exemplary in India, for instance A Gurudwara of Sikh Religion in Delhi distributed food for 200,000 needy people in different localities everyday during April.

China

China, the new super-power of the globe, has been the first point of Covid-19 in its city Wuhan from November 2019. In April, China had already crossed the extreme path of Covid-19 attack. In the second quarter and additional 1 month of July, China has taken full control in Virus infection and death, ultimately recovery of the infected persons tending towards 100. In the entire period from April 30 to July 31, additional number of infected persons is 1430 and death of only 1 person (based on Table 1 and Worldometer). Thus the policy and action of the government and people of China has been highly appreciable in the first quarter which continued for excellent results.

Following sum-up gives a picture of the Chinese success:

- Fiscal and monetary policies remanaged to aim at antivirus manufacturing, public transportation and daily necessities.
- Package announced to support resumption of work and production with focus on tax alleviation, easing monetary policy and increase in public investment
- Financial and tax measures to help SMEs for 4 years and to stabilise foreign trade and investment
- Guidelines for employers to protect workers' health
- Prohibition of discrimination on the ground of COVID-19
- Protection of medical workers through various especial favours
- Protection of community workers

- Flexibilisation of working hours
- Increased use of online platforms for social security services
- Injury benefits extended to the workers who became infected at work
- Temporary Reduction of employers' contribution to social insurance schemes
- Reimbursement of the online consultation charges for chronic and common diseases
- Unemployment social assistance for maximum 6 months to the unemployed not eligible for unemployment social insurance benefits
- Increase in social assistance to families in difficulties
- SMEs with low lay-off rate to get refund up to 100% of previous year's unemployment contribution
- Encouragement to street-stall & small stores
- Adopted Basic Health Care & Health Promotion Law especially for workers including OSH improvement
- Allocation of 250 million Yuan by ACFTU as poverty relief fund for low income workers
- Special focus of ACFTU to the workplaces and sectors of women majority
- Direct Guiding by ACFTU for collective negotiations on flexible working hours, teleworking, wage arrangements and supporting measures in women concentrated sectors.

On July 15, China revised its monetary & fiscal policies with a target to create 9 million new jobs in urban areas with emphasis on infrastructure construction. Government subsidies per capita to be increased by Yuan 50 - 550 per person. Reduction of employers' contribution to social insurance scheme. A total of 3.2 million companies received USD 5.98 billions in refunded unemployment insurance premiums. Promotion of platform economy to promote employment and poverty alleviation. Digital Transformation Partnership Action launched by the government to help SMEs. New opportunities for university graduates in state-funded Research & Development programmes.

3.2. Successful in Asia

After China, Successful in Asia, excluding Middle East are mainly Japan, Singapore and South Korea in the context of Covid-19. We have selected Japan and Singapore from two sub regions of Asia for their policy responses and actions. Japan has significantly controlled the infection, whereas infection was high in Singapore but loss of life was fully controlled.

Japan

Japan has been successful to control the spread of corona infection, recovery of the infected ones and limit the loss of lives. As witnessed on April 30, Infection had covered 13,965 persons, where 2,368 recovered and 425 lost the life. After a month, the number of infected reached to 16,804 (with additional 2839), whereas death toll doubled 886 and recovery at 14,406 exposing a higher rate of recovery. In June 30, Infection reached to 18476, death toll to 972 and recovery 16,557. The month of June has been quite significant. In totality recovery rate is 89.6% and death has been minimised in June to 86 persons compared to 425 up to April and 461 in only

May. At the end of June, infection reached to 33,049 near to double, but death was strictly limited to 32 persons (based on daily updates of Worldometer).

The policies and actions of Japanese Government may be mentioned as follows:

- Announcement and implementation of two emergency response packages on February 13 and March 10 with a total of Yen 446 billions (0.1% of GDP)
- Declaration of State of Emergencies on April 7 effective up to May 6 in all 47 prefectures of Japan. (It was lifted from May 25)
- Adoption of Emergency Economic Measures on April 7 for Response to COVID-19 and scaled up the funds on April 20 to Yen 117 billion (20% of GDP)
- Measures to prevent infection spread and to build medical treatment structures
- Deferment of payment of taxes and social security premiums (estimated Yen 26 trillions)
- Total cash payments of Yen 15 trillions (Yen 12.9 trillions to all residents of Japan, 2 millions to each micro-small-medium businesses and 1 millions each to individual business owners)
- Supports through discounts & vouchers for food services, transport, tourism and other businesses
- Set of measures announced by Bank of Japan for smooth functioning of financial market and incentives to provision of credit
- Child Allowance - Yen 10000 per child
- Emergency micro credit facilities to troubled households on zero interest up to Yen 600,000 for 3 months
- Rent support for low-income households
- Support for parent's work leaves with a new subsidy system of Yen 8330 per day
- Support to self employed people of sub-contract work Yen 4100 per day
- Special loans from Emergency Small Funds - Yen 100,000 to 200,000 at zero interest
- Comprehensive support by local governments to job/income losers due to Covid-19
- Employment adjustment subsidies increased to companies with no dismissal of workers
- Support of Yen 2 millions to corporations and 1 million to sole proprietors whose revenue falls by 50 % in any month of 2020 from previous year
- Promoting new work arrangements and telework by subsidies to SMEs for the system and loans to free-lancers & self-employed
- Infection prevention measures at workplace
- Prevention of exclusion & discrimination, paid sick leave and immediate treatment
- Expanded support for babysitter costs
- Tripartite consultations for working hours and teleworking (JTUC-RENGO the national trade union centre in every process)
- Special attention to recruitment of new graduates
- RENG0 and affiliates active in government plans
 - Yen 10,000 reliefs to 127 million residents and homeless persons
 - Focus on frontline workers
 - Hazard pay of Yen 300 per order to 15,000 Uber Eats deliverers

- Second supplementary budget on June 15 declared
 - USD 4.23 billions for enhancing Employment Adjustment Subsidy
 - USD 109 billions to support SMEs and Corporations
 - USD 18.95 Rent Support Grant for SMEs
 - USD 28 billions to support medical treatment providers
 - USD 93.6 billions Contingency Fund for Covid-19
 - 42 billions Yen for educational & prevention support to reopen schools
 - 50 billion Yen for deploying optical fibres for educational ICT
 - 31.8 billion Yen for Additional Placement of Teachers

Singapore

Singapore, with advantage of very small territorial position, has been successful to control the spread of corona infection, recovery of the infected ones and limit the loss of lives. Infection was fast in the beginning and reached to 34884 in May 31, but simultaneously recovery has been appreciable at 21699 and death toll limited to a total 23 persons. Further in June it came under full control with 3 additional deaths and a recovery rate of 87.7% (Recovery of 38,500 persons out of 43907 infected ones). In July, infection reached to 52,205 and death of additional 4 persons with high recovery rate of 89% (based on daily updates of Worldometer)

The successful response of government in policy and actions are as follows:

- Fund of \$ 17 billions for measures to save jobs & economy and variety of tax-deferments and rebates
- Mobilisation of \$ 5.1 billions as solidarity budget
- Sector specific incentives through Job Support Scheme
 - 75 % wage support to aviation industry
 - 50% wage support to food & beverage
 - 25% wage support to all sectors
- \$ 300 per vehicle per month for transport workers up to September 2020
- Taxi & hire-car drivers to get \$20 per vehicle per day for 3 months
- Cash transfer of \$ 300 per adult Singaporean
- Support of \$ 3000 to lower wage workers as workforce special payment
- Grocery vouchers tripled from \$100 to \$300 for 3 months
- Self employed persons to receive \$1000 per month for 9 months
- Set up of Temporary Relief Fund in April for unemployed persons
- Lay-off not to exceed 1 month
- Monthly Wage Ceiling Allowance raised from \$3600 to \$ 4600
- Trade loans, subsidies, temporary bridging loan Programmes to be continued and capital payments deferred for 1 year
- Guidelines for safe distancing measures at work, work from home and queue management
- Temporary housing support
- Access to paid leave and health care
- New provision of \$ 100 per day under leave of Absence Support Programme

- Tripartite consultation made regular and tripartite action through national Wage Council
- Extension of Self Employed Person Training Support Scheme to December 2020
- Hourly training allowance raised from \$ 7.5 to \$ 10 from May 1, 2020
- Aim to create 10,000 jobs for unemployed, young graduates and self-employed
- National trade Union centre also established a care fund for union members who lost job due to Covid-19

3.3. Qatar & UAE: Destination of Nepali Migrant Workers

The major Gulf destinations of more than 2 million Nepali migrant workers are Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait and Bahrain including others. We have selected Qatar and UAE to look at their policy response and actions in this Covid-19 crisis.

Qatar

Qatar has been successful in prevention and treatment of Covid-19. At the end of April, total number of infected persons was 13,409, out of which 10 patients lost their life. In May, the number became higher by 4-times. Then it started to decline and rate of recovery increased significantly. Now in July number of infected person is slow at 110,695 with a death toll of 174 persons whereas recovered individuals are 107,377, the recovery rate being 97 % and the death rate declined at 0.15% (based on daily updates of Worldometer).

The policies and actions of Qatar government are as follows:

- Large stimulus package for private sector QAR 75 billions (USD 20.6 bln) in effect from March 16 and QAR 10 bln liquidity support to stock exchange
- Qatar Development Bank in cooperation with ministry of Finance announced National Guarrantee Programme of QAR 3 bln for interest-free loans to companies effected by Covid-19 for 1 year
- Tax payment deferred up to June 30, 2020
- Plan for workplace to return to full capacity announced - from June 1 to September 1 in 4 phases
- Commercial banks deferred repayment of loans for SMEs for 6 months
- Exemption on rent for needy enterprises
- Selected sectors exempted from paying water and electricity bills
- Special arrangements by Ministry of Administration Development, Labour & Social Affair (ADLSA)
 - Free testing & health care services
 - All workers to get sick leave and wages in isolation & quarantine
 - Promotion to collective agreements
 - Temporary work arrangement from March 18
 - Private sector to reduce physical presence at workplace to 20%, others to work from home
 - Working hours reduced to 6
 - Buses to transport workers on half of their capacity
 - Directives issued for safety & health

- Enterprises to conduct risk assessment regularly
- Provisions equally applicable to domestic workers
- Biannual meeting of ADLSA, GUFs and ILO took place on April 9
- with focus on Covid-19
- ADLSA Campaign covered awareness & guidance, inspection visits, educational messages and hotline 24/7 for workers complaint.
- Taktuf Initiative by Quatar Chamber has proposed
 - Support to field hospitals
 - Medical personnel
 - Medical equipment
 - Delivery of food
 - Clearing & hospitality
 - Sterilization services
- Remotely arrangement of Sessions of Labour Dispute Settlement Committee
- Interactive online platform 'connecting for care' and live chat in 10 languages including Nepali for quarantined workers
- Separate hotline service for workers launched by National Human Right Committee

ADLSA and ILO with focus on DWs published booklet for DWS and another booklet for employers of DWs

UAE

Though number of deaths is a little higher than in Qatar, UAE has been successful to control the spread of Corona infection. At the end of April, 12481 individuals were infected, of which 105 lost life. In May, the infection and death were multiplied to 34557 and 264 respectively, but 50% of the patients recovered. In June and July, UAE was successful to manage prevention and treatment adequately. Now at the end of July, the recovery rate is high at 89% and death limited to 0.58% of the total number of infected individuals 60506 (based on daily updates of Worldometer).

The Sum up of policies and actions of UAE Government are as follows:

- In early March, UAE Government introduced Economic Stimulus Package of Dirhams 126 billions
- On march 14, Central Bank of UAE announced comprehensive economic Support Scheme to provide funding for banks, supporting liquidity and relief for interest payments.
- Abudhabi Executive Council to help SMEs through a 3 billion Dirhams fund.
- Government established Emirate Council for food Security to create 16,000 job opportunities and to increase agricultural production by over 100,000 tonnes.
- From late April, government started to reopen Malls and restaurents
- A 20% rebate on rental values for tourism and entertainment sectors
- Ministry of Human Resource and Emiratisation (MOHRE) announced
 - National programme for labour market stabilization
 - Business Continuity readiness guidelines for private sector establishments

- Innovative package for virtual labour market
- Sick leaves to employees in private sectors
- No administrative fines on private sector employers for 6 months
- MOHRE reached to 2710 private businesses to check working conditions
 - Inspection of workplace and accommodation
 - Penalties for violation
 - Hotline services for complaints
 - Special committee to look into complaints of nationals
 - Lifting of restrictions against new work permits
- Reduction of attendance of workers by remote working arrangements whose duties do not require presence at workplace
- Social distancing and sterilization facilities at workplaces
- Use of 25 % vehicle seating capacity for transportation of workers
- Free testing facilities to workers in labour accommodation places
- Ensuring wage protection system
- Specific Measures to protect migrant workers
 - Health care right
 - Employment facilitation if current employer is out of work
 - Automatic renew of visas on request until end of 2020
 - No deporting
 - Hotline services to complaints
 - Construction companies to set up accommodation at worksites
- Grant of 3-months grace period for all visa violators and no fines
- Manual for trade unions on Covid-19
- Business Continuity Tool (BCT) for SMEs
- Free treatment of all Covid-19 patients
- Supporting Employees' Basic Living needs
 - 10 million meals campaign
 - Medical, food, education and other basic needs
 - Price control measures on essential goods

The policies and actions of the two selected countries are not much helpful to Nepali migrant workers. Implementation aspect of the policies and activities towards migrant workers has been weak. Considering their dependence on migrant workers both in terms of productivity and number, their response in practical realities was expected to be more proactive and humanitarian. They could not manage in immediate response, policies to address and real implementation. The informal bilateral understanding of Nepal government during Lockdown with Quatar and UAE governments to take care of Nepali migrant workers proved to be less effective. The major issues of Food Assistance, accommodation with adequate social distancing and travel arrangement to those who return and those in queues to return home have not been addressed properly. The job-losers with no intention of returning back home are also facing problems and feel totally ignored by their employers and the respective governments. The Nepali workers are also not satisfied with the Nepali embassies and it is natural because of the insufficient human resource in the embassies.

3.4. South Africa from the African Continent

Only South Africa has been selected considering its big-brother position in Africa and fastest expansion of Covid-19.

Policies and actions are quite impressive and workers friendly, but still Infection is much faster and death multiplying. At the end of April, infection was at 5350 individuals, out of which 103 patients lost the life, but in May, the number of infected persons and death multiplied by 6 times with slow recovery. Further in June and July, the expansion of Covid-19 increased terribly. At the end of July the number is 482,169 with a death toll of 7812. The number of recovered persons is high at 309,601 at the rate of 64.21 %. Death rate has come down at 1.6% of the total number of infected individuals (based on Table 1 and Worldometer). South Africa is still in an expansionary phase of Covid-19

The major policies and actions of the government are as follows:

- Tax adjustments and tax subsidies
- Turnover tax deferrals increased to R100millions per year
- Solidarity Fund of R150 millions for vulnerable South Africans which reached to R2.6 billions by peoples' contribution
- R 1 billion spent for PPEs for frontline workers
- South African Reserve Bank announced measures for cheaper access of funding and cut the interest rates
- Social Relief & Economic Support Package of R500 billions (10% of GDP) for
 - PPEs, testing, tracing, screening & medicalnecessities
 - Food & shelter for homeless
 - Sanitization of public gtransport
 - Emergency water supply
 - R 350/month for SA workers in informal economy with no job
 - Support to SMMEs, Spaza shops and informal business by loans & grants
- Allocation of \$ 17 billion by National Disaster Fund for workers with negative income due to Covid-19 under Employer-Employee Relief Scheme for 6 months
- R 200 billion for Loan Guarantee Scheme supposed to support 700,000 firms & 3 million employees
- R 100 billion for protection and creation of jobs, of which 40 billion is set for income support to workers whose employers are not able to pay their wages
- Productivity South Africa linked with Department of Employment & Labour introduced several measures to enhance competitiveness and sustainability for SMMEs in productive sectors
- Child Support Grant beneficiaries to receive R500/month from June to October 2020
- South Africa Social Security Agency active in food assistance through vouchers & cash transfers
- Department of Employment & Labour issued Guide for employers insisting on
 - Protective clothing for workers
 - Safe working environment

- Special paid leave for workers in quarantine
- Encouraging sick workers to stay home
- Virtual communication with clients & customers
- NEDLAC as social dialogue institution managed a tripartite agreement for new work arrangements (short time, shifts, working hours, teleworking and sectors-specific issues)
- Intensive communication campaign by government
- Hospitals across 9 Provinces fully prepared for Corona cases and poors
- Preparing for new Social Compact between labour, business, community and government for structural reforms
 - To reduce cost of doing business
 - Promote localization & industrialization
 - Overhaul State owned Enterprises and
 - Strengthen informal sectors
- Focus on vulnerable workers
 - Worsening situation in informal economy by loss of job & income
 - High levels of poverty and significant levels of HIV & TB
 - Women in unpaid care work
 - Gender-based violence tripled during lockdown
 - Migrant women & refugees in harassment & violence
 - Farm workers
- Congress of South African Trade Unions active in mobilization of trade union organizers to workplaces for protection of vulnerable workers

3.5. Europe & Americas

Italy

Italy was the first country in Europe to face Covid-19, same as in 14th century to face black death of bubonic Plague. The number of infected persons reached 205,463 and death of 27967 persons, very high death rate at 13.6%. But Italy was successful in May, June and July to set speed breakers to the fast race of the Pandemic, but death rate is almost the same. However, the rate of recovery has increased significantly from 36.96% in April to 80.78% in July (based on Table1, Table 2 and Worldometer).

A sum up of the policies and actions of Italian Government are as follows:

- Suspension of payment of taxes and mortgages for April and March
- Bonus up to Euro 100 to workers with a gross annual income of Maximum 40,000 who worked in March 2020.
- Tax credit to shop-owners equal to 60% for commercial rent for March
- Employment retention with income support (80% of gross salary & full social security contribution) during disruption of production to all sectors except for domestic work
- Wage compensation equal to 80% of hourly wage to those enterprises which are not eligible for retention scheme (a maximum of Euro 600 per month)
- Euro 600 per month support for income loss seasonal workers and self employed ones.

- Euro 100 per month additional for workers in essential services.
- Voucher care services (baby sitting) for families who did not have extra paid leave.
- Euro 300 cash transfer by Municipality for those poor who have no pension or income
- Central Guarantee Fund established to support SMEs
- Moratorium on loan repayment in mortgages, leasing and short-term loans
- Volatility adjustment mechanism for insurance companies
- Access to credit for micro enterprises
- National Investment Bank's guarantee to banks in granting credit to companies
- Compensation to shareholders and bond holders for the losses due to bank crisis with advance payment (40% due compensation)
- Work arrangement with simplified teleworking, and simplified tendering procedures in public sector.
- Providing funds to enterprises for the purchase of equipment required to change the work arrangements
- Enhanced OSH measures to be ensured at workplace
- For workplaces, Covid-19 has been classified as an occupational accident
- Subsidies to companies producing medical devices and PPEs
- Subsidies to enterprises to purchase PPEs and tax-breaks for purchasing sanitization equipments
- Dismissal procedures frozen up to end of May 2020 subject to extension if needed
- Agreement signed by tripartite partners to accelerate the transfers of income replacement to workers through short-term work schemes
- Paid leave up to a maximum of 12 days/month (instead of 3 days) for care of disabled/elderly family members
- New recruitment of 20,000 workers in health sector
- Tripartite signing of Protocol for the regulation of measures to combat & contain the spread of Covid-19 in workplace on March 14, (Renewed again)
- Relaunch of economy in tripartite consultation

UK

UK was among the first victims of Europe. The number of infected persons was large at 165,229 and death of 26,097 individuals on April 30 as first quarter was extremely difficult to UK. The spread of Covid-19 became a little slow and near to double in 3-months period 303,181 and death also close to double on July 31. Rate of recovery may have been higher in June and July though data is not available. The death rate was very high at 15.8% in April which remained almost the same at 15.2% at the end of July (based on Table 1, table 2 and Worldometer).

United Kingdom has faced extreme days of history in this pandemic which are not over up to now. Let us look at its policies and actions to deal with the worst situation:

- Central bank reduced bank rate and expanded its holdings of government & corporate bonds by 200 billion Pounds.
- 330 billion pounds (15% of GDP) available for loans & guarantees to businesses

- Additional funding of 5 billions for NHS and public services
- Corona Virus Act as a new legislation into effect
- Statutory Sick Pay for individuals
- Self employment income support scheme and self employed individuals also to be covered by social protection
- Under Corona Virus Job Retention Scheme, government commitment to pay 80% of wages to furloughed workers up to 2500 pounds per month until October 2020
- Deferred VAT payments for firms up to June 30
- A 12-months business rates holiday for all retail, hospitality, leisure and nursery businesses
- Grant funding of 10,000 - 25,000 pounds for small businesses based on their turnover
- Corona virus business interruption loan scheme up to 5 millions to SMEs and 25-50 millions for large businesses based on turnover
- New package of 1.25 billions to firms driving innovation in UK
- Issue of guidance in consultations with social partners & relevant stakeholders in May to Risk Assessment and reopen businesses & ensure safe work
- Access to health care through a 5-Pillar Plan covering swab-testing, sawb-testing for critical key workers, blood-testing for right antibodies & immunity and UK-wide surveillance testing
- Strengthening OSH measures and provision of PPEs
- Prevention of discrimination and exclusion subject to Covid-19
- Joint action of workers' and employers' organization
- Focus of Trade Union Centre of UK on 6 key areas
 - Decent work & new way of doing business
 - Sustainable industry
 - Real safety net
 - Rebuilding public services
 - Equality at work
 - Rebuilding international rules for decent jobs & public services for all

Germany

Up to April, infection spread was fast in Germany though not as much as in Italy, France or UK. However, Germany could make it very slow through efficient functioning & systematic mechanisms, hence infection in total increased by 29 % in the period of 3 months - from 162123 in April to 210112. Death on the other hand is at the rate of 4.38% in an average, however the additional number in June & July is much less compared to other countries in Europe. Recovery rate of Covid-19 patients is very high at 91.5% of total infected persons (based on Table 1, 2 and daily updates of Worldometer)

Let us have a look at policies and activities of the German Government:

- Service guarantee for social services & welfare until the end of 2020-06-17
- Announcement of tax reliefs
- Workers with short-time work benefit allowed to generate additional earnings

- Limit for supplementary earnings to pensioners raised from Euro 6300 to 44,590 per annum
- Period for short-term employment increased from 70 to 115 days to help seasonal workers in agricultural sector and farmers
- A one-time salary premium of up to Euro 1,000 to be paid to employees in geriatric care
- Measures introduced for access to basic income support for job-seekers
- Self-employed workers and small enterprises can receive one-time emergency aid from federal government. Also indemnity for up to 100% of the credit sum for enterprises of all sizes
- Support package for start-ups and artists
- VAT for food served in gastronomy reduced from 19 to 7 % until June 30.
- Access to child supplement for families with low income
- Rental protection between April 1- June 30
- Conditions eased to receive short-time work benefit
- Payment of unemployment benefit extended for 3 months more if it expires between May 1- December 31
- Compensating parent with children up to 12 years who are not able to work due to closures of child care - 67% of the income up to 6 weeks
- Issue of Safety At Work Standard for SARS-CoV-2 to be obeyed at all workplaces
- A Euro 156 billions package endorsed by social partners from supplementary federal budget
- Special collective bargaining agreements between employers' and workers' organizations
- Trade union agreement with employers concerning short-time work, apprentices and working students
- Cabinet approval to Work Councils to use video/telephone conferencing for decision-making
- Announcement of a fiscal package of Euro 130 billion for economic recovery with 57 detailed measures
- Future investment package of Euro 50 billions introduced for climate-friendly mobility and R&D as a public health promoting investment including Corona-Vaccine Research
- Support to EU and international community

Brazil

Brazil once regarded as the most successful nation to deal with poverty and inequality is now in extremely difficult condition. The bad days were running for several years and now Corona virus has aggravated the situation beyond control. In a 3 month period from May 1 to July 31, Corona infection spread by 33 times from 80,246 to 2.6 million and death toll multiplied by 17 times from 5541 to more than 9 million lives. At the end of July, though the death rate is less at 3.5% compared to 6.9% of April and 5.7% of May, the number is quite higher (based on Table 1, Table 2 and Worldometer).

To save lives of the people as the first priority and simultaneously with equal importance to continue economic activities for income and employment as the blood-circulation in economy

is definitely the most difficult responsibility if not impossible. Let us enlist what Brazil has done:

- Amendment of constitution to fight Pandemic
- Issue of general guidance and sector-specific guidelines to combat Covid-19
- Issue of Guidance on OSH and Covid-19
- Zero rate of import tax announced for products necessary to combat Covid-19
- R 7.5 billion credit-line for micro and small enterprises
- Reduction of basic rate of interest by central bank to facilitate access to credit
- Issued emergency provisional measures
- Established Emergency Monthly Grant benefitting 70-100 million Brazilian workers
- Funding electricity bills of low income citizens for 3months
- Allocation of US\$ 500 millions in Bolsa Familia cash transfer programme to cover 1 million people
- Tax reduction for private companies
- US\$ 100 billion allocated for income and employment support programme, stimulus package programme for companies, tax relief measures and health supply purchases
- Presidential Decree covering the possible extension of the duration of collective bargaining agreements for 90 days more
- Ordinance of National Institute of Social Security to simplify the processes for beneficiaries caused by social distancing measures
- Retirees and Pensioners in special attention
- Trade union confederation CUT in active role

United States of America

With the highest number of widespread infection among 4,653,065 individuals and the highest death toll of more than 155,000 at the end of July, United States of America, in spite of its super-power position, is passing through an odd & most difficult path of the history. Recovery from Covid-19 is also highest as 2,286,492 Covid-19 patients have recovered though it is less than half of the total number of infected persons. The death rate is at 3.34% at present reduced from a higher 5.8 in April and May (based on Table 1, Table 2 and Worldometer).

Recovery of the US economy is at a difficult juncture. The policies and actions undertaken by US Government are as follows:

- Allocation of \$ 5 trillions as federal relief package between March 27 - April 24 and then added \$ 484 billion package in late April
- Enacted Corona Virus Aid, Relief & Economic Security Act (CARES Act)
 - Paycheck Protection Programme(PPP) of 350 billions
 - Emergency Disaster loan fund of \$ 10 billion
 - Corona Virus Relief Fund established \$ 150 billions
 - Main Street Lending Programme with \$ 600 billions
- Lowered Interest rates, established credit streams of \$ 300 billion and changed lending processes for easier access

- Municipal liquidity facility
- Payroll Support programme for airline industry
- Pandemic unemployment assistance programme
- OSH Administration and US Centre for Disease Control & Prevention issued updated guidance to make workplace safe with various safety measures
- OSHA issued industry specific guidance for construction and food service
- Funds and facilities provided for community-based testing in addition to hospital based system
- Emergency funding for child care
- Availability of telehealth services
- Food-aid programmes, up to May 8, 130 million Americans have received direct cash (A total of \$ 218 billions)
- Allocation for additional \$ 12 billions for vaccine development research
- Trade union Confederation AFL-CIO in active role and in bipartite and tripartite consultation

3.6. Response of Nepal Government

Nepal Government contributed NRs. 100 millions to SAARC fund to fight against Covid-19. A high level committee for Prevention and control of Covid-19 led by Deputy Prime Minister - Novel Corona Prevention & Control High Level Coordination Committee was formed by the Cabinet decision of March 1, 2020. An action team led by Chief Secretary of the Government was formed accordingly. The Committee established Corona Virus Infection Prevention, Control & Treatment Fund. The Fund was contributed by people and could collect more than NRs. 2.7 billions within a month. Corona Virus Control & management Centre (CCMC) in Central level and DCCMC in district level are functioning effectively. All 4 Security forces of the country including Nepal Army, Armed Police, Nepal Police and CIB have been fully mobilised along with the health related organs of the government. The self mobilization of local body representatives at grassroots is effective based on federal policy.

Nepal Government has adopted a 6T strategy (Travel Restrictions, Testing, Tracking, Tracing, Treatment, Together) in this regard. Based on the Cabinet decisions, several Directives, Executive Orders, Guidelines and procedures have been issued by the government concerning prevention, testing, treatment, funeral and waste-management. Awareness campaign on Covid-19 was also intensified.

Capacity development of Health care system was started in a fast track initiative. Prevention focus works including the management of PPEs, Masks and sanitizers in numbers & availability and the increase of ventilators and ICU beds were given immediate attention. From zero capacity of testing, the government managed a capacity of 500 testing daily before lockdown and currently the capacity is extended to 5,000 per day. Initially in the first case, swab was sent to Hongkong, but within the first quarter RDT and PCR testing facility made available in all 7 provinces through 22 laboratories.

Only two cases of corona infection positive were witnessed before Lockdown and considering the possibilities, two levels of intervention preparation was planned:

First level - Investment in health system

Second level - Effective response to a caseload of 1500 infected persons and 150,000 affected persons

Two call centres for Corona information flow established just before lockdown.

Complete Lockdown from March 24, international border sealed and flights cancelled

Use of Diplomatic Missions to ensure wages & minimum benefits and protection for migrant Nepali workers abroad

Awareness building activities and campaign

25 hubs and satellite hospital network established

Establishments of Quarantines in centre and local level, Corona Special hospitals and Isolation centres/wards in several hospitals

No custom duties for the import of health and medical equipments

Corona Insurance of NRs. 50,000 and 100,000 introduced by the government to be carried on by all public and private sector companies. By paying a premium of NRs. 300 or 600, insured person will get the amount immediately if his/her corona test is positive. Health insurance of NRs. 100,000 to cover 600,000 senior citizens without any premium. Free Health Insurance for 52,000 Women Health volunteers & their family members who will be mobilised in fight against Covid-19.

Mobile Insurance Programme to cover 40 % citizens in the country.

Insurance of NRs. 500,000 for every individual health worker by the government without any premium to be paid. Similarly Insurance of NRs. 2.5 millions to medics & staffs directly involved in Covid-19 cases.

Contribution of workers and employers (31% of wages) in social security fund will be done by Government during the period of lockdown. Enterprises to pay wages to workers during Lockdown period for two months, for which they can use welfare fund

Promotion to every enterprise to register in Social Security Fund

Cash Reserve Ratio reduced to 3% and Bank rate to 5% by Nepal Rastra Bank. A fund of NRs. 50 billion by Central Bank of Nepal for loans in 5% rate of interest to cottage & SMEs and for corona-affected tourism sector enterprises to pay wages to workers & employees. Central Bank NRB to establish Re-Financing Fund of NRs.100 billions for large industries.

Rebate of 50% in electricity bill of Manufacturing enterprises

A 50% discount by Telecom in internet service

No charges to withdraw money from ATM during Lockdown period

'Food for work' Programme in local level in labour-intensive development works providing minimum daily wage basically for informal economy workers who became unemployed. Those who do not join the programme will be given food relief equal to 25% of the wages.

Workers who had permission to go abroad for foreign employment but could not go due to pandemic & lockdown will be given priority in employment opportunities by Local government under Prime Minister Employment Programme. They will be eligible for easy loans if they want to start their own business.

Prime Minister Employment Programme extended in coverage and with more fund to support jobless workers.

Employment Service Centre to be developed as Work Information Bank.

1.3 million children of Below Poverty-line households to get Child Protection Grant.

Considering the financial problems of the country, Nepal has signed a project of \$29 millions for emergency response and health system preparedness on April 7 under WB Group's Covid-19 Fast Track facility. Likewise, Government has signed agreements for \$78.5 millions under Rapid Credit Facility of IMF and \$ 60 millions under Policy Based Lending of ADB. Similarly in July, Government has signed an agreement with World Bank for a road project deal of USD 450 millions to boost post-Covid-19 recovery.

Up to June 3, NRs. 10 billion is invested for setting up quarantine facilities, import of medical equipment, distribution of relief materials and food support. (Federal Government spent NRs. 6.03 bln, Province Governments 1.08 bln and local governments 2.76 bln. (bipad.gov.np).

From Jun 3, Economic activities were partially opened and also mobility of people based on government permission. New work arrangements have been promoted. By 214 chartered flights, Government airlifted 16,672 Nepalis mostly workers from Abroad in difficult conditions to Holding centres and quarantines in Nepal. For those who are ready to pay will be quarantined in Various hotels already arranged for the purpose. Six Holding centres in Kathmandu valley are already established under the management of Nepal Army and Province governments are given responsibility to transfer them safely to their homes from holding centres & quarantines

On June 15, Lockdown eased for more economic activities, but mobility of people from district to district not allowed. Government offices came into operation in two shifts - morning and afternoon.

On June 19, Covid-19 Crisis Management Centre has decided to open up foreign employment based on the proposal of ministry of Labour & Employment after more than 3 months of complete closure.

On June 29, Nepal government issued the procedure concerning repatriation of Nepali migrant workers by using Foreign Employment Welfare Fund. Previously the workers had to pay themselves for their flight to Nepal.

Within 1st week of July, government has permitted short-route public transport mainly taxis and buses.

On July 17, Nepal Rastra Bank, the central bank of Nepal, made public the Monetary Policy for the fiscal year 2020/21. The monetary policy addressed most of the issues of Business class as demanded by apex bodies of the entrepreneurs. Deferral of repayments of principle & interest up to 1 year and reduced 5% interest rate with easier refinancing facilities has been ensured. 15% of the loans below NRs. 1 billion should be directed to MSMEs by commercial banks in 4 year period up to 2024. Altogether there are 418,000 registered cottage & small scale enterprises operating in the country, which will be benefitted. The interest on refinancing & easier loans will be at the rate of 3-5%. Every branch of Commercial banks should at least provide these loans to 10 firms and national level development banks to 5 firms. Commercial banks should invest at least 10% on energy sector and can also issue energy-bonds.

Under construction tourist standard hotel will get a grace period of 2 years for repayment of loans. Moreover, every loan in tourism sector will be given grace period of 6 months for repayment, those effected worst will get 1 year grace period. For recovery of aviation, transport, hotel, restaurant etc. will be given high priority in current capital loans, easier loans and refinancing loans.

The policy has promoted liquidity and reduced interest for different avenues of business ranging from less affected, moderately affected and worst affected sectors. Agriculture has been given high importance by monetary policy also to supplement the policy of national annual budget. Agriculture Development Bank has been given authority to issue Farmer credit card and agricultural bonds. Within forthcoming 3 years, commercial banks have to invest 15%, development banks to 20% and financial companies to 15% of their flow of credit in agriculture. The NRB has expressed commitment through monetary policy to keep inflation within 7% so as to ensure stability in the market & business environment.

On July 21, Nepal government declared the removal of Lockdown of 120 days formally and hence from July 22, Nepal is unlocked

Now Unlocked are:

- Restriction is removed - Previously private vehicles were restricted to come into operation - odd number vehicles in odd dates and even number vehicles in even dates, with no date restrictions to those in essential services
- All government offices to work in one shift of 40 hours per week
- Trekking, travels, mountaineering, hotel, restaurant and tourism industry
- Long distance buses and other vehicles
- Admission of students and permission to conduct exams from August 17

- Internal & international flights from August 17
- Trainings for international competitions of sports and preliminary level

Still restricted and locked:

- Schools, colleges, tuition centres, training centres
- Entry from international border excluding the permitted ones
- Cinema Halls, Party venues, Dance-bar, Saloon & hairdresser, Beauty parlours, Spa, Swimming pools, Zim & Health Clubs
- Gatherings and lunch/dinner parties
- Stadiums, Religious & social gathering places, Libraries, Museums, Zoo
- Mass meetings, seminars, Exhibitions, conferences

Judiciary was also in a locked down position and supreme Court had decided that judiciary in a normal way will function after 3 days of unlock-declaration of Government. So it is the time now to open various layers of courts in Nepal.

But social distancing, use of mask & sanitizers and all health standards and directives will be compulsory to be followed. When Lock down was declared on march 24, there were 2 covid-19 patients and when lockdown is removed the number of Covid-19 infected person reached to 17,994, of which 12,417 recovered and 40 persons lost life. The recovery rate has been 69% and death rate at 0.22%.

Limitation of Refinancing credit has been reduced by NRB through the issue of new directives to NRs. 50 million per person from 500 millions per person in order to cover large number of MSMEs. The size of Refinancing Fund has been raised to NRs.200 billions more than the demand of Apex bodies of Business class FNCCI, CNI & Chamber of Commerce. 70 % of the fund will be given to operate to commercial banks and 30% by NRB itself.

Now considering the returnees from outside and job-loss, government has published notice for unemployed workers again to apply for employment of 100 days based on right to work provisioned by the Constitution. The unemployed workers can apply within August 24 in Employment Service Centres via ward offices in every municipality both in urban and rural areas.

For food assistance, people level initiatives have been very important in Nepal. youth clubs, mass organizations, trade unions, religious groups, NGOs and CBOs including local administration have been effective in the beginning to extend helpful hands to informal economy job-losers. The Relief work by the several local groups was scattered and unnoticed in national level, but the contribution is highly significant.

4.

Union Responses in various levels

From International level, International Trade Union Confederation ITUC and various Global Union Federations have been very active in policy responses and dealing with practical issues. ITUC has already conducted Global Survey to analyse the impacts of Covid-19 on work and workers.

The first survey made public on March 24, 2020 revealed how government are putting top 5 policies in place to respond to economic impact of Covid-19:

- Provision of free health care - 50% countries
- Employment protection for workers in self isolation - 34% countries
- Tax relief for businesses - 31% countries
- Paid sick leave for a period of self-isolation - 29% countries
- Bail-out funds for businesses - 29% countries

Second Global survey report on April 7 exposed that most of the countries are not providing wage protection and income support for workers. Likewise, Employers in Asia-Pacific and Americas are worse at responding to the needs of the workers.

Third Global survey Report on 28 April based on information of 148 trade unions of 107 countries concluded that there is big global gaps in adequate provision of PPEs and that the social dialogue between and among the tripartite partners is in critical position. Hence the report recommends that recovery plans nationally and internationally must ensure a socially just future.

Latest Global survey made public on June 3 warns that global crisis particularly jobs & income crisis is sweeping across the world as lay-offs and pay-offs are being heavier and heavier.

ITUC through its statement on global response to Covid-19 and statement to address G-20 has tried to sensitise the largest economies of the world. ITUC letter to G-20 includes the following as issues of prime concern:

- Workplace protection for frontline workers
- Paid sick leave
- Wage/income protection
- Managed reduction of hours with government support to maximise income security
- Mortgage, rent & loan reliefs

- Universal Social Protection & free access to health care
- Child care support to frontline workers in health care, supermarkets, pharmacies and vital service areas

In addition, ITUC has also paid high attention to sensitize towards gender-based violence and domestic violence (ITUC Websites).

Trade Union Advisory Committee to OECD countries has also reinforced the need to focus on lives, jobs and incomes of working families. (AFL-CIO website)

Trade Union response in Nepal to the abnormal situation in labour market and economy is from two sides -

- Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre, the common platform of national trade union confederations
- Individual national centres namely GEFONT, NTUC, ANTUF & CoNEP and their sectoral affiliates

Trade unions have been active in three major areas

- Consultation and interaction with government through Ministry of labour & Employment on policy issues
- Monitoring the relief activities in local level
- Relief distribution to their member workers to some extent on their own

However, the trade union activities in Nepal against Covid-19 and for reliefs & protection to workers are much limited and less effective.

5.

Work and Job-loss: Sectoral situation after Lockdown in Nepal

Looking at the loss of work, jobs, and employment in a sectoral frame is extremely important for immediate and future strategies and actions, because the problems and situation vary in a wide range from one sector to another. The jobs likely to be disrupted and undergoing disruptions as estimated by ILO during the two months of Lockdown (ILO, Briefing Note, 2020) are as follows:

Box 4 : Jobs-disruption in major non-agricultural Sectors

Major Sectors	Disrupted Jobs
1. Wholesale & Retail trade	780,000
2. Manufacturing	446,000
3. Construction	404,000
4. Transport	211,000
5. Accommodation & Food services	62,000
6. Real Estate, Administrative & other services	83,000

Central Bureau of Statistics has analysed that hotel restaurant, wholesale & retail trade, construction, and transportation will show a negative growth in current Fiscal year (Business Age, 24 May).

Tourism sector alone as a source of various services covers nearly 573,000 workers - 8% of total volume of employment - as revealed by National Labour Force Survey 2017/18. As the year 2020 was declared as Nepal visit Year, the investment and employment had gone up high at the end of 2019, and must have provided jobs to more than 800,000. Almost 75% of the tourism sector employment falls within the category of informal jobs, which is indicative of the job loss of 600,000 people. Out of remaining 200,000, too, majority may be suffering these days under lay-offs. In April, Hotel Association of Nepal has declared to provide 12% of salaries to the hotel workers, it shows the sufferings of even permanent workers in tourist standard hotel industry. Our Tourism Industry is based on travel business mainly through national/international airline services and long distance road transport, but the picture shows that the travel business across the world in 3 months of March-to-May has declined by more than 90% compared to the same period of 2019 (Business Age, 24 May).

Restriction to the movement of people have caused sharp downward shift to the demand for various goods and services except the necessities of life. Hence fall down of economic activities and the supply or flow of goods and services is inevitable outcome. Thus Health Emergency of Covid-19 has generated overall supply problems because of abrupt halts & semi-halts in economic activities of production and transportation. Due to the unexpected supply problem, demand is compelled to go down. The situation is further aggravated by job-loss and income loss of large numbers.

Further focussing attention through the looking-glass of vulnerability, the broader picture is of 5.7 millions or 81% of the total workers earning their livelihood in informal jobs (ILO, Briefing Note, 2020). A total of 1.4 millions are home-based workers. It is a fact that majority of workers in most of the sectors are informal ones and they do not have any safety nets during the crisis like Covid-19.

Findings of the Key Informant Survey of trade unionists in various sectors of employment are summarised below:

5.1. Construction Sector

Number of Regular workers in construction sector is estimated to be below 1 million, where actual number in a regular payroll is more or less 300,000. In 2018, the number of construction workers was estimated to be 975,000 (Asia Foundation Report, 2020). If we add 17000 real estate workers, the number goes up near to 1 million. There are seasonal workers from agriculture and urban poor slum dwellers who join work wherever and whenever possible in construction, the number can be estimated to nearly 500,000. However after local election and implementation of federalism, the resources and elected representatives have been focussed on infrastructural work of building social and economic overheads in addition to the investment of federal government. Definitely it has pushed up the number in various sub-sectors of construction sector. To the maximum, it can be estimated in number at 1.8 millions. Within the number, of course, nearly 15% are Indian workers, some working whole year and some seasonal. This larger workforce in construction sector, the second largest after agricultural workforce, is badly affected during lockdown period.

Jammed-wheels of transportation and closed international borders paralysed the supply chain of raw materials for construction works. Construction sector is to a large extent dependent on labour hiring chains based on large number of labour sub-contractors. The chain was broken abruptly by the lockdown. Similarly, rainy season is very close, during the months of monsoon - June, July and mid-August, construction work normally becomes less in Nepal, then there will be festivals Tihar and Dashain. Hence even if pandemic is over, the big number of workers in construction sector including job-losers will not get job until late October.

From the viewpoint of the nature of workplace, there are five categories of workers working in this sector:

- a. Mega construction project Workers
- b. House and Building Workers under contractors
- c. Self Employed individual workers

- d. Brick kiln workers
- e. Sand collector & Stone quarrying workers

Mega Projects, almost 80% in the initial phase of Lockdown were closed and workers were left on their own, though government had assured that no one should move elsewhere & would get the relief & food assistance. But within two weeks, they could not believe that they would get wages and food relief to meet their need. Workers started to move towards their home in nearby or far away districts. After a month when big projects started to operate based on government decision, shortage of workers created hurdles in operation.

In brick kiln sector, the work itself is seasonal from beginning of November to end of May, so they immediately started for their homes. Most of the Indian workers from Brick kiln crossed the border anyhow.

Workers Situation;

- Permanent workers though much limited in number were paid basic salary for the month of Chaitra (mid-March to mid-April) and are getting wages and benefits accordingly after operation of the project.
- More than 60 % construction workers have returned their home after lockdown. Among the returnees, overwhelming majority nearly 85% is of Daily wages workers. The home returnees are engaged in agricultural and other traditional works in their local areas in an underemployed position. Many of them are idle.
- Federation of Contractors Association of Nepal (FCAN) has rescued a total of 4,856 workers from worksites who were in difficult condition after work-closure and were sent back to their home, small proportion is of Indian migrant workers of seasonal character.
- Only few workers received food assistance or relief material from local authority.
- Central Union of Painters, Plumbers, Electricity & Building Workers of Nepal (CUPPEC) and other construction sector unions distributed some food items to the needy Members in some places.

No cases of Covid-19 infection have been in the notice of trade unions in Construction Sectors. No notably difficult maternity cases have been witnessed during the lockdown period. Enterprises and projects in operation have provided basic PPE's, but not any sanitizing materials. In spite of the instruction of the government to enroll in Social Security Fund, Contractors/employers have not taken any initiative. Attitude of contractors and employers is not sympathetic to workers, but they are focused on bargaining with government for different facilities and trying to minimize cash-in-hand of workers in the name of Covid-19. No sense of Corporate social responsibility is shown by them except some contribution to the Corona Prevention & Control Fund of the government.

We can mention major Problems as pointed out below:

- Uncertainty of future job and livelihood to the overwhelming majority of more than 500,000 workers

- Problem of survival both at work and at back-home
- Informal nature of Job, scattered workers and scattered work place, so relief work from union side is quite difficult in lockdown period. Membership renewal has sharply declined
- Non implementation of Government decisions by the contractors who have started works in their worksites
- Even currently engaged workers are under Declined incomes because of no overtime and other benefits as work is in contraction
- Employers' attitude towards union is not supportive compared to pre-Covid-19 periods.

Union Activities:

- Regular lobbying with the employer to implement government decision properly
- Pressurising to prevent job-loss as employers try to push out the union members in the name of Covid-19 crisis.
- Lobbying to provide relief materials and food assistance to the needy Union Members and workers.
- Efforts for maintaining membership and Regular counselling and awareness on adverse effects of Covid-19 to the union members.
- Consultation with regional and international trade union bodies of construction sector like Building & Wood Workers International (BWI) for cooperation in South Asian, Regional and international level.

As observed while discussing with key informants of construction sector, the revival of construction sector will depend on following factors:

- Control of Corona Pandemic not only in Nepal, but also in India
- Easier export and import conditions for sufficient supply of materials
- Functioning of supply chain of necessary raw materials
- Fast track procurements and payment system from government side
- Flow of confidence among workers to return to work through FCAN and government efforts
- More investment by government in infrastructure and construction considering it as the most vital labour intensive sector

5.2. Manufacturing sector

Based on record of Department of Labour and Occupational Health and Safety, total number of workers working in Manufacturing sector is 336,386. Workers in pay-roll may be slightly higher than 1/3rd of the total. If all forms of labour used by manufacturing sector including

permanent employees added together will give us a figure slightly higher than 1 million workers - 1,072,000 (NLFS, 2017/18) . As an estimated 69 % enterprises were fully closed and 13% partially in operation, only 18% were found in full fledged operation in April and May, however, the number of enterprises in partial operation is increased during June.

As informed by the union leaders, 42 % of total workers in pay-roll in manufacturing sector have been paid basic salary in Month of Chaitra (from last week of March to 3rd week of April), whereas 58 % have not been paid any salary. Employers are trying to reduce the number of workers without any consultation with unions. In manufacturing, the formal sector workers do not see any new area of work where work and employment can flourish in these days of crisis.

The situation differs from one subsector to another if we look into the list of subsectors in manufacturing. Disturbances in the Supply of raw materials, of which India and china are the sources to the largest extent, has also caused differences in situation among various subsectors. Demand though disrupted in every segment of commodities has gone down in an average due to wait-and-see of consumers and producers (Reanda Biz Serve, 2020). Purchases are delayed by consumers in wait and see approach and hence sales in the market are discouraging. Similarly Investment is delayed/postponed by producers/investors by considering the consumer delays and hence production is in a down-volume causing a down-size in the use of labour.

Anyway, Food and beverage is running anyhow though initial weeks witnessed total halt. Metal products, non-metal & plastic-rubber products as well as Textiles, Pashmina, garments and woolen carpet production are opened but working less than their 20 % of the capacity. Firms of Electronics, furniture and leather products are running somehow in the hope of days of recovery.

But after the early two weeks of lockdown, working people started to feel more uncertainty day by day. Most of them in search of option came to the single option of going back home to their villages. An estimated 30 % of the workers of manufacturing sector from the pay-roll returned their home, more than 100,000 in number. The workers who managed to remain here, could not get any assistance from their employers and since they were from the formal sector, local bodies also ignored them as they were trying to address informal sector workers and easily identifiable urban poor.

Unions have not noticed any single case of Covid-19 infection among the workers of manufacturing sector. Among the fully or partially operating enterprises, 3/4th have made available the minimum items like soap, sanitiser, masks and gloves for workers at work-place.

Registration in Social Security Fund as instructed by the Government is not considered seriously by the employers/managers of manufacturing sector. The total number of registered enterprises is increased from other sectors - hotel industry and financial sectors. Latest survey of GEFONT with a coverage of 323 enterprises consisting of Manufacturing Industries, hotels, construction companies, Private Schools, Textile & garments and health providers, 49% are enrolled in Social security Fund. Out of this, 21 % enterprises have registered their workers as well, but only 10 % enterprises have maintained regularity in depositing the contribution. Productive manufacturing sector is less responsive and very few enterprises have joined SSF after government instruction. Attitude of the employers is more discouraging instead of being

sympathetic to the workers after the announcement of lockdown on March 22. As unions have felt, the management is focussing attention towards what benefits they can obtain from the government and banking system, but not being kind to their workers & families. No corporate social responsibility contribution has been noticed by the unions in this crisis period, though they have individually and institutionally donated some funds in Corona control & prevention Fund of the government.

No maternity case has been in the notice of the unions during the lockdown period. No industrial accident has been witnessed.

Major Problems being faced by the workers:

- Even for the currently employed workers, there is Problem of transportation to go to the work place during lockdown and afterwards.
- Problem of survival to those who are not getting any wages particularly to those who have not returned back-home
- Decreased income because of no overtime and other benefits even if the work is going on.
- Freezing Collective Bargaining Agreements silently and unions being ignored as the number of workers has declined
- Weakening bargaining power caused by under capacity utilization of enterprises based on low demand of products in majority cases.
- Declining union membership and dues collection

Future Plans of the Unions:

- Regular lobbying to the employer to implement government decision properly.
- Lobbying and pressuring to protect existing jobs as employers are trying to downsize the number silently/informally in the name of Covid-19 Crisis.
- Lobbying to provide relief material and food assistance to the needy Union Members and workers in local level and in cooperation with supportive organizations of national and local levels
- Mobilization of committees to maintain membership position and regular counselling regarding adverse effects of Covid-19 to the union members.
- Policy intervening efforts through JTUCC and national centres in national and province level
- Continuous interaction with employers organizations to protect the employment of workers

Manufacturing sector which is dominant in private sector and policy influence to the state has definitely a crucial role to play for revival of the economy and generation/retention of employment. The companies producing essential goods & services are facing fewer

complexities compared to producers of other products. The umbrella organizations of Private sector FNCCI and CNI which mainly represent manufacturing industries along with others have urged for an economic recovery package from the government. They have demanded for fiscal stimulus package equivalent to 5% of the GDP (Business Age, May 2020). Their demands are as follows:

- Reduction of lending interest rate by 5 percentage points for three years
- Setting up of Rs 100 billion Re-Financing Fund
- Extension of micro-inspection period of industries under loss by five years
- Arrangement of supplementary loan expansion for good debtors in Monetary Policy
- Arrangement for a maximum of 50 percent in salary payment for lockdown period
- Arrangement for suspending collective bargaining in enterprises-level
- Arrangement for salary payment with equal contributions from employers, workers and the government
- Special legal arrangement to permit any company and industrial enterprise to reduce their size, capacity or even cease their operations
- Cancellation of electricity demand charge for four months
- 20% discount on electricity tariff for 15 months

Though demands at a glance look realistic in order to revive the productive and service sectors basically manufacturing sector, responsiveness towards workers seems less reasonable. Tripartite arrangement for salaries and suspending of collective bargaining system may provoke and depress workers as the demand related to collective bargaining will stand against the fundamental right ascertained by the Constitution and labour laws of the country.

Government has to be sensitive towards the issues of the manufacturers and private sector; some of the demands are already being addressed and for some others, government seems on the way. However, private sector should also rethink in the light of the capacity of the state and the government to address the demands. Revival and revitalising the productive sector and allied services will naturally take a considerable period of time, but it needs a lot of patience and compromise in bipartite and tripartite level.

5.3. Hotel-Tourism Sector

Tourism industry in Nepal has developed as significant contributor in the economy by earning foreign exchange to a larger extent. The year 2020 was declared as Nepal Visit Year and the target was to host 5 million tourists within the year. This ambitious plan and investments based on it have been worthless these days due to Covid-19 attack. Within the three months of Lockdown, the loss in tourism sector has been estimated to NRs. 34 billions. The estimated investment approximately of NRs.1000 billion in this sector is another problem to investors and the country. In a broad global frame, Revenue generated by travel and tourism business in 2019 was as much as 685 billion, if the normal course had not been interrupted by Covid-19, the estimated revenue for 2020 would have been 712 billions. The revised forecast caused by Covid-19 effects limits the income not more than 568 billions (Reanda Biz Serve, 2020). In

other words, travel & tourism revenue in 2020 may be less by 117 billions than that of 2019. Hence loss in our GDP and revenue is also inevitable, but how fast the process of recovery could be geared up is the major issue of concern both from sectoral as well as national economic point of view. A refinancing fund of 50 billions to tourism sector for revival is being established by the Central Bank NRB.

Loss of jobs and employment in hotel tourism sector both for wage employed & self employed and formal & informal segments are incomparable affecting as high as 1 million workers. The single largest subsector the accommodation and food services covering mainly hospitality industry used to provide jobs to 371,000 workers is almost in passive position with close-to-zero business, which implies that more than 300,000 workers have lost their job. Other smaller sub-sectors and the workers therein are also the economic victims of Covid-19.

Including various scattered workers and employment in semi formal and informal segments of tourism industry, we can mention the workers affected by halt of the flow of tourists as follows:

- Workers in Five star to non-star (tourist standard) Hotels, Restaurants, Casinos and Lodges.
- Workers in Trekking, Travel, Rafting, Airlines, Cargo and supportive porters, guides.

All enterprises were fully closed in these sectors, there may be exceptional few in operation, but from the last week of April, few started reopening. HAN, TAAN and REBAN are in continued interaction with government entities and high level of policy makers including Ministers and Secretaries. Similarly, Hotel workers union and UNITRAV are also lobbying hard for protection of jobs at least to minimize the hardships of the workers concerned. Airlines and cargo workers are partly busy based on chartered flights mainly international ones.

Workers Situation:

All Five Star Hotels paid basic salary in Month of Chaitra (mid-March to mid-April) as directed by the government. For coming months, they have proposed 12.5 % of the salaries and later on Rs. 8500 fixed to all workers. But trade union demand for at least national minimum wage is under regular dialogue, going on with trade unions and & Hotel Association of Nepal.

International Airlines fully paying basic salary, but Domestic Airlines are paying them on work basis. Out sourcing companies working in Airport & others are not paying even basic salary. The daily wages or seasonal workers are not getting single rupee during this crisis. Concerning registration in social security fund, star hotels have registered themselves and their workers even during lockdown period, but smaller ones including restaurants, lodges, hotels & guest houses, trekking-travel-rafting companies have not taken such initiatives.

There is no possibility of employment currently in these sectors. Employers are in discussion to reduce workers, for example Yeti Airlines has proposed to reduce by 50% in numbers as high as 450 workers. As many as 18,000 workers in Trekking and 15,000 in travels sub-sector have already been job-less and income-less. Nepal Airlines, the state-owned enterprise still busy in chartered flights has also pushed 145 workers out of jobs.

More than 30 % of the workers returned their home after lockdown, mainly those from small hotel, restaurant, trekking, travel rafting and airline sub-sectors.

Only few workers in Kathmandu and Pokhara based on the efforts of unions received food assistance from Municipalities and no support from their employers.

Covid-19 Infection at the end of June is reported in 9 persons from airlines service. The availability of PPEs, soap or sanitizing facilities is not a problem in Hotel tourism sector to the workers in formal employment. Maternity related cases are not in union notice during the lockdown period.

Major Problems:

- Low flexibility of leadership of Hotel Association of Nepal on the pertinent issues related to the livelihood of workers
- Knowingly Delay in implementation of Government decisions with an intention of time-by to create more pressure on the government.
- Problem of survival for those not getting even wages/salaries
- Decreased income of the still employed workers because of no overtime and other benefits.
- Almost ineffective past CBAs and unions being ignored by the employers as there is lockdown & no work
- Eroding bargaining power and declining union members

Employers' attitude towards workers in hotel, restaurant, food & accommodation sector has always been discouraging, though in case of trekking, travel, mountaineering, it was positive. Now when the flow of tourists from outside world has dropped to zero, the attitude of employers and managers has been rough as if they will not need any worker when the situation will be normalised. Business is at almost zero and their worry as well as heavy financial burden must be understood by workers and government. Fiscal policy of the government could not inspire them, but they should wait for monetary policy.

Union Activities in difficult position:

- Regular lobbying to the employer to implement government decision properly on the issue of wages and social security
- Lobbying and pressuring in a soft manner in order to protect jobs and workers during Covid-19 crisis.
- Lobbying in central level and making connections in local level to provide relief material and food assistance to the needy Union Members and workers.
- Regular interaction on adverse effects of Covid-19 to the union members.
- Efforts to intervene in Policy matters in cooperation with national trade union centres

Revival of hotel, tourism, hospitality, recreation and entertainment sectors needs more time compared to other sectors of Nepali economy. Provision of easy loans, payment deferrals, rebates in government tax and fees of public utility services are some of the measures to minimise the burdens. Enterprises have to find out measures and solutions to survive during this crisis period in a bipartite frame.

5.4. Transport Sector

Contribution of Transport sector to GDP is 7.23% and to employment is 4.5% as exposed by Economic survey 2017/18 9 (Reanda Biz Serve, 2020). The figures may be assumed more or less the same. A total 4.5% share in employment means nearly 450,000 regular workers. Almost equal number of irregular workers may be informally absorbed by transportation and allied subsectors. Altogether the issue of employment in transportation sector covers 1 million workers approximately. Transportation is fully affected sector in COVID crisis due to jammed wheels in lockdown. This total shut down of vehicles has overall impact on production and marketing. Raw materials to producers and enterprises and finished goods to consumers were hurdled as supply chain link was heavily disturbed. Though the supply of raw materials and commodities to consumers was managed anyhow in later days after two weeks, movement of people was restricted to the large extent, still the mobility of individuals is under several restrictions. Restriction in mobility of people affects adversely the movement of goods and services also.

Short route bus services will be started from first week of July, but long route bus services have to wait for more uncertain days. Only in emergency cases, some reserved bus service under institutional arrangements is functioning occasionally. There are no scheduled internal and international flights, only chartered flights are in operation. Most of the airlines are out of operation, only state-owned Nepal Airlines and Himalayan Airlines from Private sector are functioning under chartered arrangements. The number in airlines is very small compared to those in road transport, their financial conditions are also different.

If we focus our attention to road transport, the number of vehicles registered is as much as 3,539, 518, more than 3.5 millions (Reanda Biz Serve, 2020). There are more than 200 Bus service companies already registered after the dissolve of Bus service committees' network by the government decision 3 years back. Most of these committees have transformed themselves into registered companies.

There are now two types of workers - Company owned workers & Individual workers. There are variety of activities and workers associated directly and indirectly with transport sector in varying characters. To name some of them, there are - Long & short route bus-drivers, helpers, conductors, bookers, checkers and company staffs and likewise Taxi-drivers, Auto riksha drivers, delivery van drivers, Carrier - truck, tanker driver and other heavy equipments operators and soon and so forth.

Legally the committees have transformed themselves and registered as companies, but they are functioning as in previous days and in individual ownership. Democratic and institutional type of functioning and behaviour is still very far. Hence working conditions of workers is not changed. Most of the workers in transport sectors do not have any appointment letter and any

contract or agreement signed. Most of the things concerning terms and condition of work are still running under verbal understanding.

So the pay-scale, in most of the cases, is much lower than the national minimum wage set up by the tripartite decisions. The workers survive because of daily allowances for food & allied while at work. During lockdown, allowances are at zero as wheels are at jam within the garages.

Most of the transport workers live in their own hometowns but are mobile through the automobiles which are their actual workplace, so returning to home was not any problem to them. Nearly 10% of the workers working in Kathmandu valley returned their home outside of the capital city.

Major problems:

- During lockdown majority of transport workers have not received a single Rupee in the name of salary or allowances.
- Survival problem to a large number of transport workers and their family life is relying on past savings, which will not be sufficient for more than 2/3 months.
- Transport workers did not receive any relief and food assistance from Government side or from local bodies. Few Rickshaw and cart pullers have received insufficient food assistance in local level. But unions particularly Independent Transport Workers Association of Nepal distributed food materials to 14000 members in several places including Kathmandu.
- Only one case of Corona infection has been noticed in transport sector, but there is high risk of more infection when public transportation will be reopened by the government.
- Transport workers of essential goods delivery services and other commodities are always at risk and they have not been given any reliable protective materials
- Negligence in implementation of government decisions is common in transport sector, as the employers organizations are not closely associated or affiliated to apex body of the employers' organization.
- Absence of any formal & regular social security system in transport sector is also an issue of worry to the transport workers. Whatever social security system in case of accidents was developed by the committee system is also vanished with dissolution of committees. They had few years back jointly launched movement for inclusion in Social Security Fund and an agreement was signed by three major trade unions and SSF Administration. But still it is not implemented.

Unions' Activities:

- Regular lobbying to the employer to implement government decision properly.
- Lobbying to provide relief material and food assistance to the needy Union Members and workers.

- Regular interaction to save workers and their families from covid-19 mainly on prevention and adverse effects to the union members.
- Policy discussion with concerned government officials and employers organizations of transport sector.
- Unions have jointly submitted a charter of demand to the Government for operation of transport service, OSH arrangements, PPEs and sanitization.

The government policy in lockdown did not address the transport problems concerning human movement, because human mobility was to be restricted to the maximum extent in order to protect people from corona infection. However, transportation concerning export-import and marketing of goods & services were addressed effectively for maintaining the supplies of necessities. Now government is planning to allow the mobility of individuals in order to revive the economy from July 2020. So in the process of implementing new annual national budget, government will have to address the issues of bus companies and individual transport workers operating variety of vehicles for human movement. At present, the bus companies, self employed bus-owners and trade unions are in common position to ensure a safe reopening of transport services. Government through a promotional monetary policy can address their issues of loans, interest and repayments more effectively.

5.5. Health Sector

ILO has estimated that there is shortage of 18 million health workers worldwide. In the context of Covid-19, the shortage has become more visible. Health sector is the most important sector in Covid-19 crisis and as an emergency, investment in health infrastructure and health care services by the governments is multiplied everywhere. In Nepal's context, too, more investment in immediate health services and permanent health infrastructures has been managed with top priority, but at the same time, the investment of the private sector is declined as their health providing services are less because of lower demand caused by restrictions in mobility of people during the period of lockdown. There is dilemma of shortage of health professionals in Covid-19 related prevention & treatment activities on the one hand and of idle health professionals in private & general hospitals on the other. Though government declared that whoever from the private sector health workers joins hands in corona prevention & treatment work in the public sector, s/he will be given the same level of wage/salary facilities as to the public sector health professionals. It is unfortunate that government mechanisms particularly the Ministry of Health & Population could not mobilize this human resource and equally unfortunate is the behaviour of majority of private sector health providers & health workers who did not come forward to work in cooperation.

Based on 2017/18 figures, the contribution of health sector to GDP has been 1.75% and to employment is 2.4% in number it will be roughly 336,000 ranging from high skilled professionals to unskilled helpers.

Of the total human resource in health services, 60% is in public sector and 40% in the private sector.

In hospitals and other health providers covering both public and private sectors, there are two types of workers - direct employees permanent or in contract and outsourced. Among the outsourced workers, majority is in security, cleaning, house-keeping, driving and low paid technicians like medical equipment repairing workers, electrician, plumbers and so on.

In addition there are women health volunteers in every ward of municipalities appointed by government to cover every household. They are the backbone of Nepali healthcare system in primary & household level, mainly for pregnant women and babies. They are not provided even the minimum wages, but this time considering the crisis created by Covid-19, government has mobilised all 52,000 women health volunteers with some facilities including free insurance in prevention of Corona infection.

No health providers or hospitals are closed during the lockdown as health care service is one of the most important essential service. As informed by the key informants, 60% hospitals and health providing institutions are in full-fledged operation, whereas 40% are in partial operation. As there is no queues in out-patient departments of hospitals and health providers due to lockdown and banned mobility of people, incomes the hospitals and health providers has gone down sharply.

Workers Situation:

- There is busy work and full payments in public sector hospitals, but 60 % health providers in private sector paid basic salary only in the first month of Lockdown. Of the remaining, 56 % reduced salaries based on attendance whereas 3 % did not paid any wages and asked them to stay in houses to come when called.
- Only 15% of the health providers of private sector paid full salary in month of May and 70 % paid wages partially based on attendance. On the other hand, 15 % have not paid or called majority workers to work. Job-losers are few, but they, too, will get their job or alternative job with reopening of the economy in a loosening lockdown. So job-loss is not a problem in health sector.
- There does not seem any possibility of immediate increase of employment in health sector, however government has announced to expand health care facilities in every Local body covering all 753 local government with hospitals and hospital-beds. Permanent health structures and service delivery has been planned which will contribute to generate employment in health sector to a larger extent in forthcoming days.
- Only 2-3% of workers returned their home after announcement of lockdown, but most of them have already returned to their workplace.
- No one except few outsourced cleaning workers have received or demanded any relief or food assistance in health sector.
- Though the number of health workers who became infected is 61 persons, there are 15 cases of union members. Unfortunately 1 health worker committed fire-born suicide due to insult and humiliation by the society in far western remote district.
- Government and the entire nation has recognized and appreciated the role of health professionals, doctors, nurses and other health workers. Nepal Government has declared

additional allowances and insurance to the workers who are working for Covid-19 prevention and treatment.

Major Problems:

- Outsourced workers working with private health providers have been facing loss of income and in some cases even job-loss.
- There are problems in private sector in the implementation of Government decisions.
- Problem for survival for outsource workers who are not directly associated with treatment services to the patients.
- Reduced income because of no overtime and other benefits in private sectors
- Freezing collective bargaining agreements, weakening bargain power and declining union members & dues
- Though PPEs and allied materials are provided, infection risk is very high to the health workers and their families. Majority of those directly related to Covid-19 hospitals & cases are themselves in isolation in their homes in order to ensure less risk to their family members.
- Only 4 hospitals have registered in Social Security Fund in spite of government directives. Most of the hospitals and health providers have not taken initiatives for social protection of their employees.

Union activities:

- Lobbying to implement government decision addressing Covid-19 and keeping an eye into the situation to protect jobs and income of the workers mainly in private sector.
- Active to provide relief materials and food assistance to the needy low paid union members and workers.
- Lobbying for mobilization of idle & underutilised health workers of private sector through government mechanisms
- Demanding for good quality PPE's and safety measures to minimise the risk of infection as health workers are the most vulnerable ones in corona crisis.

Concerning the revival of health sector, there is no problem compared to other sectors like manufacturing, hotel-tourism, transport or construction. Government has allocated more budgets for health infrastructure development in local, provincial and national level. Investment in health sector during the coming fiscal years will be increasing and employment generation both in the formal and informal sectors will go to upward direction.

5.6. Education

Education as a vital sector with far-reaching impacts contributes more than 7% in GDP and employs more than half a million people directly and equal number indirectly. Corona crisis and Lockdown has directly closed 36,477 schools and colleges affecting the education of nearly

8,796,624 children & young learners (Reanda Biz Serve, 2020). The number of teachers in the public (government financed & community based) sector is as much as 317, 449 (Economic Survey 2018/19) and almost 30,000 administrative staffs is not facing job problem. However, the teachers on contract are facing problems of income-loss, the number is not significant. Similarly those in higher education in university level are also in employment security with nominal exceptions. But the teachers and administrative staffs in more than 6,000 private schools have become vulnerable from the job point of view and have lost income after mid-April. Their number as estimated by Key informants is approximately around 82,000. Similarly the number of private colleges is more than 1500, of which 1085 are associated with Tribhuvan University. TU has its own 61 colleges nationwide with 7,920 university teachers and 8,094 administrative staffs, where few from nearly 1200 part-timers are the income losers. The teachers and staffs mainly in private colleges have lost income, though many of them are part-timers having full-time job elsewhere.

To continue the functioning of formal education system from primary level to university level, the temporary arrangements may be based on digital/online learning & classes and Radio/TV Education programmes. All examinations including SEE and higher education were postponed. Exams in university level have been scheduled by Tribhuvan University through a newly designed procedure. For exams in physical presence of the candidates requires a number of arrangements and preparation which does not seem possible in near future, it may take more time.

All arrangements for learning & knowledge sharing through various possible alternatives, techniques and methods will ease the concerned people to work and earn something for their livelihood. Within this short span of time of 3 months, large numbers of teachers have gained capacity in information technology and also academic improvement.

For maintaining jobs and employment in Education sector cheaper loans to private schools is helpful, Tax rebates and deferral in payments including rents will be necessary. Subsidies will be helpful to community-based schools as the peoples' capacity to assist these schools financially is weak due to Covi-19 hurdles in economic activities.

Government has declared on July 21 that school admission will be opened from August 17. Government has started preparations for classes with physical presence in schools by closing the quarantine centres which were running in schools and sanitising. Tribhuvan University is opened after the end of lockdowns from July 22, however classes in physical presence of students and teachers are still not declared.

Post Covid-19 scenario seems more complicated with opportunities and challenges. The entire system may have to go into a total revisit from the viewpoints of text-books, Time-frame, Session arrangements, modality of examinations. A combination of education in physical presence in the schools with online education, Radio/TV education programmes and Home-schooling has to be managed, where there will be foreseen & unforeseen changes in the pattern of employment and nature & extent of jobs.

5.7. Home Based Workers & Domestic Workers

The picture presented by NLFS 2017/18 concerning home-based workers and Domestic workers through the number by place of work reveals that workers at home in number are as much as 916,000. The number goes up if we add those who work in workplace structures attached to home and worker working at the house of clients/employers. It gives us a figure equivalent to 1.7 millions (24.6% of the total 7 million employed) workers. In addition, there is equally large number in domestic work as high as 1.38 millions nearly 20% of the total number of fully employed workers in Nepal.

Enterprises related to food, water, gas, dairy are in function, but with 50% capacity, Most of the enterprises are closed, hence subcontracting of work to HBWs are reduced much almost by 50%. Reduced supplies are anyhow maintained by cottage, small scale and micro enterprises running under 1/4th of capacity and with the use of HBWs.

It is estimated that majority of women almost 70% have lost job and payment, whereas 50% of male workers have been pushed out of their job. Non-payment of wages and piece-rate wages has become a common phenomenon.

Around 30% in average in all forms of enterprise are running, of which women are much less (20%) at work because of close-down of public transport.

Employment expanded in Agriculture particularly Tunnel Farming which has engaged HBWs to some extent. Employment in Food for daily consumption and COVID kit production are in flourishing stage.

Heavily affected area from job-loss point of view are Garment, Carpet, handicraft production, Tourism sector, barber shop, domestic work, beauty parlour and massage parlours which used to engage HBWs.

Number of workers who returned to their home are almost equal in number - both males & females. While going back home, they faced multiple hurdles. Mentionable are:

- Lack of safe place to stay
- Lack of food & water
- Problems of sanitation & medicine in addition to tough physical tiredness
- Violence and harassment on women and adolescent on the way
- Even Rape cases which are not recorded

Among the domestic workers, Part-timers lost their jobs as working women have stayed at home during lock-down. Part-timers remained in cities though their job of 4/5 houses reduced to 1/2 houses. Full timers and mainly residential DWs did not loss their job, but stress of work increased. The part-timers are suffering of non-payment of full wages, in most of the cases, only half of their wages are paid by employers, though employers are also facing loss of income in few cases.

Even care-giver to the oldage persons have lost jobs. As the rent was increased by house-owners, Part-timers were compelled to go out the city towards back-home position in their home districts. Some house-owners were not sympathetic even in such an extremely difficult situation. Government's request not to ask for rent for at least the first month of lock-down was ignored by most of the house-owners. Altogether 30% of Part-timer DWs left Capital city, who have their homes in nearby districts of Dolkha, Kabhre, Dhading, Nuwakot and Sindhupalchok. In returning back-home, it was very difficult to them particularly to those who had small babies /kids. Food problem and police harassments were major issues, where those with union cards felt convenient and also they were successful to help other colleagues of the travel. Almost 400 (Of which 80% were women) travelled through the buses and vehicles sent by Local municipalities for Valley-leaving workers.

Cash relief was zero to DWs. In those places wherever unions were strong, DWs also could get food assistance. In capital valley, still 900 Part-time DWs need food relief. Few with acquaintances, received one-time rice, pulse, oil, salt and potato from ward level arrangements of Municipality. Some were benefitted from labour-friendly NGOs.

Home Workers Union of Nepal (HUN), the Nepali Affiliate of International Domestic Workers Federation (IDWF) itself could mobilise members to get food assistance to the needy DWs and HBWs from NGOs and ward committees. It also mobilised small funds from Asian Domestic Workers Federation for safety materials like mask, gloves and medicines to more than 550 DWS and HBWs. HUN has conducted almost 1-dozen virtual meetings with IDWF, ADWF and other internal/international partners. Now it has focussed attention on problems of single women and chronic sick women for food & medical assistance. In order to expand mutual help, HUN has activated a passive cooperative and started saving group and food assistance of rice & pulse.

Lobbying and advocacy by HUN is going on through virtual invitation & meeting. For policy pressure, HUN is planning for demonstration in capital city.

In case of Kathmandu, 60% of HBWs were benefitted by food assistance for 1 month. Home Net Nepal itself has mobilised assistance from partner municipalities and distributed food assistance as well as masks and gloves to more than 3500 HBWs.

At least 40% of remaining workers and poor families have not received any food assistance during the 3 months of March-May

No cases of Corona infection positive and death by COVID-19 has been witnessed among HBWs and DWs

Major problem/issue, if to be mentioned, is the Employment for urban poor, piece-rate & daily wage workers. They are facing lack of cash in hand due to loss of work they were engaged. As OPDs of hospitals are closed during lockdown, lack of public health and reproductive health services have serious effects creating miserable condition for pregnant women and newly burn babies. Children's education is totally stopped.

Looking into the status of Availability/Sufficiency of PPEs for workers at work, lack of PPE is creating both physical and mental problems.

Social security coverage is almost non-existent to HBWs and DWs. Newly introduced Corona Insurance of Rs. 50,000 and 100,000 is basically covering urban middle class and comparatively high income groups of working people. Hence overwhelming majority of HBWs and DWs are out of any insurance scheme and are exposed to risk.

Maternity cases during lockdown definitely facing Critical condition. Two women have lost life in totality by corona infection during maternity. Among HBWs and Domestic workers, 3 cases in capital valley and 2 cases in eastern province of maternity have been witnessed up to June first week.

The attitude of employers/managers towards workers during lock-down is basically focussed on intention of dismissal, avoid to pay salary and wage during the lock down period. Very few employers have provided one-time assistance to their workers in credit and cash.

HNN has provided food basket and Covid-19 safety kit to nearly 1900 households of working poor, wage workers and home based workers. HNN has been in advocacy with central government and municipalities to include recovery plan for HBWs in their annual plan. It is also trying to promote home based production so that the poor women will get job at home on the one hand and flow of domestic products in the market on the other.

5.8. Street Vendors, Self Employed and Various Segments of Informal Economy

Worldwide, the estimated number of informal economy workers is as much as 2 billions, of which 1.6 billions are under the serious impact of Covid-19 (WIEGO, March 2020). Fully and Adversely effected sectors are highly visible in informal economy ranging from street vendors, market vendors and hawkers as the largest among them to beauticians, saloon & footpath haircutters in COVID crisis. Their income in normal situation is also very much flexible, so in abnormal situation their earnings are badly affected. Almost 30% of the Street vendors have fixed place of their business/services, whereas majority are hawkers and cart-pushers. Almost all salons are closed and footpath haircutters are idle as people do not come close to them. Daily wage labourers scattered in several areas of work including agriculture, dairy farms, Loaders-unloaders, forest workers, fishermen, tailors, shoe-makers, blacksmiths, embroidery workers, metal workers, woodworkers, bamboo workers and so on as wage workers and self employed workers in different craftsmanship have been the backbone of the economic life of society. In every sub sectors of informal economy, work is divided in several traditional skills involving both daily-wage/piece-rate workers and self employed price earners.

Statistically, if we look at the labour force, 90.5% of the female labour force is informally employed compared to 81% of the male labour force in informal employment. Similarly from age-group point of view, informal employment is highest among persons in 15-34 years of age almost 90% of the working age population (NLFS 2017/18), which clearly indicates that the most energetic part of the workforce is in informal employment under exploitative working conditions of income below minimum wages.

Looking through the lens of income and earnings, the proportion of workers below the Minimum wage of 13,450 is 37.4% (NLFS, 2017/18), a highly significant part of the workforce is below the level of minimum wages. This workforce below the income of minimum wages is the bottom-point victims of every crisis and particularly Corona-created crisis has naturally affected them to the worst. Most of them have lost incomes for survival. Thus more than 60% of these workers returned to their homes after lockdown, though there were number of sufferings and unexpected tensions on the way-back-home. They have been focused by local bodies, NGOs, other social organizations and trade unions to provide relief and food assistance, but as the number is large, assistance has been proved insufficient. A large number among them cannot afford to pay for soap, sanitizer, masks and other protective items while at work or during outside home.

As Covid-19 is not expanded yet in community level in spite of the inflow of Nepalis from the open border, The overwhelming majority of the infected persons are returnees, few are from their families and few health workers, airline workers and persons in essential services. So informal economy workers in spite of their vulnerable conditions are anyhow untouched to the larger extent, but risk is increasing day by day. If Infection spreads in community level, the first to victimize are informal economy workers.

Major Problems:

- Informality itself is intensifying uncertainty of workplace, work and income which is now aggravated by Covid crisis creating hand-to-mouth
- Health care problems in case of sickness as hospital OPDs are not regular these days
- Problem of maintaining social distancing in urban poor living areas
- Unavailability of sanitizers, soap and water for majority informal workers
- Problem of children-care as they are now out of school
- Problems in implementation of Government decision by the concerned mechanisms creates further hardships to informal economy workers, as their vulnerability needs immediate response and relief.

The capacity of the unions in informal economy is also very much limited on the one hand and national trade union centres are basically focussed on formal sector ignoring the issues of informal economy on the other hand. Hence they have not been found effective to design plan of actions and launch programmes of mobilization.

The revival fully depends on central policy of the government backed by budget, fiscal policy and monetary policy. Nepal government has declared to provide at least 100-Day employment to informal economy workers to be managed by local governments. Similarly government has given first priority in food assistance, minimum wages and food for work programme to the informal workers in rural & urban municipality level.

In addition to the major sectors mentioned above, other crucial ones are Agriculture, wholesale & retail trade and Education from the large number point of view. Less number but crucial ones are Banking & financial sector, Insurance, Communication including telecom, press & media, Hydro power, Real estate, cooperatives etc. which significantly contribute the economy.

Agriculture has unexpected increase in labour force this year in rainy season, mainly available for paddy production as internal returnees from the cities and Nepali migrant returnees from India & Gulf have arrived to assist their families in subsistence farming. The workers with almost zero marginal productivity in disguised unemployment are now working in the paddy fields. At the same time it is also reported in Nepal-India border areas that lack of daily wage workers has been a problem as Indian seasonal workers could not come here due to lockdown.

Wholesale & Retail trade normally contributes 14.37 % in GDP and provides direct jobs to more than 12,40,000 workers (Reanda Biz Serve, 2020) based on the figures of Fiscal Year 2017/18. Disrupted supply chain during the lockdown has badly affected this sector, majority in closure for more than 5 weeks except essential goods. Downfall in imports both from China & India was crucial on the one hand and closure of as well as under-capacity production in domestic manufacturing units were the major causes. Additional but equally important factor was the jammed wheels of transportation that caused problems in the operation of wholesale and retail trade. Hence employment effect is visible, but not hard-hit.

Insurance sector as an influential part of financial sector is developing and expanding gradually in Nepal, but due to Covid-19, an unexpected go slow in the speed has taken place. In insurance sector, the activities of agents have come to a downfall due to lockdown and heavy reduction in economic activities. As a result, there is reduction in total premium and investment of insurance and reinsurance companies. Job-loss is insignificant as the number is small in this sector.

The activity of banks and financial sector is also in difficult days, as no investor these day is interested in investible funds. Deposits are not being transformed into the productive capital; hence the interest to pay to the depositors is a burden to the banks and financial companies. Employment in insurance/financial companies and banks is at standstill, not yet declined but risk of job-loss is increasing. Expansion of banks/financial/insurance companies has been halted by slow-down of economic activities and hence possible scope of new job creation is now erased from the scene. Human resource of insurance/financial companies and banks is under psychological pressure of corona infection and health-risk has created problems in their performance. Most of the avenues of insurance sector - motor, aviation, marine, property, agriculture have declined and premium collections to the companies have definitely gone down. Demand for life insurance has also declined but newly introduced Corona insurance as a non-life insurance is preferred by the people. Death claims may increase in forthcoming months. Corporate sector may prefer group insurance for the coverage of health risk.

Real estate business is at halt and human resource associated is fully useless and jobless these days living on the past savings.

Box 5 : Covid-19 Impact sum-up

Sector	Delivery	Employment
Hotel-Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total closure Functioning at less than 5% • Trekking -Travel-Rafting at almost zero level 	Devastating
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost Zero Functioning up to mid April • Slow functioning in May and June at less than 20% of pre-lockdown • Reviving in July with less than 50% capacity 	Hard-hit
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost Zero Functioning upto April • Slow functioning in May and June at less than 10% of pre-lockdown • Functioning in July at 20% of Pre-lockdown period 	Hard-hit
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Mobility - Jammed wheels in March-April-May, slow wheels at low 10% in June, good start at less than 20% in July • Working effectively for goods delivery though reduced at 55% of pre-Lockdown • Only few chartered flights in aviation 	Hard-hit
Wholesale & Retail Trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food, medicine & daily consumption - reduced due to transport hurdle, but managed • Other commodities - demand and sales reduced more than 50% 	Hit
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functioning effectively 	Normal and high absorption of labour force
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total closure except insufficient online education 	Hard-hit
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full functioning in public sector • Low functioning at 50% in private sector 	Normal
Banking, Financial & Insurance sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total closure in the beginning, but slow recovery from May 	Less than Normal
Cooperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saving credit cooperatives - largely reduced activities • Product-delivery cooperatives 	Hit
Foreign Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outflow of workers zero with few exceptions • Returnees at rush from open indo-Nepal border up to June, slow in July • Returnees from other destinations low • Large number waiting to restart job in destinations 	Hit
Informal sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home-based & self employed work hurdled by raw material shortage - 25% of pre-lockdown • Street trade - 30% of pre-lockdown, slow revival in July • Daily-wage & piece-rate works - reduced to 25% of pre-lockdown 	Devastating

Thus from every sectors of work and employment, there was no option to the job-losers in cities and urban centres mainly in Kathmandu valley to decide back-home to their districts. They could not believe that the food assistance relief would be sufficient and regular. Large number started to leave the cities from the day of declaration of Lockdown. As the Announcement of Lockdown was done on March 22 to come into affect from March 24 at 6.00 AM, so preparation for easy go out was in a too short time frame for workers.

The fear of unknown Covid-19 pandemic has been one of the driving factors, but not the only one, to push the working people out of the cities and Kathmandu valley. Similarly, after two weeks of lockdown, they started to feel that economic activities will not take place in near future and livelihood problems to them will be more acute. After abrupt stop of income, immediate problem was the payment of rent to the house-owners which would be highly burdensome & even impossible to many of them as house-rent in Kathmandu Valley has been the single largest item of expenditure for working class people. It was painful to the working families that the savings would be finished soon whatever small past savings they had just before lockdown. Therefore from all segments of informal employment, common action of the working class people was the mobility towards their homes in villages, to some it was nearer and to many it was very far and remote. In case of Kathmandu valley, not less than 800,000 returned to their homes of outer districts, of which less than 5% returned back recently with a little relaxed situation.

The going back-home workers suffered police harassment and harassments from local people on the way in the initial days, but later on government was not strict to stop them in their working places as the number started to multiply. Local representatives and members of parliament also supported their back home after few weeks of Lockdown. They were also facilitated by food support and vehicles to some extent.

These internal home-returnees do not seem to return easily and immediately to their previous workplaces without a high degree of certainty. Large numbers are already looking for options in their places. So creation of options in local level by all three tiers of governments is the urgent need of time. Workplaces in the cities and particularly in Kathmandu valley may not come to a normal functioning in full capacity that was before the pandemic or at least Lockdown, full fledged operation may take long time.

6. An Uncertain Future

A situation of lay-offs and pay-offs to millions and mere offs to more than millions from their work, workplace, incomes & livelihoods seems a common phenomena. Unemployment benefits, relief packages and welfare programmes will be insufficient if it goes longer. The ultimate result will be income inequality more and more. The question is what if virus accentuates inequality beyond any predictions and benefits to only big and powerful. The power equation of societies in favour of few and adverse to billions with favourable for autocracies against democracies may become reality of the coming decade. The fruits of adversities are currently in the bags of tech-giants like Facebook, Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Google, Alphabet and few others. An emerging 'world of remote everything' (John Cassidy, TNY) may be our fate for many forthcoming years, which means few will be beneficiaries and billions will be suffering.

We are facing the greatest depression after 1929, the former was the by-product of war, but this one quite different caused by Pandemic and many seen and unseen factors including climate & environment. The great depression of 1929 created room for

- Compulsion for the state to design policies, mobilization & action for the best possible level of employment if not full employment
- Higher government spending in public utility services and social sector
- Wide coverage of state owned enterprises
- Higher Government investment in SOEs & PPPs
- Progressive taxation
- Control & regulation of financial sector
- Strengthening of Trade unions, civil society organizations and various forms of pressure groups

But Progressive taxation was partially paralysed by tax-heavens & corruption of politics & bureaucracy. Likewise financial capitalism emerged with forceful character to make regulation helpless frequently. When socialism became defensive due to its rigid political model of USSR & East Europe, the market philosophy effort in the name of liberalization & privatization encouraged the sale of SOEs in corporate hands damaging the economic balance in favour of Private sector giants & MNCs leaving people on the kindness of market, but the degree of kindness of market is always stable at zero level. However, the strength of labour-activism and civil society as a demand for change and pressure from below through political & social movement became the major positive force of the globe.

Consequently, within few decades, Asian Financial crisis in 1997 and world economic crisis in 2007-2008 shaped a different declining future for Privatization-liberalization-Globalization. A new future through AI, Robotics and fast moving technology with positives and negatives for every political system was emerging along with new types of power-balance and tousel between USA & China.

Now, a crisis beyond imagination in the form of Covid-19 pushed everything in disorder and uncertainty. The major points witnessed during the crisis are as follows:

- Health service failure worldwide and needs reshaping
- Depression in real estate and housing
- Damaging effects in tourism industry
- Restaurants for take-away and home-delivery services, reduced catering services, low demand of vegetables & meat except for domestic consumption
- Socialisation crisis with no big gatherings, no dinner/lunch parties, no seminars, handshakes, no hugs, having social distancing as a normal life practice. Thousands of Audience in stadiums may become a part of history. However social distancing is beneficial for free thinking, for instance, during Plague of 1665-66 in London, Isaac Newton came with new discovery by his home as Cambridge University was closed. (Zee News April 19, 2020)
- As a cultural change of habit, South Asians have a bad habit of spitting everywhere, mostly because of Pann and tobacco chewing. This habit is to be changed
- Reduced commercial sex work with numbers of conflicting impacts has left a considerable number in extreme anxiety
- Employment, health, inequality may become relevant agenda in politics and normal life.
- E-commerce, online exchange and home-delivery services may be in rush.
- Migrant returnees of Nepal will also create a high-volt crisis of employment and livelihood. As most of the remittance receiving countries have weak economies to reintegrate and provide jobs to the returnees, the returnee workforce may become idle and problematic, more severe in case of Nepal. The serious hurdle is the Absence of policies, funds and system to adjust them & maximise their capabilities/skills/will/power to work & contribute the nation. Every government, stakeholder and policy designer worldwide realise that migrant workers are among the hardest hit by Covid-19, but unfortunately neither receiving nor sending countries have, so far, addressed the hardships of the migrants to the required extent.
- The migrant workers, even if they have not loss jobs may be working on reduced wages or facing non payments and living in worksites with increased risk of infection. Those waiting for home-return arrangements are with little or no money for food and

accommodation as being faced by Nepali workers in gulf countries and many more destinations.

- A total 164 million migrant workers suffering worldwide, half of them women workers, are 4.7% of the global labour force (ILO Newsroom), which cannot be ignored by the concerned governments and international agencies.
- A crisis of human flow, to their homes & home countries, is to be managed seriously by the governments of labour sending countries.

Whether migrants or natives, for millions and millions of workers, job-loss means loss of income. Loss of income leads the workers to food problem and danger of starvation, at least malnutrition to the children and physical as well as mental health problems to all. Feeling of heavy insecurity and of a dark future among the billions is the most dangerous threat, which will become more and more visible if the Corona-led crisis continues for long. There are exceptional cases of suicide in Quarantine, rape in quarantine and death due to denial of hospitals to admit for treatment. If such exceptional cases increase, mental depression will adversely affect the entire society.

Uncertain future is indicated by ILO Director General (Newsroom, ILO website) in his May Day Statement, "The new normal (*after pandemic is over*) may be dictated by constraints imposed by Pandemic rather than our choices and preferences." He has also analysed that an extraordinary precariousness and injustices of our world of work is exposed in a cruellest way by the pandemic in the form of current crisis.

For Example, the share of global income earned by workers has declined from 53.7% in 2004 to 51.4% in 2017, whereas the share of capital income increased from 46.3% to 48.6% in the same period (ILO Dept. of Statistics, 2019). This trend of income share sloping downward for labour and upward for capital was in a normal situation. Now with employment and income crisis created by corona pandemic, we can sketch a gloomy picture of the fate of the majority working people in the bottom quintile - an uncertain future, more uncertain in LDCs like Nepal. Only the land-based/nature-based livelihood strategy can provide temporary survival against hunger & starvation.

If crisis continues taking a long length of time-arc, there will be long-term outcomes more adverse creating more and more hardships and sufferings to the working people. As a result, multi-dimensional poverty and inequality are likely to increase significantly. As World Bank has estimated, people living in poverty could increase by 70-100 millions from 632 million people in 2019 and this increase in poverty will be the first increase after 1998 (UN Policy Brief, June 2020).

Protection of working families during the crisis of uncertain period under Covid-19 Pandemic and ensuring a post-pandemic future where no one will be left behind should be the aim of every activity while fighting with Covid-19 and recovery from its short-term & long-term impacts.

The world is more divided with increased conflict and confrontation, between Iran & US, between US & China and between China & India and several other bilateral conflicts. Free

movement of people is restricted by spread of pandemic and international borders are sealed. Compromise, coordination and cooperation is the urgent demand internationally which is continuously ignored by the powerful ones. In our case in Nepal, the border dispute between Nepal and India basically caused by big-brother mentality of Indian government, may disturb the fight against pandemic and economic recovery. In addition, the internal political problems in major political parties both ruling and opposition have also added fuel to uncertainty in Nepal.

ILO has organized virtual global summit to address economic & social impact of COVID-19 aiming at building back better in the post-pandemic recovery. The summit involved 275 speakers from 98 countries with 54 Head of States, 5 Heads of Agencies. The single outcome is the unified Message in one sentence - We Need a Better Future of Work After Covid-19 with Decent Work For All

The major and common questions to deal with and resolve are twins

- How to control, minimise and eradicate Corona virus infection &
- How to design & race into economic recovery for better normal

7.

Recommendations

Entire world needs a human-centred/ poor-centred normal, a class-sensitive & gender responsive normal, a race-sensitive & caste-sensitive normal and a climate/environment sensitive & sustainable normal. Majority believe that once vaccine will be developed, everything will be normal. But vaccine will also take longer range of time than our expectations and still the changing features of the virus may create frequent hurdles for full effectiveness of the vaccines. In fact, isolated efforts can not solve this global problem, but coordinated efforts are necessary, however new rules of social distancing and regulated mobility of people with strict health prevention standards are inevitable.

In addition to health, new recovery strategies & plans for economy and social life will be inevitable in days to come. A combination of coordinated efforts in global level and effective implementation in local level is the path to go ahead.

This is the right time to minimise Military spending, however conflicts among the world-powers have multiplied these days even in such a global crisis-time. Conflict of the world-powers adds fuel to problems everywhere.

Diverting resources from luxurious and socially harmful items to essential and necessary items of goods and services can ensure higher availability and economy in the allocation of financial/physical resources.

In General:

- Fiscal design is to be changed from traditional frames & formats and monetary policy should be made more favourable to small businesses, MSMEs, banks, financial companies and cooperatives but definitely not on labour displacing expense.
- More investment in health care systems, health education & medical research, sanitation & environment
- Tax reforms, wider in coverage but flexible to address emerging issues and to promote economic activities
- Social protection, social assistance and welfare system need linking with strong solidarity funds at global to local levels
- Initiatives for a fixed proportion of Official Development Assistance for social protection in every ODA receiving country

- Initiatives for the establishment of Special Fund in every labour receiving country for social protection of migrant workers
- Minimisation of precariousness in informal economy through wide coverage of Labour Inspection System
- Relief Spending to be managed as a big component to address both nature-created & human-made crises
- Wide range of Welfare programmes to support the survival of bottom segments of society targeting vulnerable groups by listing them in a prioritised frame.
- Employment retention and expansion measures supported by wage subsidies as a part of Active Labour Market Policies
- Promotion to home-based/land-based productive work and minimisation of useless high salaried jobs, for example ceiling on the high salaries and additional incomes of CEOs & top management officials both in public and private sector can be fixed at a minimum. Series of allowances may be curtailed.
- Financial assistance to businesses in essential goods & services which operate with high labour intensity

In Particular:

- Revival of major sectors Transport, construction, manufacturing, wholesale & retail trade and hotel & tourism is extremely necessary. But revival is not an easy task and Existing infrastructure of Nepal cannot create large number of jobs to workers in manufacturing and other sectors. Agriculture as the single largest contributor to GDP and employment is not much affected, but it needs more care from policy makers & government during the pandemic & post-corona future in order to achieve a higher degree of independence in our economy. Agriculture is to be considered as the only immediate and durable source of solution to the problem of unemployment and food security.
- In addition to revival of major sectors of production, services and employment, remittances and earnings from tourism industry must be considered in making strategies for future.
- The reduction in Remittance is less than estimated and the number of returnees is also less than initial estimation. Economic activity in the destination will resume and hence government has already opened the lock of foreign employment. Few will stay and majority will try to go abroad. If Nepal India relations will improve, majority of Nepali returnees from India will also cross the border again. Hence short-term management for returnees within Nepal, but ensuring safer migration abroad & India to them in aftermath should be the general strategy of government. Thus contribution of Remittance in GDP and of foreign migration in employment may remain more or less at same level, but serious efforts from government side are inevitable. The concerns of Foreign employment agencies, as they will be seriously working for survival of their business, should be addressed by the government, but at the same time protection system for

workers should be made stronger through coordination between ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Labour & Employment by mobilising Non residential Nepali Association and human resource of Embassies/diplomatic units everywhere in destination countries. Trade unions should take more initiatives to protect workers in foreign employment through national trade unions of destination countries and regional /international bodies of international trade union movement.

- It is also a bitter reality that the policy responses of migrant worker receiving countries have not been much effective in case of Nepali migrant workers. For instance, the bilateral understanding between Government of Nepal and governments of Gulf countries and India through telephone talks or other means have not given any feeling of being protected to the Nepali migrant workers. As role of foreign employment will remain highly significant even in Post-Corona Future, G-to-G MoUs & Agreements with receiving countries must be given high intensive care..
- Identification and enlisting of vulnerable HHs in every 753 jurisdictions of Local Governments in ward level, simultaneously making list of the migrant returnees from abroad and internal returnees after job-loss
- Equally important is the Coordination between federal, provincial and local governments to mobilise their mechanisms in cooperation and to avoid duplication in the use of resources
- Through local Bodies, distribution of sanitizers, soap and masks to the informal and unemployed workers at least every month will be appreciable.
- Immediate employment of very short-term character for unemployed workers can be generated in sanitation/sanitization and small infrastructural works schemes of local level. Similarly another possibility is of home-delivery services everywhere at local level by producers, wholesalers, retailers and service providers.
- Sector specific plans should be designed by National Planning Commission in consultation with line Ministries, particularly Ministry of Labour & Employment should work more closely with NPC. Fiscal and monetary measures to promote economic activity & employment generation backed up by welfare programmes for working class and marginal social groups should go in combination.

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Annex 1: List of Key Informants

Trade Union Activists

- Construction (Narnath Luintel, Gopal Karki)
- HRC (Surya Kunwar, Banshi Bhattarai)
- Auto-servicing (Kamala Tamang, Madhav Pandey, Jeevan Adhikari)
- Manufacturing (Anand Thami, Krishna Rimal, Arjun Adhikari)
- Transportation (Bidur Karki, Bhim Rai, Navaraj Ghimire)
- Health (Chandra Thapa, Gita Thing)
- Education (Madhav Poudel)
- Informal Sectors (Om Thapalia, Narayan Neupane, Gyanu KC)
- Travel-Trekking-Rafting (Suman Parajuli)
- Foreign Employment (Bajra Rai, Samar Thapa)

Special Interaction with

- Dr. Shiva Sharma, President, National Labour Academy
- Basudev Adhikari, Chairman-Nepal Bank Limited & Former Executive Director of Nepal Rastra Bank
- Dr. Baburam Adhikari, Member National Education Commission and Former President of Nepal National Teachers Association
- Dr. Keshab Basyal, Tribhuvan University
- Dr. Rabindra Ghimire, Pokhara University and President of Nepal Insurance & Risk Management Association
- Random talks with 24 unknown individuals in streets during the month of July