

UKaid Skills for Employment (शीप) Programme Monthly Bulletin: November 2021

Funded by the British Embassy in Kathmandu, UKaid शीप, is brokering transformational partnerships with the private and public sector to propel growth of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in priority sectors – commercial agriculture, light manufacturing, tourism, ICT, and construction – primarily in Province 2 and Lumbini Province. शीप uses an innovative Challenge Fund to expand market-aligned skilling, affordable financial products, and ethical migration services linked to gainful livelihoods for Nepalis and support transformation and growth within industries.

#NotesFromTheField: Monitoring and Recognition of UKaid शीप Ignites Stronger Partnership with Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security (MoLESS)

“Labour is linked to skill, skill to employment, employment to production, and production to economic growth.” –
Outgoing Secretary of MoLESS, Surya Prasad Gautam



The outgoing MoLESS Secretary’s message is strategically aligned with, and embodies, UKaid शीप’s enterprise growth-based approach to job creation and industry growth. Between October-November 2021, as part of our continued efforts to build and broker stronger collaborations with and between key actors and institutions in the Government of Nepal (GoN) and private sector—for synergy and amplified results—we had the opportunity to showcase our work with all three-tiers of the GoN. Former Secretary Gautam, Joint Secretary and Director, Prime Minister Employment Programme (PMEP) Dandu Raj Ghimire, and Under Secretary, PMEP Lok Nath Bhushal participated in multi-day field trips, spanning both Lumbini Province and Province 2.

Several important takeaways and ideas are coming out of our joint monitoring and learning visits with MoLESS and others, including the potential to extend support for:

- Improved coordination of Government-to-Government dialogues (with added emphasis on skilling and safer migration opportunities for women), to open new more-lucrative destinations and job roles for Nepali migrants;
- Supporting returnee migrants’ re-integration—economically and socially—in the country;
- Further enriching the information dissemination capacity of GoN’s Employment Service Centres (ESCs) to better inform potential migrants;
- Roll-out of GoN’s apprenticeship funding to ensure effective market alignment, drawing from शीप’s demonstrated best practices, and models for engaging the private sector;
- Stronger integration with other development partners; and
- Continued technical advisory and [support to the government](#) by UKaid शीप, which is also a key element of our work.



While in Janakpur, the team did a walk-through (pictured above) of [MEPL’s MAW Skills Academy](#), launched in early 2020, to expand job-linked training access for underserved communities, including women, in Province 2 (pictured above). MEPL’s training center covers practical and theoretical training as well as key soft skills and courses on inclusion and safeguarding.

The MAW Academy is a busy site with a growing number of employment seekers from various rural municipalities undergoing skilling to operate excavators and backhoe loaders. Outgoing Secretary Gautam (pictured above) quizzed trainees and license instructors on what it takes to become a JCB-certified and licensed operator, and one that can command upwards of NPR. 40,000 (£250) and NPR 140,000 (£885) in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries by way of monthly income. To ensure a pro-poor focus, alongside its fee-and revenue-based model, MEPL has been actively forging collaborations with local government bodies and NGOs to generate co-funding support for the most disadvantaged trainees. It is also looking at expanding its remit to include other jobs in the auto- and construction- industries.

In Province 2, the team also took stock of buzzing Artisan Villages in Sarlahi where seven carpet weaving workshops, profiling energetic weavers, busy looms, and exotic spread of carpet designs, and linked to national and international carpet value chains, have been firmly established. The visitors were pleased to witness such decentralization of the carpet manufacturing process, and its impact on local job creation, especially for women. Artisans and entrepreneurs at workshops, supported by [शीप and Label STEP](#), got to showcase their talent with leaders from the GoN. Joint Secretary Ghimire (pictured left) even sat down with skilled artisans to learn the basics of carpet weaving.



While in Lumbini Province, the high-level mission from MoLESS were accompanied by the leadership from Local and Provincial governments (pictured right) when they ventured into Tansen, Palpa to visit factories operating under the [Palpali Dhaka Association](#). Witness to, and enthused by, how Palpali Dhaka is on the path to revitalization and re-positioning in local and international markets, the team shared several ideas in support of the initiative. A high-level advocacy, led by Mayor Ashoke Kumar Shahi, in hard-at-work for national-level declaration of Tansen as the Dhaka capital of Nepal. Over the past year, with support from शीप, entrepreneurs, designers, buyers, and the government have come together to restore the legacy of the hand-women Palpali heritage fabric, and the handicraft, from diverse vantage points, including rejuvenating weaver interest and skills as well as improved innovations and branding for Palpali Dhaka.



UKaid शीप's work often brings together officials from the Federal, Provincial, and Local levels for joint review, identification, and pursuits of shared interests, and is emblematic of federalism in action. We are honored to have staunch champions and strong partners in the government.

The team also covered शीप's Banks and Financial Institutions (BFI) partners [Laxmi Bank](#) and [Sana Kisan Bikas Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha](#) Limited. The BFIs explained how their migration loan products—pre-migration and enterprise start-up focused—are responding to the livelihood needs of migrants, returnees and their households in the two Provinces. While in the Lumbini Province, Jagadamba Spinning Mill under [Nepal Yarn Manufacturers' Association](#) welcomed the team for a deep-dive understanding of how शीप-supported apprenticeship training model has led to large-scale job creation in the manufacturing sector, noting the gender inclusion aspects as well. The [Shree Kisan Innovation Hub](#), yet another शीप partnership based out of Butwal, offered a new perspective to team (pictured left) prior to their return back to Kathmandu, building increased interest in industry-led skilling and service provision models in the agriculture space.



#HotOffThePress: New Partnership with IME and Remit Aid

We're excited to announce our new Challenge Fund partnership with [Global IME Bank](#) along with [Remit-Aid](#) and [IME Remit](#). The goal of this new partnership is to bring a dedicated funding/credit line, enabled through investments by global social impact investors seeking modest yields and impact data, targeted towards migrants and their households whose incomes continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this partnership, funds will be raised from the global capital markets with the issuance of Remittances Advance Bond (RAB) and disbursed to the families through a digital platform which both the migrant and their households have signed onto.



This partnership will provide a unique solution by connecting global social impact investors to migrant workers by supporting the flow of much-needed remittances back home—offering financial stability and predictability in the post COVID-19 environment. Overall, 5,600 migrants and migrant households are poised to benefit from loan against remittance, disbursed to the migrant households in Province 2 and Lumbini Province, and repaid by the migrants working in the Malaysia corridor. Migrants can apply for the emergency loan as a safety against future disruptions or as a temporary buffer against pandemic related supply-demand disruptions.

This partnership will leverage Artificial Intelligence technology with a credit scoring algorithm to help diagnose financial health assessments of potential borrowers for new tailored financial product offerings—making the platform unique and the first of its kind in Nepal. Finally, through such partnerships, we are also expediting social impact investments inflows into the country—thereby paving the way for increased number of similar capital flows to other priority programmes of FCDO as well as other donors.

Interested in UKaid शीप's Challenge Fund mechanism? [Learn more.](#)

Profile: Kheti's Digitally-driven Model & Partnership to Improve Livelihoods for Farmers

DVExcellus (Kheti), an agri-food tech (web and mobile) platform, is an online marketplace for farm products and provider of end-to-end solutions for farmers and small agri-enterprises. Kheti connects farmers directly with consumers (eliminating the need for middlemen), bringing farmers into the fold of e-commerce. It offers three digitally-driven modules: [KHETI Farm](#), [Farm Management Tool](#), and [KHETI Food](#) to better connect production (at farmer level) and consumption (at buyer level), and an easy-to-access space for other agri-ecosystem players such as cooperatives, development agencies, governments, and products/service providers to engage with producers/consumers.



Through UKaid शीप's support, extended via [Upaya City Cargo](#), Kheti is skilling farmers with a focus on digital literacy and digital payments, mainly targeting farmers from Kathmandu Valley, Chitwan and Kaski Districts. Kheti's proven data-driven farm management tool (FMT) helps build farm efficiency and profitably. "Kheti offers an efficient supply chain management system through use of data, by Kheti and farmers both, to better manage farm produce and predict output and harvest quantities. These predictions are enabling better connections to B2B customers," explains Deepak Tuladhar, Project Coordinator, Kheti.

Kheti offers guidance on various crop cultivation practices, extensive profile on 47 different crops, as well as an interactive mode for farmers to enquire and access information and inputs.

Kheti's **TOP FIVE BENEFITS** for farmers:

1. Enhanced and direct linkage to market.
2. Free agricultural technical advisory.
3. Soil test and recommendation of required fertilizers and seed rate as per the respective crop.
4. Purchase of quality agricultural inputs in affordable price.
5. One-stop-solution.

The crop profile includes insights on areas like crop rate per hectare, fertilizer requirements, crop spacing, optimal temperature and moisture, control against pest and insect damage. Farmers can access agricultural inputs more-easily at more-affordable prices on the one hand, and sell their produce, directly, at their requested timeline.

Since 2020, Kheti has trained over 339 farmers, bringing them into the fold of e-commerce along with added delivery service option through Upaya: CityCargo. Farmers linked with Kheti (and others) can soon access cooling boxes and load pooling mechanism, through Upaya, which will further augment the supply chain for perishable agri products and help farmers avail a fair price.

Insights: Key Takeaways from the Abu Dhabi Dialogue Proceedings

The Sixth Ministerial Consultations of the [Abu Dhabi Dialogue](#) (ADD) held in Dubai on 26 and 27 October 2021 was attended by Government, private sector, and civil society leaders from 16 countries to discuss a range of issues relating to recruitment and employment of temporary contractual workers. The convention accorded the responsibility of Chair for the next two years to the Government of Pakistan, a position held earlier by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). During the dialogue, the GoN delegation (headed by the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security) reiterated its commitments to supporting skilled and informed migration and promoting ethical recruitment from Nepal.

UKaid शीप priorities—aligned to SDG 10.7 on orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and with GoN goals—were among the key topics discussed. This was reflected in the keynote address by UAE Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation on new economic priorities of GCC countries focused on increased demand for skilled labour (via development of regional guidelines on skills partnerships); industrial diversification and growth; adopting effective technology; according priority to the women workforce; and migrants protection in the emerging labour markets. UKaid शीप is committed to GoN's priority on skilled mobility partnerships and is prioritising corridor specific skilling policy development by supporting a launch in an exciting new corridor. Skills accreditation and augmentation, fair recruitment in potential new destinations, access to information and affordable finance continue to be key drivers of safe and orderly migration for the programme. And we are excited that our interventions are aligned with the future of orderly migration as discussed at the ADD and other similar forums.

Key insights from the Convention:

1. The convention announced launch of a joint programme that explores the following thematic priorities: 1) enabling and improving access to justice for temporary contractual workers; 2) facilitating and enhancing skills mobility between and among countries of origin and destination in response to changing employment landscapes; 3) addressing COVID-19 challenges; 4) integrating gender into employment promotion policies; and 5) fostering international, intra-regional, and inter-regional cooperation on migration governance.
2. Bangladesh, Pakistan and UAE conducted special sessions to share their best practices. Bangladesh shared its recent regulatory and policy frameworks and highlighted its legal and policy provisions on migration governance and migrants' welfare including skilling and comprehensive reintegration programme (through access to affordable finance, insurance facilities, cash transfers, and health and sanitation) for migrant workers in light of the coronavirus pandemic. The country is using digital tools for an integrated database and information management of potential migrants, returnee migrants and recruitment agencies. Pakistan presented its regulatory framework for social protection and skills enhancement and recognition co-opting the digital technology. This includes an integrated database of outgoing migrant workers, recruitment agencies, overseas vacancies, and complaint management to enable skills-job matchmaking in real time and promote compliance to fair recruitment. The UAE highlighted the mandatory requirement for the employers to put AED 3,000 (£613) as bank guarantee on behalf of the employee or insure them under the new insurance policy for two years. This reduces the risk of default on salary payments or provides health insurance cover to the employees. The scheme covers both residents as well as foreign migrant workers and has special significance for migrant workers. In 2018, seven insurance companies formed a pool to develop a new insurance product to protect migrant workers and since April 2021, to respond COVID-19 and provide protection to workers, the number of participants has increased to nice. Currently, SMEs and domestic workers are the major beneficiaries.

3. The high-level panel discussions focused on impact of labour supply and demand in light of the changing employment landscape, and promotion of joint efforts between the member countries for migrants' skills examination and recognition.
4. Presentation from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) emphasized pre-conditions for effective application of technological solutions for migration governance. The UN body highlighted that data privacy and ownership, non-discriminatory laws, and strong administrative appeals systems as pre-conditions of good governance in both origin and destination countries.
5. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) presented its ongoing programme on Professional Accreditation for enhanced productivity and performance of the workforce to enable skill-based hiring and skills mobility partnerships among the member states. Its Professional Accreditation System consists of two programs: Skills Verification Programme that examines vocational skills and Qualification Validity Programme that endorses academic qualification and prior experiences. While the former was launched in 2019 with the piloting initiative in India, the latter is under development and will be launched next year. The KSA has identified 1,099 occupations for the skills verification programme under which skills assessment is carried out both in KSA as well as in the country of origin of migrant workers before issuing the work visa. The current labor sending source country partners include India, Pakistan, Philippines, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. The country plans to expand its partnerships to other source countries as well.

The Abu Dhabi Dialogue was established in 2008 as a forum for dialogue and cooperation among Asian countries of labour origin and destination. The ADD consists of 18 countries, 11 countries of origin: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam; and 7 countries of destination: six GCC countries of destination (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), and Malaysia. It has special significance for the South Asian countries--including Nepal--as GCC is the major destination for most of the migrant workers from the region.



Ministers and senior officials from 16 GCC and Asian states attended the high-level regional summit on labour and migration, the Sixth Ministerial Consultation of the ADD. Source: Emirates News Agency