

UKaid Skills for Employment Programme (सीप) Monthly Bulletin: April 2021

Dear Reader,

We hope this finds you well and safe. As the COVID-19 wave hits Nepal, and the broader South Asia region, we are wading into uncharted territory again. Last year, despite the disruptions caused by COVID-19, सीप—and many of its partners—found ways to adapt and sustain their skilling initiatives. This was possible in large part due to: i) an increased and accelerated adoption of digital solutions; ii) innovations in business models; iii) diversification of skilling areas; and iv) expanded shared-value multi-sectoral partnerships that allowed diverse institutions to leverage and optimize resources.

In the Agriculture sector, for instance, to supplement their in-person classroom and mobile farm-based trainings and strengthen supply chain connections with farmers and agri-MSMEs, Shreenagar Agro Farm, began exploring and testing development of an integrated mobile-based application i.e. Shree Kisan App. This App, led by an anchor firm like Shreenagar, is intended at integrating smallholders and MSMEs into the digital economy to build access to key market information, inputs, skilling/reskilling programs, and broader markets. Similarly, cognizant of the training and market linkage gaps in the Maize value chain, Shreenagar successfully built a strategic three-party collaboration model—with local Governments and Cooperatives in the Lumbini Province—to ensure small-scale producers, especially women, get the resources and training they need to increase their production, access markets, and build sustainable livelihoods.

UKaid सीप is supporting such transformational partnerships to propel growth of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in priority sectors – commercial agriculture, light manufacturing, tourism, ICT, and construction. Using market-based and enterprise-driven models, सीप's efforts, through 'catalytic' co-funding and technical assistance, are building skilled workforce, reliable livelihoods, and productive enterprises—while also attracting investments at the Provincial level. This month, with the Lumbini Province' plans for an [Investment Summit](#) in our radar, we reconnected with the Provincial Government leadership, to offer support. In the past, सीप has also supported the Province with Skills Gap Assessment and Employment Status Study analyzing three key growth corridors. More recently, through Rojgari Services, we linked private sector support for the Provincial Government's online jobs portal service.

Partnerships in Lumbini support:

- Revival of the Palpali Dhaka Industry.
- Constructing path to development through demand-driven skilling and placements in Heavy Earthmoving and Construction Sector
- Propelling inclusive jobs and growth of the yarn industry, among the top Nepali exports.
- End-to-end one-stop industry-led farming solutions for smallholders.
- Bridging cargo delivery gaps in various sectors/supply chains.

Given past experiences, we remain optimistic that, and the diverse partners and stakeholders we engage in Nepal, will find innovative ways to support firms and people through continuity in needed livelihood-creating services and enhanced ability to rebound and enable progress, despite the challenges brought forth by COVID-19.

Stay safe and take care,

Baljit Vohra, Team Leader and Stuti Basnyet, Deputy Team Leader, UKaid सीप



The Month That Was: सीप Partner Updates

Inclusive Job Creation and Industry Transformation in the Yarn Industry. In April, together with industrialists and HR professionals from the **Nepal Yarn Manufacturers' Association (NYMA)**, at a small special event in Kathmandu, we commemorated the progress and the learnings of the सीप-NYMA partnership and reflected on the way forward—for sustained job creation and industry transformation of the yarn industry. NYMA and सीप's multi-factory partnership, since November 2019, has enabled quality job-linked skilling and employment for nearly 4,000 workers and improved factory capability at the Triveni Spinning Mill, Jagadamba Spinning Mill, Reliance Spinning Mill, Tricot Industry, and Jaya Spinning Mill. At the event, organized also to mark the closure of the first phase of the partnership (pilot period) with सीप, NYMA unveiled an industry-led curriculum covering five job roles. The Curricula was tested, refined, and standardized with inputs from the factories, alongside interventions for improved trainer capability, upgraded infrastructure, and streamlined processes.



'Skilling initiatives coupled with firm growth-enabling interventions, co-created and collectively pursued with the industry, form an integral part of the progressive yarn industry's push to structurally transform through modernization and expansion, diversification of exports to new geographies, and improved organizational capability of the firms.' - Nicola Pollitt, British Ambassador to Nepal

Top Three Learnings from the सीप-NYMA Partnership

1. Unity of purpose helps leaders and followers alike- 5 competing factories setting aside their business interests to forge a common vision towards developing a uniform approach to skilling in critical job roles- for the betterment of the industry as a whole. This not only helps the industry leaders but also creates a sense of urgency among the followers to ensure survival.
2. Export-oriented industries lay added emphasis on Skilling - Given the focus of the industry on exports, the necessity to stay abreast on product and process improvements, coupled with progressive thinking of owners/CEOs, a top-down culture emphasizing modernization and productivity adds to the importance of skilling.
3. Meso-level industry bodies can do more for the betterment of the industry- NYMA embodies the attributes of an effective meso-level body that is committed to bringing in best practices through unified approaches to skilling and job creation, in addition to its usual role as an advocacy organization.

सीप and NYMA are now exploring the viability and impact potential of replicating the skilling model, tested and proven through the pilot period, across the Yarn to Garment value chain. Consultations are underway with some of the key stakeholders, including the Garment Association of Nepal, Nepal Sthaniya Tayari Poshak Utpadak Sangh and Federation of Export Entrepreneurs' in Nepal and Tiruppur Export's Association and Guhan Tex Solutions in India.

Yarn is one of Nepal's top export commodities and one of the biggest contributors to the national economy. Last year, four industries within NYMA exported yarn worth over Nepali Rupees 9.5 billion; Turkey, Europe, and India being the major markets. Along with Chairperson of NYMA Pawan Golyan, the event was co-hosted by leading industrialists Ram Chandra Shanghai, Bishnu Neupane, Abheek Jyoti, Shakti Golyan, and Akshya Golyan. WATCH the proceedings: <https://bit.ly/3xfwXgC>.

New Partnership Alert! Innovative Tech-driven Partnership with Laxmi Bank. Designed to harness the power of technology and collaborations, सीप is pooling funds with the Bank to link and serve 4,500 migrants and migrant households in Province 2 and Lumbini Province with enterprise start-up credit and pre-migration loans. Building on its previous experience with UNCDF, Laxmi Bank will expand and refine blockchain and API technology to make loan against remittance more accessible and affordable for migrant households--targeting migrants travelling to the Dubai and Malaysia corridors. At the same time, the Bank is building stronger ties with its downstream micro finance partner **Laxmi Laghubitta** to create tailored financial products, coupled with business development training, to support rural-based enterprises, especially women-owned MSMEs in the agriculture sector.

COMING SOON: Virtual Exhibition to Showcase Nepali Handmade Carpets. Label STEP is bringing high-value carpets to life through a virtual exhibition, hosted on the Explore Rugs Virtual Exhibition Platform, in the last week of May. The virtual exhibition will showcase the stories and products from the artisans who have been trained and employed in the artisan villages of Sarlahi district. It will bring together national and international rug designers to promote hand-knotted Nepali rugs in the global market. Stay tuned for details! With catalytic support from STEP and सीप, the carpet manufacturers in Nepal have set up seven industry-led weaving workshops, with world-class weavers linked to the carpet value chain, in Province 2. This partnership has taken Nepal's carpet manufacturing hub from Kathmandu to an underserved geographic area – Sarlahi which has traditionally served as the origin of Nepal's weaving community, and is creating jobs for local women (primarily from migrant households), disadvantaged groups and PwDs.



Sita Tamang with her husband Nima at a workshop after taking a three-month training on weaving.



Amazon Web Service (AWS) Educate 'Centre of Excellence' Coming Soon to the Institute of Engineering (IoE). Since 2019, **Genese Solution** has strived to make AWS Cloud Computing curricula and certification more accessible to students and colleges across Nepal – to build work-readiness of students on emerging job roles while also supporting employers in finding the talent needed for successful adoption of cloud solutions. Genese has partnered with 59 colleges, five job placement firms, and nearly 210 employers to build the collaborations needed, system wide, to better skill and connect able graduates with industries. With the AWS Cloud Academy expected to be launched by May 2021 at the Institute of Engineering (Pulchowk Campus, Tribhuvan University), Genese and सीप's pilot period partnership is poised to lay the foundations for scale-up. The AWS Educate Center will enable IoE faculty to access ready-to-teach cloud computing curriculums and provide upskilling opportunities for 2,000 students annually (through 14 IoE-affiliated colleges across Nepal). Genese has also started an elective course called 'Scalable Infrastructure Architecture' at IoE for Master's level students based on AWS and Bachelor's programme in Specialized Cloud Computing for the Lord Buddha Education Foundation.

In April, Genese signed MoUs with three campuses in Province 2 and four in Bagmati province to upskill students (including with Oxford college, as seen in the photo). To bridge the supply-demand gaps in the ICT job market, Genese along with partner Girls

Tackling Inequality and Harnessing the Value of Industry-Government-Cooperative Collaboration for Agricultural Development. This month, **Shreenagar Agro Farm** completed hands-on skilling on aquaculture at the Lumbini Province. Participants were onboarded and trained in cooperation with the Nepal Association of Blind Upliftment, and subsequently linked to input and output markets. Targeted shared-value collaborations with diverse market actors, including those that support People with Disability, can ensure aspiring farmers and small-scale producers, get the resources and training they need to increase their production, access markets, and generate income to build sustainable livelihoods. Since December 2020, Shreenagar has built a strategic three-party collaboration model targeting the maize-feed-poultry value chains with local Governments and Cooperatives. About 1,600 smallholder farmers, mostly those affiliated with local Cooperatives, have been trained in maize production, harvest, and collection (as well as on poultry and aquaculture) along with provision of quality inputs (primarily seeds and fertilizers) and buy-back guarantees from Shreenagar. 17 rural Municipalities across the Lumbini Province have joined hands as resource partners to co-fund logistics and other training expenditures and support mobilization of trainees, especially women and disadvantaged groups.

CASE STUDY: Local FMs and Rural Municipalities-Key for Rural-based Youth to Seek Heavy Equipment Operator Training. Between March-April, **MAW Earth Movers Pvt Ltd (MEPL)** launched two-shift training in lieu of rising demand for heavy equipment operator training in Janakpur; among the trainees was Anjila Devi, first woman from the Terai community to take on the JCB machine at the Center (photo below). Meanwhile, MEPL's training partner in Nepalgunj, the Citizen Prabhidhik Shikshalaya Center continues to see growing demand from youth and rural Municipalities. This Center signed an MoU with the Runtigadhi Rural Municipality in Holeri, Rolpa for youth to avail training. MEPL has so far signed 11 MOUs with local Municipalities for co-funding.



Among the trainees from Rolpa is Reg Bahadur Mahara (photo above). A migrant labour in India previously, Reg was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Unable to find a decent job in Nepal, Reg's search brought him to the training center in Nepalgunj. "I see JCB's everywhere in Rolpa," explained Reg as he described his motivation to join the training, which he heard about through Holeri FM. For Reg, while it was the "visible" construction work underway at Rolpa that gave him the confidence of finding a job as an operator, for other trainees it was the desire to stay back with family even after COVID ended. Other than rural FM stations like Holeri FM, the majority of the candidates heard of the training through their Rural Municipality Office at Holeri.

101 Agriculture Cooperatives Onboarded to Expand Enterprise Start-up. This month, **Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha (SKBBL)** onboarded 101 Small Farmer Agriculture Cooperatives across 20 districts in Province 2 and Lumbini Province as downstream partners. To build improved prospects of success as a self-employed worker/entrepreneur, सीप's partnership with SKBBL targets returnee migrants, women, and socio-economically disadvantaged groups. For this, SKBBL is building the institutional capability of local Cooperatives to provide enhanced access to tailored financial products coupled with skilling and market linkages service. The partnership is designed to mobilize the skills and savings of returnee migrants, migrant households, and women in productive entrepreneurial ventures through skilling-based affordable credit products (as well as savings).

Second Batch of Weavers Graduate from the Palpali Dhaka Association. A three-month dhaka weaving training, conducted with co-funding from the Lumbini Province and Tansen Municipality, came to an end for 98 weavers on April 18. This batch, similar to the first batch of 50 graduates, will be employed by the partner industries within the Association or can pursue self-employment, with financial support from partner NMB Bank, to start home-based dhaka weaving workshops. To support revival of the Palpali Dhaka Industry, सीप is supporting the Association with skilling of weavers and entrepreneurs in partnership with diverse national and international stakeholders, including the Lumbini Province Government and Tansen Municipality. To build the foundation for industry growth and sustained job creation, efforts are underway—through support from Label STEP Switzerland—to inject quality and innovation in Dhaka designs, improve branding and marketing, build stronger forward and backward national and international market linkages, and enable access to finance for both weavers and entrepreneurs.



Sumitra Bhattari, 19, a newly graduated weaver in Palpa.

Continuing its support to the Association, this month, Label STEP completed surveying nine Dhaka weaving workshops, and developed a draft Fair-trade Standard following stakeholders' consultation. The standard costing template for Dhaka textiles has been developed and wage survey completed, based on which the standardization of the wage rates as per the designs is being done. Fabric samples as well as the updated price lists of the samples were exchanged with the Association for Craft Producers to initiate the sample development process.

Rojgari Service Expands and Deepens Engagements with Industries to Expand Job Placements. Proponent of domestic employment and ethical recruitment practices, **Rojgari Service**, a medium-sized private job placement service provider, is increasing skilling-linked job placement services for job seekers. सीप's partnership has enabled Rojgari to expand and upgrade its digital and physical infrastructure and job placement services. The company uses a combination of brick-and-mortar *Rojgari Pasals*, set up in Nepalgunj and Birgunj with 's support; a mobile outreach vehicle *Ghumti Rojgari Pasal* that can travel to rural and remote villages to sensitize and register job seekers; and mobile and web application <www.rojgari.com> to register and connect job seekers with industry clients. Rojgari currently has an industry client network of nearly 4,900, of which about 900 were onboarded through सीप's support. Recently Rojgari tied up with the Mount Sibhalik Infrastructure Pvt Ltd., in Lumbini Province, to place skilled masons and is exploring new opportunities with internet service providers (such as Classic Tech and Vianet), distillery and chain restaurants. In Province 2, Rojgari has similarly initiated linkage with Hulas Steel Industries and textile factories.

Training for Self-employment Underway to Meet Delivery Needs through Upaya City Cargo. This month Upaya City: Cargo ramped up training for driver partners in Kathmandu, Butwal, and Pokhara. The drivers were trained in areas of digital literacy, financial literacy, customer relations, vehicle maintenance and road safety. Upaya uses a combination of in-person, virtual, and on-the-job based training to build skills for employability of drivers. Upaya currently has a network of nearly 1,500 driver partners who can be mobilized for delivery of goods. Check out their app: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.citycargo.users&hl=en&gl=US>.