



Perspective: Journey of Women Workers and Search for Change

A Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) with Internal Migrant Women Working in Informal and Entertainment Sectors in Kathmandu, Nepal



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This is a research publication by Women Forum for Women in Nepal (WOFOWON), in collaboration with the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)

This research report is part of a multi-country Feminist Participatory Research Project implemented by The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) in partnership with colleagues in South, Southeast and West Asia. GAATW gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Women's Fund Asia to carry out this project.

GAATW and the Research Partners stand by the process and findings from the researches. Views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of Women's Fund Asia.

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Pooja Chaudhary joined WOFOWON in the later stages of the FPAR, and has greatly contributed to the study: from literature review to data analysis and presentation, along with editing and structuring of the FPAR Report. Anisha and Pooja wrote and finalized this report.

GAATW initiated, helped conceptualize this research, provided continuous guidance and support in the process and supported in editing this report throughout its writing process.

Dedication

To all the internal migrant women workers whose strength and resilience is unmatched.

Acknowledgments

Most importantly, we thank all research participants for collaborating in this project, for sharing the knowledge that made this FPAR possible, for their openness to sharing such an important part of their lives, and for the essential work that they do.

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About Women Forum for Women in Nepal (WOFOWON)

Women Forum for Women (WOFOWON) as an organization and organized movement was initiated by women working in entertainment sectors (dance restaurants, duet restaurants, massage parlor, open restaurants and cabin restaurants) by recognizing gender discrimination against the workers prevalent in work places of the entertainment sector, which for a long time was not recognized as a sector of employment. It is the first organization in Nepal which was established by women working in entertainment sectors in Nepal. Women working in this sector felt strong need to be united, raise voice and to fight against these injustices. The organization was established as non-governmental, non-profit organization in 25th March, 2008, and has been continually working to secure human rights and labour rights of the women workers.

WOFOWON has been fostering unity and sisterhood amongst women workers to combat these challenges. WOFOWON is an organized movement in itself which is moving ahead by building and strengthening organized movement of women labors. It is based on membership of women workers, with current membership (as of June 2019) of 637 women who are working and/or have worked in the entertainment sector in the past. The members consider the organization as their extended family and as power center of women working in entertainment sectors in Nepal.

WOFOWON continues reaching out to women workers through continued outreach, runs a drop-in-centre where women workers can meet, learn new skills, organize and access information and assistance. WOFOWON facilitates for awareness and capacity development among women workers for realization of migrant women workers' rights, collective identification of issues and demands, along with advocacy and alliance building. WOFOWON also bridges women workers' affiliations with trade union and increases women workers' access to services related to psychosocial support, legal support, health and health rights, education and emergency safe shelters for women workers and babies of women workers. WOFOWON mobilizes cultural campaigns to change negative social perceptions towards the entertainment sector and women working in this sector.

About GAATW's Feminist Participatory Action Research Project on Safe and Fair Migration in Asia

In 2018-2019, the International Secretariat of the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW-IS), in collaboration with eleven organisations across nine countries in Asia carried out a Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) titled 'Safe and Fair Migration: A feminist perspective on women's rights to mobility and work'.

In our study, FPAR is used as a framework and approach to capturing migrant women's complex realities and perspectives on labour and migration. What distinguishes FPAR from conventional research is that it is deliberately women-centred and participant-driven; the knowledge comes from the women (community) and is owned by them, and based on their lived experiences. Research participants propose solutions so the research results become a tool to collectively organise advocacy actions. Therefore, this is an outcome of deconstructing the dominant understanding of safe and fair migration and reshaping the concepts from a feminist perspective. We believe our approach of building knowledge from the ground up and creating evidence base will add value in addressing the structural causes of power disparities that affect women's migration and mobility.

Our research community ranges across South, Southeast, and West Asia offering views from both countries of origin and destination, as well as adding the perspective of internal migration from rural to urban areas. Three distinguished sectors of work are covered in this study, including domestic work, garment work, and entertainment work.

The lead researcher groups who facilitated discussions with women migrants are: Anti-Racism Movement (Lebanon), Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (Cambodia), International Domestic Workers Federation (Lebanon), Karmojibi Nari (Bangladesh), Legal Resources Center for Gender Justice and Human Rights (Indonesia), MAP Foundation (Thailand), Sandigan (Kuwait), Self-Employed Women's Association (India), Society for Labour and Development (India), Women Forum for Women in Nepal (Nepal), and an independent researcher based in Jordan.

"Two people will shout as much as they can. But ten people are louder than two."

Borrowing from one of our FPAR research participants' words, we hope each piece of our collective study will help amplify women migrant workers' voice to bring about structural change for a safe and fair migration that works for women.

A consolidated regional report and the country research briefs are available on the GAATW (www.gaatw.org) website.

FOREWORD TO THE 'SAFE AND FAIR' RESEARCH SERIES

In the past several decades neoliberal globalisation, inequality between and within countries, conflict and environmental degradation have prompted unprecedented levels of migration. We are seeing a major trend towards increasing internal migration and urbanisation – by 2050, the global population living in urban areas is expected to reach 66 per cent. Meanwhile there are around 250 million international migrants, of whom half are women. In destination countries, demographic, labour market and economic changes (the privatisation of public services, aging societies, women's growing participation in the workforce) have created a demand for care and service work, with an expectation that this demand will be filled by female workers in the domestic, care, manufacturing and entertainment sectors. In origin countries, economic restructuring and industrialisation have led to loss of traditional livelihoods, agricultural decline, wage stagnation and a growth in precarious work, resulting in gross inequalities, and creating push factors for women to seek alternative income generating activities, including through migrating for work.

While these structural changes play a huge role in shaping “push and pull factors” for migration, it needs to be acknowledged that women are not merely passive subjects in their migration, but that for many, migration is a way of asserting agency and finding freedom from patriarchal societal norms. Many women choose to migrate in order to see the world and gain new experiences, find economic opportunities, to be able to support families and to exercise autonomy and social independence. Despite the many risks and the challenges in accessing information about migration processes and opportunities, women continue to migrate all over the world, including from marginalised communities and rural villages. However, there is a lack of recognition of migration as a right, and of women workers as independent economic actors. States' labour migration policies are broadly missing a human rights and gender-transformative approach to migration and work.

Activists on the left have long critiqued the exploitative nature of some cross-border labour migration schemes that employ workers on poverty wages in substandard conditions, while outsourcing the costs of social reproduction to countries of origin. In the past 20 years, feminists, including GAATW, have tried to bring attention to the particular discrimination and risks created for women migrants by laws and policies governing, and failing to govern, labour migration. Although such initiatives have tried to stress women's perspectives, the conversation about migration has sometimes backfired and produced unintended consequences. Governments of origin and destination countries have in some instances responded not by making migration protective of human rights, but by curbing it through restrictions on women's mobility on the basis of age, marital status, pregnancy and maternal status, and category of work, especially for low-wage workers, and increasing border controls.

Much of this is done with the supposed aim of ‘protecting’ women from trafficking and exploitation; however, what these protectionist restrictions have done is open up a market for clandestine and debt-financed migration, creating or exacerbating the very vulnerability, violence, and exploitation they were intended to prevent. While non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have tried to bring issues of human rights to the table, they have, perhaps unintentionally, contributed to the repressive government agendas. Some anti-trafficking NGOs perpetuate narratives and images of migrant women as victims, and infantilising women by portraying them as inherently vulnerable and in need of protection. As a feminist alliance, GAATW sees its role as supporting the empowerment of migrant women to move and work safely and with dignity. This feminist participatory action research project

is our collective effort to deconstruct and reshape a narrative of labour migration that is safe and fair for women workers, especially those in the most marginalised segments of society. We hope that this study serves as evidence to fight for the rights of migrant workers and amplify women's voices in the local, regional, and international migration agenda.

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INTRODUCTION

In Nepal, there are approximately 3.79 million internal migrants (UNESCO 2017) and most people migrate to major cities for different reasons. Most entertainment business workers are internal migrants too, usually from marginalized ethnic groups in rural areas. Women join the entertainment business with expectation of economic independence and better life, however, they are subjected to several forms of labour exploitation, as well as the social stigma associated with working women.

Despite these barriers, women in the entertainment sector have been challenging patriarchy and the traditional gender roles placed on women, for example, to be bound within domestic work. In the legal context of unregulated entertainment businesses in Nepal, there are several instances of human rights and labour rights violations, calling for the need to frame adequate national policies in line with international legal documents to address the human rights and labour rights of women in entertainment businesses.

This study explores the nexus between internal migration and employment of women in entertainment businesses in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, where women have long been struggling and fighting against societal discrimination and negative attitudes towards their work and identity. Their decision to migrate is conditioned by their experience of a range of gender-based discrimination and domestic violence. There are also other precipitating factors for displacement like armed conflict and natural disasters; alongside unequal economic development in the country which draws people to the city to pursue their aspirations for a better life, economic independence, or education.

Women working in segments of the entertainment sector such as in cabin restaurants, massage parlors and open restaurants face different types of labor exploitations. They have long working hours stretching from early morning to late evening. They work for very low wage and face physical and mental abuse and sexual harassment. Informality and uncertainty of work have made it more challenging to file complaints against violence at the workplace, which has led to development of a culture of silence among employees and a culture of impunity among customers and employers.

Women working in these sectors also face rights violation from the police, such as arbitrary arrests at the workplace or while walking in the streets. Policemen use derogatory words against the workers and frequently charge them with creating 'social disorder', forcing them to pay bail amounts in order to be free. Unable to pay the bail, they become dependent on employers and bonded to the employer to repay the amount. This dependence reduces their bargaining power and they are forced to work for minimum wage. Even when they are released the night after their arrests, they face additional problems due to the detention.

Entertainment sector work is not recognized and respected by families, society and the government and their contributions are rarely acknowledged. Instead, institutions have negatively conceptualized women workers on account of flouting gender and sexual norms. This undermines women's fundamental right to equality and right to employment. Government and non-government stakeholders perceive women in the sector as vulnerable. However, these women challenge patriarchal gender norms value systems, such as that women should be dependent on men, not embrace leadership positions and comply with the restrictions imposed on them. Against these

challenges, women workers are taking initiatives for organized movement building to claim their rights and dignity.¹

Most previous studies related to the issues of women informal and entertainment workers have focused on vulnerabilities, human trafficking and sexual exploitation in dance restaurants, duet restaurants, massage parlours and cabin restaurants. The structural reasons behind the problems women face were broadly missing, and employment and empowerment aspects of working in this sector were also rarely highlighted.

Against this background, it is worth looking into how informality and non-recognition of work in the entertainment sector as labour affects marginalized groups, especially women. More importantly, this study seeks to bring into view and learn from women workers' own analysis of safety and justice in the entertainment sector.

CONTEXT

Socio-economic and Political Context

Poverty, social and gender inequalities, geographical inequalities, lack of employment and economic opportunities, lack of adequate education and health facilities have hampered the overall development of Nepal. The 104-year-long tyrannical Rana Regime from 1846 to 1951 played detrimental role in restricting the development of the people of Nepal. Natural and human resources were exploited by the elites ruling the nation. Nepal has recently emerged as Federal Republican Democratic Nation after the overthrow of monarchy in 2006. Between 2006, the country saw a decade-long civil war. Even after the establishment of democracy in 2008 and restoration of multi-party democracy in 1991, centralized development was practiced for very long time. Rural areas lack physical infrastructures and this has led to inequality between urban and rural areas. The current federal state system, in theory, de-centralized the power and governance, with provision of provinces and local level government. It may be too soon to analyse whether the system has worked in favour of the most marginalized groups. Nevertheless, it is crucial to draw the attention to major political parties that are in ruling as well as in opposition towards the problems that women workers in Nepalese society continue to face in the entertainment sector.

Nepal is now a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural country. It is a diverse country with over 100 different caste and ethnic groups who speak over 92 different languages.² However, the country also upholds long history of discriminations towards these diversities. With domination of Khas-Nepali speaking monarchs and rulers, ethnic groups were marginalized. Untouchability was introduced within the caste system, inter-caste marriage was considered a wrong practice and people engaging in such marriages were socially excluded.

The country is highly patriarchal with deeply entrenched hierarchies. Various studies have established that gender inequality is a major social barrier to human development. Women have been oppressed in Nepali society for a long time. In 2011, women were far behind in decision making, subjected to different forms of violence within the family, and discrimination of women in access to education, property and the labor market.³

¹ Life of women working in entertainment sectors: right to decent work and living wage, WOFOWON, 2015

² Teknath Subedi (2068), Introduction of sociology and anthropology in Nepal

³ CBS (2011), National Population and Housing Consensus

In 2016, “Nepal has shown progress in socio-demographic indicators in the past decades but the economic growth has been very slow. Slow Gross Development Product (GDP) growth coupled with persistent inequalities, high youth unemployment rate and gender gaps for most socio-economic indicators have been a challenge for the government”.⁴ In 2016/17 “24.8% of the households in the Annual Household Survey were headed by female members. The female household heads were found higher in urban (28.6%) than in rural (21.8%)”. The sex disintegrated data of household heads shows that female headed household on average was only about 25%⁵ which also is attributed not to uplifting of women’s position in the household, but to foreign migration of male family members.

A study by United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) from 2017 states that “overall, poverty has declined in Nepal, but it has worsened in the high mountain region and in urban centres. School enrolment for girls has improved substantially but the dropout rate is high, they are victims of early marriage and a structurally patriarchal system. Discrimination toward women and girls is rampant, son preference is high and employment opportunities for females are low. They are often victims of physical and sexual violence. The changes in population health over the past three decades are striking and yet aggregate improvements mask inequalities between sexes, among geographic regions, sociocultural groups and wealth quintiles.”⁶

The unemployment rate in Nepal is 46% and about 60.5% among the productive age group of 15-59 years old. Currently, the dependency ratio of Nepal is 65, indicating there are about 65 persons who depend upon the population of the productive age group⁷. This implies that young people have higher family, social and economic responsibility, which includes women working in entertainment sectors.

Context of Internal Migration in Nepal

Nepal is a small landlocked country with total area of 147,181 sq. km., bordered by India in the south, east and west and China in the north. Despite the small territory, Nepal has diverse geographical variations and is divided into three ecological belts: Himalayan Region which covers 19%, Hilly Region covering 64% and *Terai* (or the plain lowlands) covering 17% of the total area. Based on census data of 2011, the geographical distribution of the population (out of 26 million) followed 6.7% in the Himalayan Region, 43.1% in the Hilly Region and 50.2% in the *Terai* Region.⁸

Many studies show that most towns in Nepal were established by internal migrants. Internal migration mainly occurs from the hilly mountainous region to the lowlands.⁹ Census data shows that the scale of internal migration has increased rapidly after 1991, following the restoration of democracy in 1990. Evidence shows that the significant increase in internal migration may be associated with the expansion of employment opportunities in informal sectors. The highest amount of out-migration occurs from the Western hill region followed by the Eastern hill. The Central hill is the most frequent

⁴ CBS (2017), Annual Household Survey 2016/17, Summary report

⁵ CBS (2017), Annual Household Survey 2016/17, Summary report

⁶ UNFPA Nepal (2017), Population situation analysis of Nepal

⁷ CBS (2017), Annual Household Survey 2016/17, Summary report

⁸ CBS, 2011

⁹ S Thieme, S Wyss, 2005, ‘Migration Patterns and Remittance Transfer in Nepal: A case study of Sainik Basti in Western Nepal’, *International Migration* 43(5) 59-98. retrieved from <http://sci-hub.tw/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2005.00342.x>

destination for internal migration and the Kathmandu Valley constitutes 20 per cent of inter-district migration.

Studies also show that due to low agricultural productivity, difficult topography, extreme climate, lack of employment opportunities, and limited infrastructural development, people residing in the mountain and hill districts used and continued to use internal migration as a survival strategy. "It has always been stressful trying to survive as a landless, land poor, small farmer and/or agricultural labourer in Nepal. In the 1960s and 1970s many of those migrating from the hills to the plains (as it 'opened up' after the elimination of malaria) were hoping to escape debt and the ever-present disaster of land loss through landslides and erosion, not to mention the inexorable diminution of farm and plot sizes through inheritance."¹⁰ Hence Nepal's internal migration owes greatly to the regional imbalances in the distribution of resources, opportunities, services and poverty, unemployment, difficult livelihoods and food scarcity of households.¹¹

A breakdown of the 2011 census indicates that 54.3 per cent of internal migrants are female, which had been increasing since last decade. Existing data on female internal migration focuses on migration in geopolitical sense and the study on the growing number of female economic migrants from rural area to urban cities is quite limited. Marriage migration also owes to a great deal to the migration of women. Women must migrate to their husband's family after marriage, which implies that nearly all married women are internal migrants.

Brief Context of International Labor Migration from Nepal

Nepal was not open to international migration till early nineteenth century. Nonetheless, international labour migration has long been part of Nepal's history. Nepalese men migrated to Lahore to join the army in the early nineteenth century, joined the British army in the 1800s, and were attracted to various regions for work in tea plantations, construction work, and coal mining. Although the government ignored labour migration for decades, beginning in the ninth five-year plan for 1997-2002, the government started viewing labour migration as a development strategy. Due to lack of employment opportunities, lack of respect of work, lack of proper employment remuneration, a huge population of Nepal is compelled to choose foreign employment.

Background of Female Internal Migrants in the Entertainment Sector

After the 1990s, when Nepal saw political change and restoration of multi-party democracy, society became open in many aspects and this is when different entertainment businesses started to open.¹² Since 1991, restaurants offering a mixture of food, alcoholic beverages, singing and dancing have emerged as major entertainment outlets in the big cities of Nepal.¹³ However, it was after the country's decade-long civil war which ended in 2006 when the entertainment industry started to mushroom around big cities such as Kathmandu, Biratnagar and Pokhara.

¹⁰ Addressing Nepal's land and agrarian crisis: An introduction, New Angle, Nepal Journal of Social Science and Public Policy, Vol. 4, No.1, 2016

¹¹ Internal Migration in Nepal. *Population Monograph of Nepal Vol. II*, Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003.

¹² Niroula, G. (2017). Women vulnerability in informal entertainment sectors in Kathmandu: A human rights perspectives. *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(1), 23-46.

¹³ A study of girls and women employed in the restaurants of selected cities of Nepal, ILO, 2006

A study by Action Aid Nepal in 2004 suggests that women working in cabin restaurants in Kathmandu were mostly internal migrants from hilly districts like Sindhupalchowk, Dolakha, Kavrealanchowk, Makwanpur, Nuwakot, Dhading, Udaypur and Terai districts like Morang, Sarlahi, Chitwan, Jhapa, among others.¹⁴ The instability after the conflict compelled especially widows and single mothers to get involved in the sector as they were unable to find alternate means to support their families.¹⁵ Moreover, with domestic violence and unemployment, many women migrating from rural areas for economic reasons or displaced by the conflict ended up working in dance bars and cabin restaurants where they do not need specific certifications of professional skills or higher education. This is in line with what Sanghera pointed out that factors such as conflict and poverty make marginalized people more vulnerable and create the conditions that 'free up' these groups to become potential migrants.¹⁶

WOREC Nepal also states that women have been working in this sector after the earthquake in 1990, in search of food and accommodation. According to a study done by Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare in 2008, there were nearly 1,200 massage parlors, dance bars and cabin restaurants in the Kathmandu valley – which are all categorized under the entertainment sector – employing nearly 50,000 workers of whom 80 percent are women.¹⁷ Another study by Maiti Nepal in 2010 suggested that 80.3% women workers had migrated to Kathmandu, due to poverty and in pursuit of higher education. The instability after the conflict compelled especially women who had lost their husbands and single mothers who were unable to find alternate means to support the family.¹⁸

A previous FPAR conducted by WOFOWON on 'Situation of women workers in the entertainment sectors: Right to decent work and living wage' in 2013-2014 with more than 200 women working in entertainment places showed that 96% were internal migrants from marginalized communities. The same study also shows that women workers have been organizing and raising collective voice for justice for a decade now.

Women had skills of cooking, serving, cleaning, based on experience of household work or previous work experiences as domestic workers. Women employed in more technical segments of entertainment sectors such as massage parlors learn the skill through training programs. Women with limited academic and professional certification (because of denial of access to education and opportunities on the grounds of gender based discrimination which frequently originates from the immediate family) have sought employment in the sector too.

While recognizing that gender discrimination is also prevalent in other work places of informal and entertainment sector, Women Forum for Women (WOFOWON), as an organization and organized movement, was initiated by women in the informal and entertainment sector in 2008, from the above mentioned workplaces.

¹⁴ Acton Aid, Plight of Cabin Keepers, 2004

¹⁵ <https://globalpressjournal.com/asia/nepal/women-confront-exploitation-in-nepal-s-entertainment-sector/>

¹⁶ Sanghera, J (2005) Unpacking the trafficking discourse. Trafficking and prostitution reconsidered: New perspectives on migration, sex work, and human rights

¹⁷ Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (2008), Study report related to cabin, dance restaurant and massage parlor, 2008

¹⁸ <https://globalpressjournal.com/asia/nepal/women-confront-exploitation-in-nepal-s-entertainment-sector/>

A Challenge to Patriarchy

In Nepal, the main sector for employment for both men and women is agriculture. Around 25% of the total active population are engaged in industry and service sector (ILO, 2010). CBS population monograph, 2014 states, around 25.4% of total economically active women are engaged in non-agricultural work of which 3.6% are engaged in manufacturing and recycling, 0.8% are engaged in construction, 0.3% are engaged in transport, storage and communication and 17.9% in the trade and service sector.

However, women in the formal sector represent less than 3.5% of employment overall (FWLD, 2006, 2014 and NFLS, 2008). This suggests that a major portion of women are in the informal sector of the economy. Informal economy is characterized by irregular employment, uncertain wage rates, low income, long and uncertain working hours, no written contract and non-existent or poor legal protection; this exposes women to several forms of labor exploitation.

Working women are facing gendered social norms and structural barriers. Gendered norms are generally backed by familial and social barriers attached to women's employment. Women refrain from working due to family and community pressure, humiliation and slanders attached to working women. Studies suggest that women are discouraged to work because working women are often accused of promiscuity and adultery by relatives and other members of their community (FWLD, 2014). Similarly, women are denied work due to several traditional beliefs and reason relating to family prestige, for example, traditional belief that women's place is at home and issues of family social hierarchy (FWLD, 2006 and FWLD, 2014). In the entertainment sector, these societal perceptions are manifested in most severe forms.

Women working in the entertainment sector, for having entered into a profession which is considered inappropriate in terms of patriarchal notions, have actually defied patriarchal gender roles, but are facing discrimination in their working lives. WOFOWON's 2015 FPAR showed that women working in this sector had to pay high social cost of migration due to lack of recognition of their work and negative attitudes towards them. Women working in the sector are highly affected due to the stigma and thus negative behaviour in day-to-day life.

Two decades ago, the negative stigma in the government towards the sector and women involved in the sector was even more rigid. In 2002 Women Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) (broadly working on rights of and social justice to women) started reaching out to the community of women working in these sectors. Back then, WOREC had to involve other informal sectors such as street vendors, in order to get approval from the government to work for the rights of women in the entertainment sector. The broad categorization as 'informal and entertainment sector' was a strategy of coping with negative perception in the government.¹⁹

Policy and Regulatory Context

A new constitution was adopted in Nepal in 2015. The document contains several provisions aimed to prevent discrimination against women. The new constitution also includes a provision regarding

¹⁹ WOFOWON (2017), Strategic review and planning meeting report, testimony of Dr. Renu Adhikari (Founder of WOREC Nepal)

‘gender and sexual minorities’, making Nepal the first country in South Asia to address the topic. However, the constitution still fails to grant women equal rights in regard to citizenship.²⁰

Lack of Adequate Policies on Internal Migration

The Constitution has entitled all Nepali citizens to right to mobility and right to practice any profession within the country as fundamental rights. Article 17, sub-clause (2)(e) states that, every citizen shall have the freedom to move and reside in any part of Nepal, and sub-clause (f) states that every citizen shall have the freedom to practice any profession in any part of Nepal, along with operation of industry, trade or business. The Constitution has also stated that the federal states should consider all Nepali citizens equal, irrespective of their geographical origin (article 233). Constitutionally, it is the responsibility and obligation of the state to guarantee the overall human security system (article 51, sub-clause 4) (which includes security before, during and after migration). Women working in the entertainment sector are denied the right to labor: to practice appropriate labor, right to appropriate remuneration and contributory social security.

Nepal lacks adequate policies on internal migration. Policies as well as programs tend to focus on cross-border migration. Act to regulate immigration by the name of The Immigration Act 1992, act against human trafficking and transportation by the name of Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007 are present; however, there is no specific policy regarding internal migration or internal labour migration.

A working government body by the name of “foreign employment promotion board” is functional in Nepal; however, there is absence of a regulatory mechanism to promote work within the country. With transitioning governments in the past decade, programs for youth entrepreneurship development were positively initiated, but these programs could not be sustained and could not ensure enough access of women and girls. Safe migration initiatives are largely focused around the nexus of human trafficking. The Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007 is moreover limited to punishment for the trafficker, but it does not focus on internal migrants and the problems they may encounter.

The 2008 Verdict & Guideline against Sexual Exploitation at Workplaces in the Sector

In 2008, in response to a writ filled against the government for not addressing problems faced by women working in the sector, the Supreme Court promulgated a verdict and guideline against “Sexual harassment against women working in workplaces like dance restaurants and dance bars”. It was the first time that the state had legally addressed this sector, and mentioned women in this sector as ‘laborers’. This document prohibited sexual violence against women and girls working in entertainment sectors, presented regulatory guideline for these businesses, formed a monitoring and action committee to take action against such behaviours and demanded the government to formulate a new law to address the problems and challenges faced by the women workers. However, even after ten years, the directive is limited to statements against sexual harassment and procedural guidelines have not been framed to implement these provisions. A separate law to improve working conditions in the sector has not been formulated.

²⁰ B R Upreti, 2016, ‘Women in Nepal’s Transition’, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

In 2016, the then Women and Children Office, Kathmandu had initiated formulation of procedural guideline for business registration in this sector. However, at the time of endorsement, it came out as procedural guideline against sexual harassment and exploitation at workplaces in entertainment sector. The document was supposed to be endorsed by the Cabinet of Ministers, but the status of endorsement and implementation of this document is under shadow.

Fund for Reintegration of Human Trafficking Survivors in the Entertainment Sector

An emergency fund for reintegration of human trafficking survivors in the entertainment sector had been established by the then National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking (NCCHT), which came under the then Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. The fund was not directly accessible for women workers, and in telephone conversation with a representative from the current Women, Children and Senior Citizens Ministry, it was found that these funds now come within the authority and management of the local level government bodies.

Entertainment Businesses' Registration vs. Informality of Work in the Sector

If we look at the status of business registration of the establishments where entertainment industry operates, most of these businesses are registered as ordinary restaurants, as there is no legal basis for these establishments to be registered specifically as cabin restaurants, dance bars, etc. They are often registered at the Office of Cottage and Small Industries under the Industrial Business Act; Local Governance Act; and Tourism Act.²¹ Some businesses are found to be operating without any form of registration. In either cases, whether an entertainment business is formally registered or not, the workplaces have precise physical boundaries. On these grounds, this sector can be identified as a formal sector of employment. But the nature of employment is mostly informal; such that there is no protection of the rights of employees or security at workplaces and the jobs are insecure. Furthermore, the existing laws that legally pertain to the entertainment sector are not implemented.

Sexual Violence at Workplace (Prevention) Act, 2015

The Sexual Violence at Workplace (Prevention) Act adopted in 2015 mentions entertainment sectors in its preamble. However, the act limits the definition only to the organized sector and appears to exclude entities operating in the informal sector²² and the entertainment sector receives only a mention. The act has not been implemented in this sector.

The Labor Acts

The former Labor Act of Nepal, adopted in 1990, had defined only workplaces with more than 10 workers as labor establishments. The Labor Act has been recently amended, and the new Labor Act 2017 has made provision to recognize business establishments with even a single employee as an employment establishment. However, the act has not been implemented in the sector.

²¹ Maiti Nepal (2010), Youth-led study on the vulnerability of young girls working in restaurants, bars and massage parlours in Kathmandu

²² Pioneer law associates (2016), Legal news: 'Nepal introduces legislation to address sexual harassment at workplace'

Article 11 of the Labor Act 2017 restricts employers to employ employees without formal employment agreement, except for emergency employment. However, formal employment agreement or even a work identity card is not given to employees in most entertainment establishments. This limits the rights, protection and facilities to women working in this sector.

The working hours in the sector differ compared to general office hours (10 am to 5pm); and the Act has not addressed special requirements for labor monitoring in this sector.

Social Security Act (2017)

Social Security Act was endorsed by Nepal in 2017. The Prime Minister inaugurated the act and program by attracting huge attention from the media and the public. The act provides for social security to citizens based on their contributions. However, as the contribution of women workers is made invisible, the risk of leaving this group outside the provisions of social security is high.

Policies Enacted against Women Worker's Right to Mobility and Employment

The Some Public Crime and Punishment Act 1970 is often implemented to restrict mobility and right to work for women working in these sectors and has long been used to justify their arbitrary arrest.

Lack of Participation of Women Workers in Policy Making

The participation of women working in these sectors, while guidelines regarding these businesses' operation are formulated, is mostly ignored; thus hugely limiting women workers' right to participation as well as negotiation. The implication of policy changes on women workers and over labour force is not consulted with representatives of the labourers.

International Legal Documents

International human rights documents acknowledge human rights and labour rights of every human being. Nepal being party to these international human rights documents is obliged to frame necessary legal framework on human rights and labour rights.

Universal Declaration on Human Rights 1948

The declaration is foundation international legal framework for right to employment, equal wages, and trade unions. Article 1 provides for freedom and equality rights, Article 3 for right to life, Article 13 for movement and migration and Article 22 for social security.

CEDAW

It acknowledges several human and labour rights, particularly for women, for example, right to equality, freedom, employment, equal wages, leave, reproductive rights, and right to be free of human trafficking and exploitation.

ICESCR

It acknowledges employment right and employment related rights, labour recognition, labour wages, mobility, social security and other labour rights.

Nepal is party to these international human rights documents, under Treaty Act, 1990, Nepal needs to frame adequate legal framework to recognize workers' human and labour rights provided under these international documents.

Existing Social Justice Movements in Nepal in Relation to Women Working in the Sector

The women's rights and labor rights movements are making progress and evolving in Nepal. However, an amalgamation of women entertainment workers' issues in the movements is still missing in the context. Women rights movement in Nepal started against social and harmful traditions and has moved forward with the political movement. The major fight against these injustices is still ongoing. Political parties mention agendas of gender equality at a theoretical level in their election manifestos; however, patriarchal notions dominate the matter of implementation.²³ The National women's commission was formed in 2002 but its activities on the issues of women's migrant labor have been very limited.

Moreover, it has only been recently acknowledged that low caste women suffer from other forms of discrimination, in addition to patriarchy.²⁴ The reasons like caste, language, religion, culture and capacity are obstructing development of women and equality. Women are facing special problems in society. The problems of migrant women and domestic violence survivors are more complex and women are also affected by climate and diseases, which has made it more difficult to forward the women's movement.²⁵

It has not even been a decade since the trade union movement started including women workers from informal and entertainment sectors and raising their issues. Women entertainment workers are organized in trade unions, or with organizations like WOFOWON. However, human and labour rights movement of women workers in this sector is still standing apart of the mainstream movement. "In 2013, two area committees of Trade Union of entertainment workers was formed by women working in the sector under the Nepal Independent Hotel, Casino, Restaurant Workers Union (NIHWU), most of the workers were WOFOWON members".²⁶ By the June of 2019, 118 workers are affiliated with the NIHWU. Long working hours in massage parlors and cabin restaurants restrict women workers' ability to join movements. Women in this sector have succeeded to ensure representation within the union, however the labor issues in big hotels and establishments get most of the attention and the issues related to women working in the small entertainment establishments are often overshadowed. Trade union movements have been able to secure and increase national minimum wages and the fight for increasing the minimum wage to living wage is ongoing. But women entertainment workers are not even paid the minimum wage.

Neither transitional justice movement or Dalit and ethnic minority movements - which are considered significant social justice movements in Nepal that brought women's issues to the fore – have paid attention, nor are they vocal about the working women in the entertainment sectors. It can be said that indifference towards women working in this sector, which is labeled as 'bad work' in patriarchal definitions, is one of the biggest challenges in the wider scenario of diverse social justice movements.

²³ Nepal ma Mahila Andolan, 2066, Shiva Maya Tumbahamfee`

²⁴ M S Tamang, Accord Issue 26, 'Social movements and inclusive peace in Nepal'

²⁵ Nepal ma Mahila Andolan, 2066, Shiva Maya Tumbahamfee`

²⁶ WOFOWON FPAR Report 2015, Situation of women working in entertainment sectors: Right to decent work and living wage

Some people engaged in social justice movement explicitly exclude the socio-economic, political issues of women workers in this sector, and some complicity refrain to raise the women workers' issues and to include women workers in the movement.

Between 1990 and 1996 there was an emergence of women's NGOs in Nepal who partnered with the UN, INGOs and donors. There was also an increase in political parties leading to more sister women's organizations. As peace and nation building become the primary areas of focus, women's issues were overshadowed. However, women NGOs representing marginalized women gained voice, and there were changes made to several discriminatory laws such as giving equal citizenship rights for mothers among many others.²⁷ Some analysts claim that the turmoil caused by the civil war paved a path for women's inclusion into politics.

Recently there are more than 20 NGOs which started to work directly on the issues of women working in the entertainment sector. However, most of the work is grounded in a 'welfare-approach'. NGO work around these issues is mostly restricted, as per the perspective of individual donor and type of project. If and when a project targeted to certain goals such as ending human trafficking, etc. in the entertainment sector undermine the prospects of employment and labor issues of women in the sector, the project may establish the identity of this sector only as a sector of human trafficking, but not as a sector of employment with problems and risks of human trafficking. This kind of project approach can positively impact the lives of few women workers but can generate messages that lead to fragmented understanding regarding the sector and issues of women working in the sector.

Adding to the fragmentation, various media resort to extreme portrayals of women in the sector as either victims or agents of social deformities and focuses unwarranted attention on women's 'character'. Only few media have presented employment issues of women workers and presented women working in this sector as change makers.

As an organisation of women workers, WOFOWON values a rights-based approach over rescue-based approach, establishing that the sovereign right of making decision of one's life is vested upon each individual, in her own context.

Safe and Fair Migration

"In recent years, the term 'safe and fair migration' has emerged in international discussions and framings of migration and the concept has been addressed through the UN's development of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GCM). It has risen in popularity following a gradual international distancing from anti-trafficking discourse, which is critiqued for reinforcing anti-immigration agendas through its treatment of irregular border crossing as a crime, and irregular migrants as its victims.

While there are plenty of academic and non-academic resources on gendered labor migration and the ways in which it is precarious, unjust, and exploitative, literature on SFM is not as well developed. 'Safe and fair migration', as an individual concept, is rarely employed. Instead, the concepts of 'safe migration' and 'fair migration' are mostly used by international bodies, such as the United Nations (UN), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), large NGOs, and human rights groups. 'Safe migration' tends to define safety through migrants'

²⁷ South Asia Women's Fund, 2012, 'Rights, Shares and Claims: Realising women's rights in South Asia'

legal status, the absence of violence and trafficking in the migration process, and the provision of information and awareness-raising about the conditions they are migrating to, their rights, and the kinds of support networks that exist and are accessible to them. 'Fair migration' refers to more policy-based interventions that create fairer systems of migration, recruitment, and employment, focusing on a decent work and rights-based policy agenda, including inter-state agreements that ensure the protection and rights of labor migrants.

While both concepts point to important aspects of migration, some have noted that these agendas aim to maintain and work *within* the system that has created situations of exploitation, criminalized human movement and border-crossing, in addition to denying migrants access to their rights and protections. Here, there is a serious risk that these measures are increasingly being used to justify an unjust control over and management of the movement of migrants by equating 'safe and fair migration' with 'legal' migration, and as such primarily focusing on migrants' legal status rather than their right to move, work, and reside safely. Without scrutinizing legal systems and accounting for the structural basis of *unsafe* and *unfair* migration - including notions of citizenship that define people's 'legality' - SFM will remain limited in its scope and effectiveness."²⁸

The FPAR wanted to redirect the perceptions of safe and fair migration, safety and justice to be spoken by women workers own' life experiences.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

More than 90% of women working in entertainment sectors in Kathmandu are internal migrants. However, the consideration of linkages between internal migration in relation to women working in the entertainment sector has been largely missing. In broader national context, the work around internal migration is very limited in terms of structural factors, identification of associated issues faced by internal migrants, and state accountability.

It is generally perceived that women migrate from rural communities due to their inability to cope with hardships in the villages and that they choose to work in the entertainment sector in cities because it is 'easy work and easy money'. This perception is fueled by negative stigma towards women's work in the sector. Women's human rights to make life choices, to mobility, to work and rights at work have been compromised and violated. These perceptions also seriously disregard the structural discrepancies within the country, the right to decent work in all labor sectors and disregard the aspirations of women for better lives, and women's right to make these choices.

Exploitation of women workers in the entertainment sector is often seen as 'a part of employment' or a result of 'the immoral character' of the affected woman. As a result, workers are held responsible for their predicament and advised to change their occupation, rather than confronting the challenges in the sector and seeking to address problems. When it comes to justice for women working in this sector, even people in the human rights movement were found to be considering violence against

²⁸ Anti-Racism Movement (ARM), Migrant Domestic Workers' Community Organizing within the Lebanese Socio-Legal Context (2019)

women in the sector as 'normal'. Due to the negative perspectives, women are deprived even of a safe space to openly disclose their work.

As discussed previously, there are many gaps due to which the issues of women working in the entertainment sector are not included in various social justice movements. Despite various interventions, women working in the sector have not achieved substantial progress in their lives.

For women entertainment workers, 'safe and fair migration' are foreign terms. Nevertheless, WOFOWON feels that it is timely and instrumental to delve into this issue for the betterment of Nepali entertainment workers and will be a stepping stone for a change that respects and acknowledges their work as work. Moreover, the current Safe and Fair Migration (SMF) framework does not directly address safety and fairness in internal migration. This project aims to properly account for the dynamics underlying current state systems in order to understand what specific aspects of the internal migration systems in Nepal need to be addressed in the work towards SFM.

Having stated the context in the entertainment sector, it merits mention that workplaces within the sector are marked by visible class differences. As an organization of the most marginalized women WOFOWON has focused on the most precarious workplaces within the sector which has not been recognized as a sector of employment for long. These are identified as dance restaurants, duet restaurants, massage parlors, open and cabin restaurants. Today, women working in dance and duet restaurants are comparatively more organized; they are able to associate dignity with their work and raise voice against injustice. Women working in these workplaces have formed trade union committees, which they lead, and groups such as singers' group, waitresses' group and dancers' groups. In these groups, women discuss problems faced by the workers who are in these specific positions at their work places, and also organize for advocacy and awareness raising campaigns.

The stigma on women working in cabin restaurants, open restaurants and massage parlors is still very strong; and human right violations from the police persist, thus workers suffer from social exclusion, displacement from work and cannot even disclose their work to their families and social circles. The work of women in these segments is linked with women's body and sexuality rather than labor.

By employing Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) methodology and principles, WOFOWON, collectively with GAATW, primarily aims to create spaces and thereby bring women entertainment workers' perspectives forward and analyze their everyday life, their problems as well as their achievements in the context of the overarching structural constraints. It also examines various social perspectives, legal provisions and regulatory contexts of women's work in the entertainment sector. The main objectives of the study were:

1. To probe the circumstances that led women workers in the massage parlours, open and cabin restaurants to migrate to the city and to work in these occupations.
2. To examine the socio-economic conditions of women employed in these workplaces.
3. To analyse the ideas of safe and fair migration from the perspective of women workers in these workplaces and subsequently to bring women workers together to collectively identify structural issues and to promote collective action.
4. To increase deeper feminist understanding of the issues at organizational level and prepare advocacy actions.

The following questions were collaboratively formulated for the study:

1. How do women migrant workers define 'safe' or 'unsafe' migration, 'fair' or 'unfair' migration?
2. From women migrant workers' experience, what can be done to improve migration regimes to bring about 'fair' processes and outcomes in migration?
3. What are the gaps in current initiatives of government agencies, international agencies and NGOs that cannot address the realities of women workers during internal migration?
4. Are women workers supported by the families and society while migrating and working in the entertainment sector, or not?
5. How are women working in these sectors challenging patriarchy?

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK, PARTICIPANTS AND METHODOLOGY

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)

This study employed FPAR as the primary framework of inquiry. FPAR aims to bring out the hidden experiences of marginalized women and to create and foster local knowledge and movements for social justice. FPAR builds upon the immense knowledge base that resides in the daily life experiences of women and underlines the power that every woman has to analyse and translate her life experiences into voice leading to social change.

This research was not about expertise; rather it was about sharing/expressing, listening/feeling, reflecting and analysing. Another main difference between FPAR and other research methodologies is that FPAR does not see women and community as subjects to be studied, similarly, in this FPAR, women workers were active and integral part of the research processes. From academic perspective, this research can be considered as a qualitative, empirical and exploratory study.

The FPAR was participatory and process oriented. The theme of the FPAR was mutually agreed by the research partner organizations: GAATW and WOFOWON. Women workers have participated in selecting the study area, identifying main research questions, documentation, as well as in participatory data analysis. WOFOWON was very conscious in breaking the possible binary hierarchy between researchers and women workers.

Building FPAR in the Community

Pertaining to one of the objectives of the **FPAR, to foster organizational feminist understanding and learning**, the FPAR the concept, processes and principles were frequently discussed with WOFOWON board members (all nine board members were women who are currently working or have worked in the entertainment sector) and staff (including four individuals who have worked in the sector in the past) at WOFOWON through five meetings and focus group discussions throughout the study. These meetings involved discussions of the research topic and questions, and sharing of literature reviews and previous FPAR by WOFOWON.

The Feminist perspective in this study was built upon by discussion and shared organizational understanding within WOFOWON. The shared understanding can be summarized as, feminism is a perspective as well as practice that recognize different identities and the need to dismantle unequal hierarchies whether based on gender, caste, ethnicity, economic status, occupational choices, colour or any other categories. Feminism is inclusive and as feminists, we raise voice against oppression and violence against women. The concept and practice do not oppose the male gender but advocate equality among human beings irrespective of sexual and gender identities.

Initial consultations with women workers: On 29 April 2018, an interaction program was organized with 25 women working in dance restaurants, duet restaurants, open restaurants, cabin restaurants and massage parlors in order to collectively define the research questions and to draw final outline of research design, including selection of research areas. The research design was finalized based on the discussion during the meeting.

Finalization of data collection tools was also done collectively through 3 FGDs with active general members, board members, and staff members of WOFOWON.

Reaching out to women workers: WOFOWON reached out to more than 150 female workers at 35 different workplaces within the research areas to establish friendly relations between the researchers and the workers. During the outreach, WOFOWON representatives made sure that the visits would not hamper the workers' work, and introduced themselves; shared information about WOFOWON and the FPAR was then communicated after a few visits. Sharing with research participants that WOFOWON is an organization formed and led by women working in the same sectors and is working to ensure labor rights, ending all forms of violence against women workers created an environment of trust in women workers towards the researchers. Two out of three researchers from WOFOWON have had the experience of working in the entertainment sector in the past, therefore it became easier for women workers to open up about their experiences.

Communication with employers and negative attitudes of employers towards NGOs: Five employers were met at the workplaces during outreach and data collection. The employers were also informed about WOFOWON and the FPAR. It was found that most employers were reluctant towards women organization representatives visiting the workplaces to encourage women workers to withdraw from the sector. When they were informed that WOFOWON is not against employment in this sector, rather it envisions this sector to become a safe place for women to pursue employment, seeking identity and recognition of women's work in this sector, their behaviour changed positively. The employers were also reminded on the necessity of wellbeing of workers to sustain their businesses.

Research Sector

The FPAR was focused on female internal migrants working in the entertainment sector in Kathmandu. And, within the entertainment sector, the following three segments: cabin restaurants, open restaurants and massage parlours.

Development of collective consensus on research area selection. At the time of designing the research (from April to June 2018), incidents of police raids to cabin restaurants, open restaurants and massage parlors had become very frequent. A few NGOs also participated in these raids where female workers above the age of 21 were being arrested and put in police custody, whereas, the workers below the age of 21 were 'rescued' and their custody was temporarily assigned to the NGOs for taking

them to safe shelters for psychosocial counselling. The NGOs focused on promoting withdrawal of young workers from entertainment sector. However, these actions of ‘rescue’ and even ‘counselling’ were not consented and had not been in favor of the workers. And the workers who were arrested were humiliated in public and their privacy was violated by the police. The police and NGOs seemed to be overlooking the effect of these forced actions on women and girls who are working in these three segments of the entertainment sector. Hence, the three segments were selected as the research area by collective decision made during the first FPAR consultation with women workers organized by WOFOWON on 29 April 2018.

Research Participants/Co-researchers

64 women workers directly participated in the research as co-researchers: 22 women working in cabin restaurants, 22 women working in massage parlours, 15 women working in open restaurants and 7 women entrepreneurs (which includes some former workers in the entertainment sector who have started their own small businesses as ‘small restaurants’ being workers and employers).

Tools and Methods of Data Collection

The research used both qualitative and quantitative tools of data collection. Data collection was mainly done by 3 researchers and 4 outreach workers at WOFOWON.

Primary data: Main sources and tools of primary data collection were:

- (1) Personal interviews with 53 research participants, 2 of which are documented as case studies and 51 as survey questionnaire
- (2) One Focused group discussion (FGD), as ‘migration meeting’ with 7 co-researchers
- (3) Field visits and observation
- (4) Researcher’s diaries: maintained by 2 researchers from WOFOWON, and researcher’s reflection interview done by lead researcher with researchers and outreach workers at WOFOWON
- (5) Key informant interviews with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, including:
 - a. Government representatives from:
 - i. Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security
 - ii. Labor and Employment office, Kathmandu
 - iii. Metropolitan Police Circle, Kathmandu
 - b. Non-government Stakeholders
 - i. Labor Union: National Independent Hotel, Casino, Restaurants Workers’ Union (NIHWU)
 - ii. Business owners’ unions:
 1. Nepal Massage and Spa Owners’ Union
 2. Restaurant owners’ Union
 - iii. International Labor Organization (ILO) office for Nepal
 - iv. Migrant women rights activists

Secondary data: The sources of secondary data were:

- (1) WOFOWON: analysis of membership of women workers at WOFOWON and trade union area committees, fact finding reports
- (2) Business owners’ union: number of business establishments and women workers

- (3) Labor and Employment office Kathmandu: Data on cases of labor exploitation from the study area, reported at the office
- (4) Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and other sources of data on Internal migration
- (5) Study of online and paper news articles within the research period

Data Analysis and Presentation

The data of this FPAR were analysed in following two ways:

1. Participatory data analysis: A workshop was organized by WOFOWON with researchers, co-researchers and WOFOWON board and staff members. Main discussions during the workshop were about collective identification of districts of origin and reasons behind village to city migration
2. Desk analysis: Rest of the analysis was done by researchers at WOFOWON through desk analysis.
3. Initial consultation and feedback of findings: Initial findings were presented to co-researchers and WOFOWON team, where working conditions at the workplaces were discussed and possible factors obstructing organized movement of women workers in the study area were collectively identified.

Electronic and manual processing of documented data were done throughout and after completion of data collection processes. Analytical categories were formed on the grounds of main research questions. Different primary and secondary data are compared wherever applicable for triangulation of the data.

Limitations of the Study

Women, men as well as sexual and gender minorities are involved in various forms of entertainment sectors such as films, music industry, casinos, dancing and singing restaurants, etc. However, the study was limited to women who are working or have worked in cabin restaurants, open restaurants and massage parlors in Kathmandu district.

The report represents the findings and analysis based on the life experiences of 64 co-researchers and recognizes that there can be diversity of women's experiences, who have not directly participated in the research.

Direct participation of women workers as co-researchers was the priority during the research. However, owing to time constraints of research participants for consecutive meetings and time limitation of the study, the participation of women workers in all stages of literature review, data collection and analysis, and report compilation was not possible.

The researchers compiling this report do not have professional background of directly working in the entertainment sector. However, they have attempted to minimize the outsider's view as much as possible and attempted representing the workers' own voices truthfully.

The use of third person pronouns to refer to women workers, in this report is not due to 'othering' women workers, but these third person pronouns are used to reflect the limitation of subjectivity of the researchers, who compiled this report.

The transcripts of case studies were based on field notes, thus all the quoted sentences in case studies may not be exact to how they were told to the researchers. However, researchers have attempted to present the testimonies in most authentic way possible.

Ethical Considerations

Participation, non-discrimination, inclusion, confidentiality, solidarity, continuous free and prior-informed consent with all research participants were adopted at all stages of primary data collection. The research participants' right to privacy is maintained by confirming anonymity and confidentiality during presentation of the findings.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Age and Ethnicity

Table No. 1: Age and ethnicity of research participants

Age	Count	Ethnicity	Count
18-25	26	Ethnic/indigenous	33
26-30	9	Dalit	4
31-40	12	Brahmin	2
41-50	1	Chhetri	11
Below 18	4	Muslim	1
Total	52	Others	1
		Total	52

Source: Survey (2018)

Table No. 1 presents age and ethnicity of the participants. Majority of the participants belong to 18-25 age groups. Similarly, majority of research participants were born to ethnic and indigenous communities of the Hilly and Himalayan Region of Nepal such as Newar, Gurung, Tamang, Lama, Magar, Basyal, AleMagar, Chhyantyal, Sherpa, Rai, Sunuwar, ThapaMagar, indigionus community of the *Terai* region such as Kumal and Tharu. Few were born in dalit and chhetri communities, very few in Brahmin communities and 1 research participant was born to Muslim family.

Religion

Table 2: Religion of research participants

Religion	Number
Hindu	39
Buddhist	5
No religion	3

Christian	2
Other	1
Hindu and Buddhist	1
Total	51

Source: Survey (2018)

Majority of research participants were Hindu, followed by Buddhist and Christian. 1 research participant identified as polytheist: following Hinduism and Buddhism. Whereas, 3 research participants did not follow any religion.

Type of Family during Childhood

Table 3: Type of family of research participants during childhood

Type of family	Count
Nuclear family	26
Joint family	25
Total	51

Source: Survey (2018)

Even in nuclear family, 16 research participants had more than 4 family members. The highest number of family members in nuclear family within research participants was 10. The known reasons of big family size included giving birth to many daughters due to son-preference and due to the consideration in agricultural family that the more human resources, the more hands you have at field.

Some joint families had as low as only 4 family members. The visible reason for small family size with joint family was the death of one or both parents. Many research participants who had lost their mother were living with step-mother and step-siblings, and one of the research participants' father had passed away during her childhood, so she used to live with step-father and step-siblings.

6 research participants had lost both parents at early age, 2 had lost their mother, 3 had lost their father and 1 was raised a maternal house after losing both parents.

Gender lens on head of household vs. caretakers of home

Table 4: Head of families vs. caretakers in childhood families of research participants

Head of household v	Care taker			Total v
	Female	male	both	
Female head	17	1	1	19
Male head	11	9	3	23
Both head	2	0	2	4
Total >	30	10	6	46

Source: Survey (2018)

Most women were born into female headed households. But care work inside the household is mostly done by women. For 2 households where both male and female were head, men were not engaged in care work, but women were.

Number of income-earning family members during workers' childhood

Table No. 5: Family size vs. Number of income-earning member

Family Size	Number of income-earning member					
	1 person	2 person	3 person	4 person	5 person	8 person
Family of 4	1	1	1			
Family of 5	3	3			1	
family of 6	2	3	1	1		
family of 7	1		1		1	
family of 8	1	1	1			
family of 9	1	1				1
family of 10	1			1		
	10	9	4	2	2	1

Source: Survey (2018)

The above table shows that there were few income earning members compared to the family size, which increases the financial burden and can be accountable to decrease in living standard.

Family Occupation and Source of Income

Table 6: Family occupation and source of income during childhood

S.N.	Occupation /source of income	Number of families
1.	Only 1 source of income	
	a. Farming	16
	b. Foreign employment	7
	c. Driving	3
	d. Manual labor	3
	e. Small businesses	2
	f. Army	1
	g. Rental (for shop)	1
2.	Two sources of income	
	a. Farming and small business	1
	b. Farming and driving	1
	c. Farming and tailoring	1
	d. Farming and cattle raising	1
	e. Selling wood and religious priest	1
3.	More than two sources of income	
	a. Farming, labor, furniture making	1
	b. Cattle raising, foreign employment, trekking guide	1
	c. Farming, retired army (pension), police service	1

	d. Driving rikshaw, painting walls	1
	e. Job in manpower company, driving	1
	Total	43

Source: Survey (2018)

As seen in the above Table most of the research participants' family had only one source of earning. Most of the research participants' family's main source of earning was farming, followed by foreign employment, driving.

Research participants were engaged in household work during childhood such as farming, household work and farming.

Education

Table 7: Enrollment in school and access to education

Enrolled in schools		Academic levels	Number of research participants
Yes	40	Primary level	19
		Secondary level	10
		Till class 10	8
		Passed school leaving certification level (SLC)	1
		Higher secondary education	2
No	11	Literate	5
		Illiterate	6

40 research participants were enrolled in school, but only 16 got to study till secondary level, and only 2 studied until higher secondary level. 11 participants did not get to go to school, of whom 5 can read and write and 6 cannot.

The income from working in massage parlor has enabled 1 worker to currently pursue higher secondary education.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Prevalence of Migration

Internal migration is common all over Nepal. People have been migrating to cities primarily for economic reasons, followed by other reasons such as lack of infrastructures in the village, political and social problems.

Internal Migration of Women Workers (Research Participants)

The diversity in district and geographical region of origin amongst the 63 research participants is remarkable. They have migrated to Kathmandu from 31 districts (out of 77 total districts in Nepal)

from within 5 provinces (out of 7 total provinces). The map below visually indicates their districts of origins:²⁹

Figure 1: Geographical mapping of district of origin of research participants



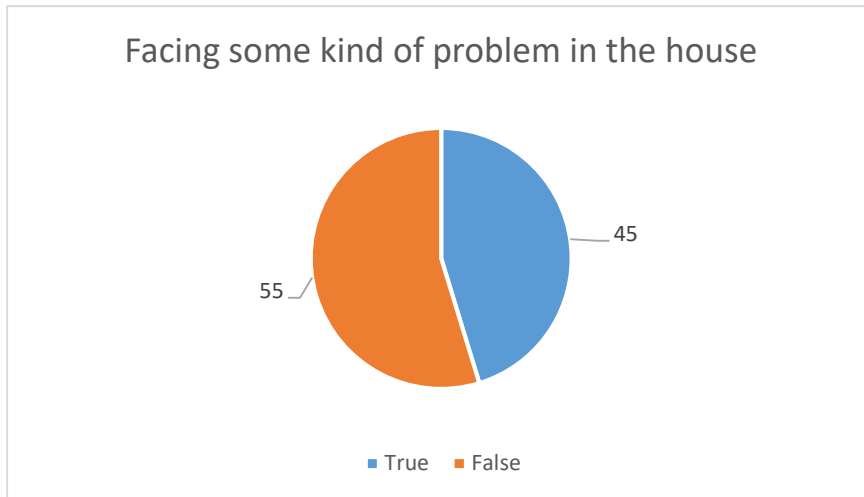
In the figure above we can see that migration to Kathmandu is common from districts in the Hilly and Himalayan Region. Based on our literature review, Hill to Terai (plain low lands) and to valley migration is a common trend of internal migration for Nepal.

Moreover, as the development opportunities have been highly centralized in Kathmandu, the in-migration to Kathmandu is remarkable, not only in the informal and entertainment sector, but also in other sectors of employment or for study or other purposes.

“...people migrate in search of opportunity, or to get rid of violence in the home, it is all forceful situation”. – Manju Gurung, KII

²⁹ Tabular representation of districts of origin is attached as Annex 1

Decision to Migrate



Pie Chart 1: Facing problems in the family

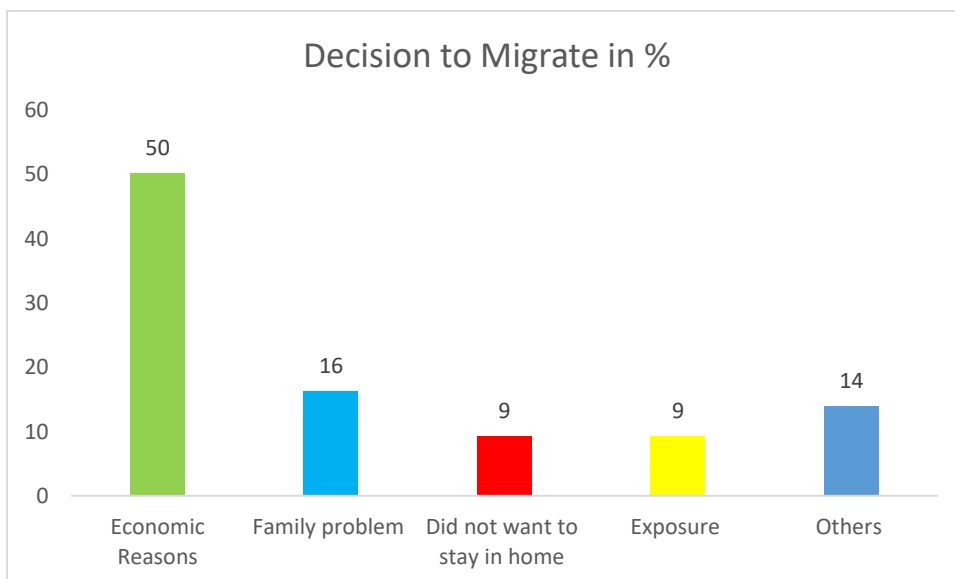
As Seen in pie chart 1, many of the participants had faced some kind of problem before they chose to migrate to the city. Most of the participants faced problem such as death of family members,

father’s second marriage, drunk behavior and other unhealthy living environment. This suggests that those who faced some kind of problem in their family had opted to migration. The reason behind migration decision is further explained below in Bar diagram No. 1.

There were multiple problems and there was lack of most basic infrastructure of development and basic utility needs such as drinking water, electricity, schools, transport facilities, health centres and the places were vulnerable to be affected by natural disasters and experienced damage. Women had to travel as long as three hours to reach the nearest school. Financial problem often led to fights within the home and with neighbours.

“...I got the work in Kathmandu, as a domestic worker, but the work was very difficult. I worked for 5 months. I was promised a salary of NPR300 (3 USD) per month. But I was not paid a single rupee for my work. I returned home. By that time, I had started to understand the struggles of life. I attempted to continue my formal education, but there was no environment for me to get any support. So I had to come to Kathmandu again”. – Massage and Spa worker

Bar diagram No. 1: Decision to migrate



“after experiencing violence in the family, I left the house along with my kid. Leaving the house, it felt like a new beginning of my life. I managed to find work to support our cost of living and for my children’s future. Later, I became the owner of a guest house”. Open restaurant worker

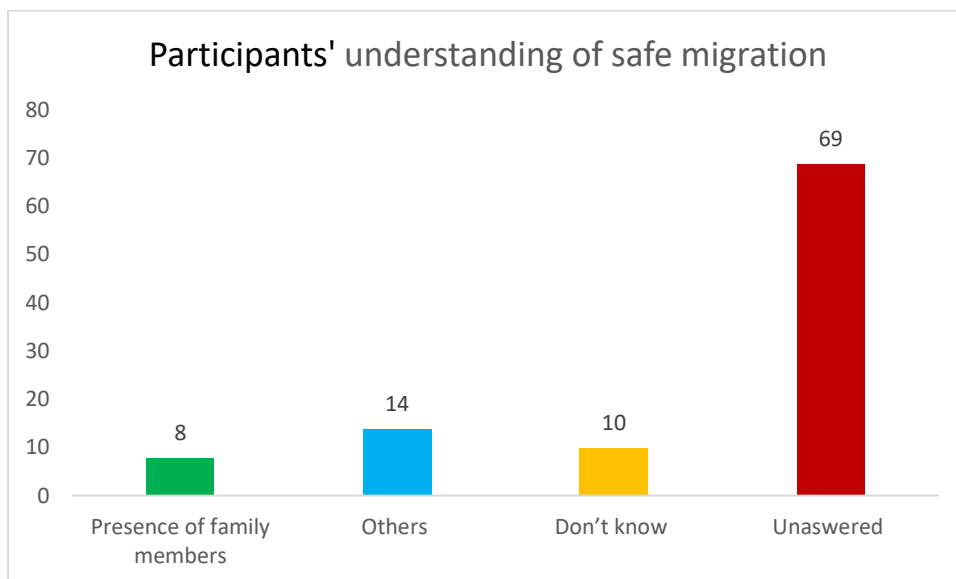
As seen in Bar diagram No. 1, the primary reason behind the decision to migrate was economic, which includes migration seeking employment opportunities. Many research participants had come to Kathmandu in search of employment trying to escape poverty, to get out of violent family relationship. Women also migrated to get basic needs such as healthcare, education for self, education of children. The aspirations to see the city, to have fun, to engage in other work were other reasons they mentioned.

Understanding Safe Migration

‘Safe and fair migration’ were foreign terms to research participants. It was difficult to translate these concepts in order to resonate with the realities of women workers. The concepts were translated locally to be discussed as feeling of safety in relation to migration and fairness was locally translated as ‘justice’.

Participants’ Understanding of Safe Migration

Bar diagram 2: Understanding of safe migration



As seen in the above chart, most participants did not answer when they were asked what safe migration meant for them. There could be several reasons behind this that could be explored in future research. Among those who answered the question, presence of family members during migration meant safe migration for them. Similarly, travelling with someone trustworthy and travelling with good passengers in the bus meant safe migration. Some participants had no idea about safe migration.

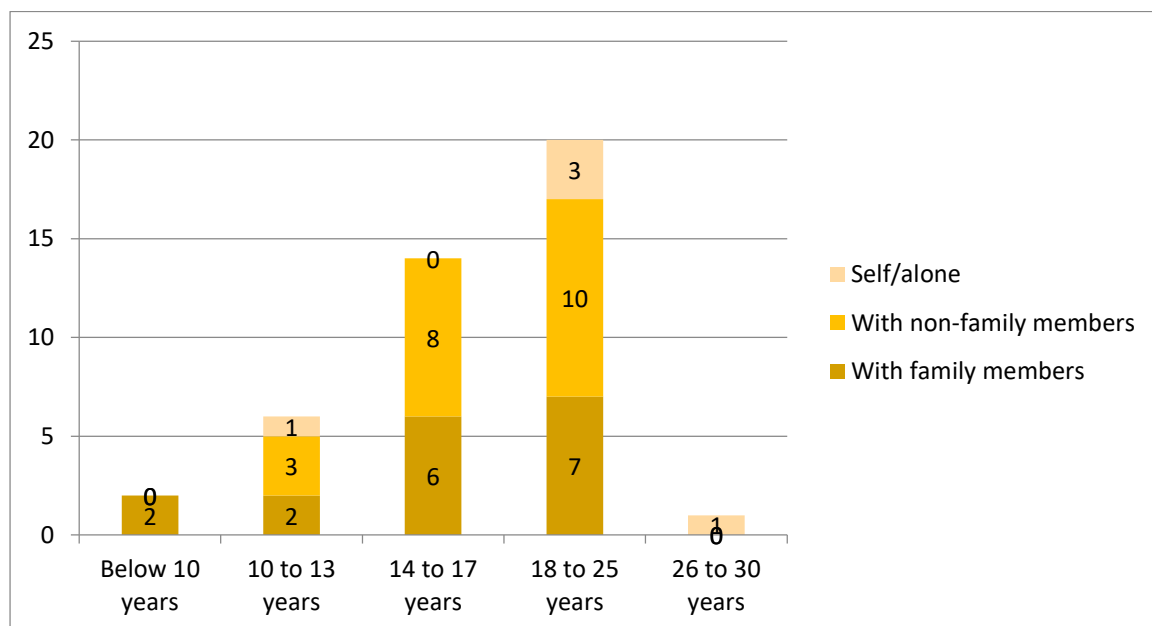
Migration by Choice vs. Forced Migration

As seen in Pie chart 1, a large percentage of women participants had faced some kind of problem in their house. These pressing problem in their family and developmental problems pushed them to migrate to better places. As the data presented in the pie chart No 1 and Table No. 6 there were various circumstances that pushed the participants to choose to migrate to better their life. However, their migration decision was the decision by their choice.

Who They Travelled with

Despite lack of information about the destination, women choose to migrate given the difficult situations they faced and mostly travelled with friends and then with family members.

Bar diagram 3: Who research participants relied on for migration



Age at migrating to Kathmandu for the first time

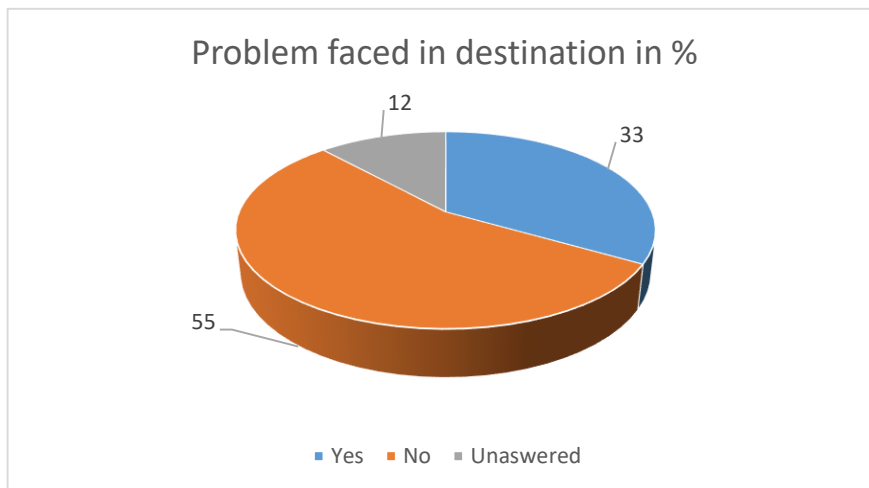
As the above chart shows, among 43 research participants 22 had already come to Kathmandu at a very young age before 18 years, 20 participants were at the age between 18 to 25 years, and 1 participant was at the age between 26 to 30 years.

Who research participants rely on during first migration to Kathmandu

Research participants, who came to Kathmandu before the age of 10 relied on their family members: father and grandfather. In the age group above 10 years, 21 participants were accompanied by non-family members. They came to Kathmandu with their friends or their family members' friends.

15 participants came to Kathmandu with immediate family members including their fathers, sisters and husbands, along with their relatives like sisters/brothers-in-laws and father's sisters. 5 participants came to Kathmandu alone. 8 participants who were very young at the time, escaped to Kathmandu without consulting with their families because they were not supported by their families.

Problem Faced in Destination



Pie-chart 2: Problems faced in destination (in percentage)

As seen in the pie chart above, 33 % of the participants faced some kind of problem after reaching the destination. Some of the problems mentioned by the participants included

dilemma and fear of not finding a job in Kathmandu, fear and anxiety due to unsafe roads during travel, anxiety related to staying with her cousins, safety and brought up of their dependant babies and trauma due to domestic violence back at home.

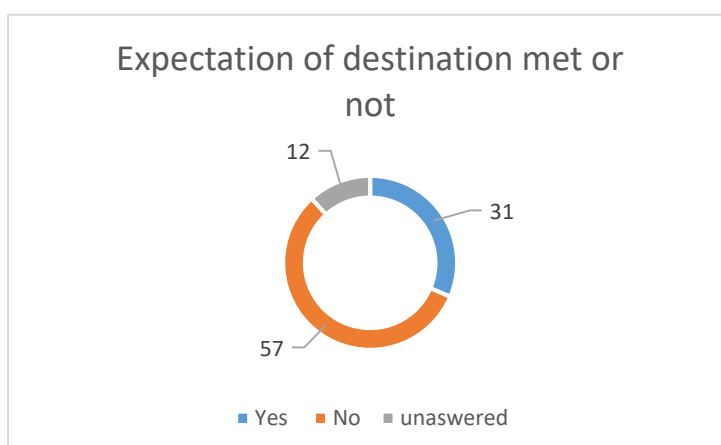
Table 8: Problems faced at places of origin

Nature of Problem	Percentage
Economic problem	63
Residence problem	13
No respect	13
Others	13
Total	100

Among 33% of those who reported to have faced some kind of problem in the destination, these problems included economic problem, for example, difficult to find job and not being paid for the job, residence problem, no respect for the profession and other problems.

Expectation vs. Reality

Pie chart 3: Expectation on destination place in percentage



As seen in the pie chart above, 57 % of the participants found the destination place different from what they had expected, for example, they had expected to get a job coming to Kathmandu but after reaching they did not get the job. Even if they got the job, the job was not as they had expected; or they migrated for education but did not get education opportunities.

Table 9: Reasons of starting to work in the entertainment sector

S.N.	Reasons of starting to work in entertainment sectors	Number
1	Financial problems in the family	7
2	Did not find other job	4
3	Low earning in other sectors	4
4	Possessing necessary professional skills	4
5	Difficulty in previous work sectors	3
6	Transferred from other work sector within the entertainment sector	2
7	Overall good feeling to be working in Kathmandu	1
	Total	22

As the above table shows, 5 of the 7 research participants starting to work in the sector faced basic survival problems, two workers had to raise their babies alone, because their fathers did not share the responsibility.

Research participants could not find work in another sector due to lack of academic certificates. 1 of the workers who had her infant baby, found it easy to work in the sector as she could carry her baby to the workplace.

Women workers had professional skills related to working in open restaurants with their previous experiences of doing household chores and domestic work. Women who have started their own small restaurants have learned skills of doing business and marketing while working in other restaurants. Women who had similar training related to beauty parlors could get work in massage parlors. Participants had also changed work places within the entertainment sector, for example from working in a duet restaurant and open restaurants to cabin restaurants, with the help of friends.

Difficulties in other work sectors such as domestic work, include very long (morning to late night) working hours and work load which becomes challenging to women's health and well-being.

Sources of Sense of Safety

Research participants felt that they have derived sense of safety firstly from within themselves, in terms of self-confidence, financial independence and decision making, bravery, their dedication towards their work and professional skills. Secondly, the love, solidarity, trust and support from family and society stood out as second major source of sense of security.

Research participants indicated that they had derived sense of safety based on legal provisions, but it was very limited. They had very limited access to legal information before they had migrated to Kathmandu, and yet do not have enough access to legal information and have not been able to practice the rights they are entitled to.

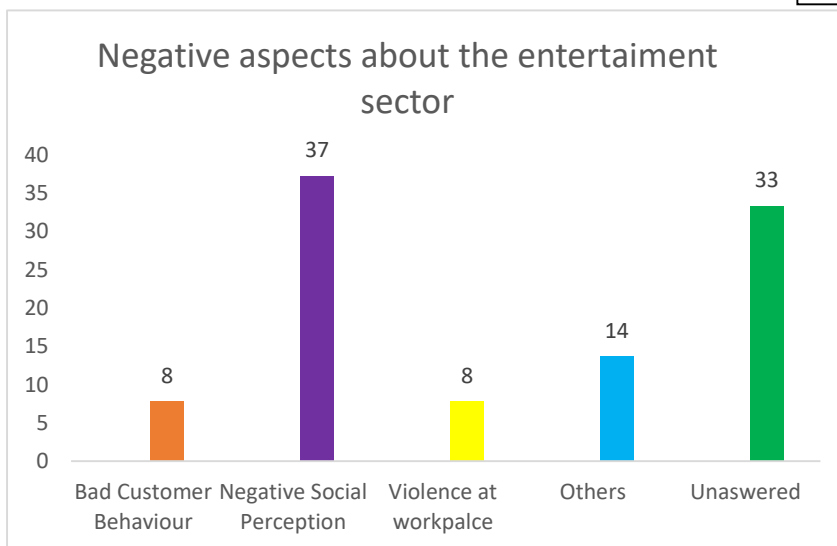
Safe environment at workplace was also identified as important source of safety, however have not been achieved by research participants.

Perception on Entertainment Sector

As explained in the literatures above, the entertainment sector is not perceived as a decent job by society, government agencies and the workers themselves. When asked what is negative about working in the entertainment sector, most of the respondents mentioned about negative social perception while others chose not to answer the question.

"...when we are informed about sex work and the use of minor at work, we raid the place. If the information is correct, we file the case against the owner. We want the entertainment sector to be a dignified profession. Society's perception has to change". – Police officer, KII

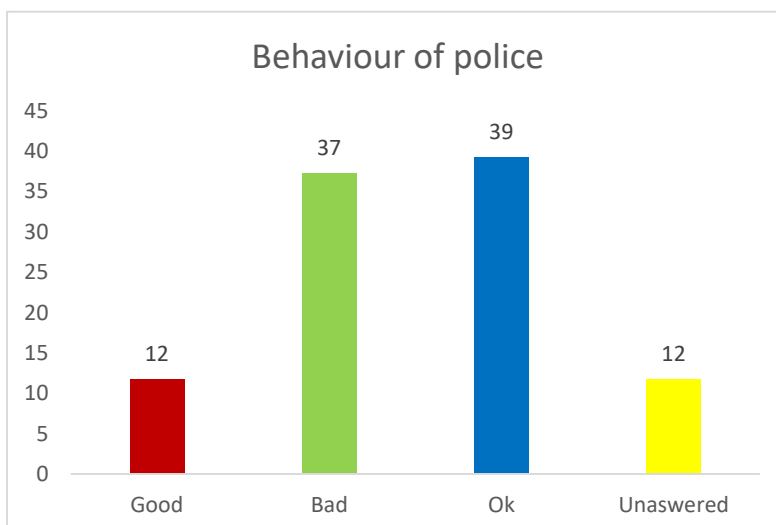
Bar diagram 4: Negative aspects about entertainment sector



As reported in the diagram above, 37% of the participants reported that the main negative aspects of the work were the negative perception of society about the entertainment sector. Others reported bad customer behaviour and violence at the workplace.

"...I was troubled by my neighbour when I was doing business. They used to gossip. When we say open restaurant, people think negative about it". – Open restaurant worker

The workers in the entertainment sector are often arrested by police believing that entertainment sector work invites social disorder. WOFOWON has been continuously visiting police station to settle the issues with police to release the detained entertainment workers. When asked about the behaviour of the police towards participants, most of the participants mentioned that behaviour of the police towards them was bad. It is further explained below.



Bar diagram 5: Behaviour of police

As mentioned in the diagram above, 37 % of the participants mentioned that behaviour of police towards them was bad, 39% of them reported the behaviour of police towards them was ok while only 12 % of them reported police behaviour to be good.

Challenges to Patriarchy

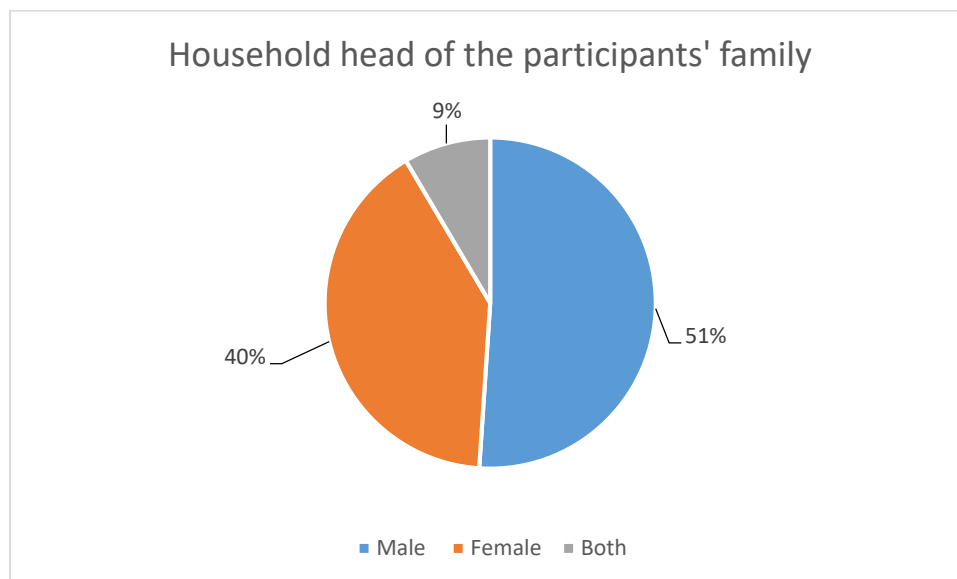
Nepal is a patriarchal society which determines women's roles and status in the society. Although the situation has changed slightly, most of the household heads are male, while women are expected to be caring and loving instead of working outside the house and are not morally allowed to work at night. Working women face many challenges in carrying out their profession due to negative familial and social perception on them.

Given this context of patriarchal social structure, women in the entertainment sector are challenging patriarchy because they work against the roles defined by patriarchal social structure, for example, they work outside the house, they work at night and they are independent.

Household Head

In Nepal, most of the household head of the family are male members but this is not the case for the entertainment sector workers' family.

Pie chart 4: Household head of the family



As seen in the pie chart above, 40% of the participants' family's household head were female which is against the patriarchal social structure.

Decision to Migrate

Irrespective of their compulsion or choice, majority of research participants decided to migrate, by doing so, they exercised their right to making life decisions for themselves. These actions challenged patriarchal control over women's right to mobility, control over resources, and over women's body as well. The analysis of migrant women activist Manju Gurung will further explain that, *"the right to mobility and freedom of women are associated with women's sexuality by the families, societies as well as the government. It is socially perceived that women get into sexual violence whenever they move out of home. A woman is an independent human, she has human rights, right to work, right to earn and to freely practice any forms of occupations, and all forms of work should pertain to decent*

working conditions. Society had categorized women’s works based on biased perceptions to disrespect the work of women. Professions where women engage are defined as small work and prohibited work. This created social fear in women, and compulsion to hide about their works. The compulsion to hide about the work accelerates the risk and violence against women.” -KII

Impressions about Work and Working Time

In the given patriarchal social structures, women working beyond household premises are not positively perceived by society due to various reasons. In rare cases women working at night are positively perceived. One of the primary reasons is the idea of unsafe working environment of female workers; however, when participants were asked about their overall feeling about their work most of them mentioned the work to be good and explained about the contribution of their profession in supporting their life and their family.

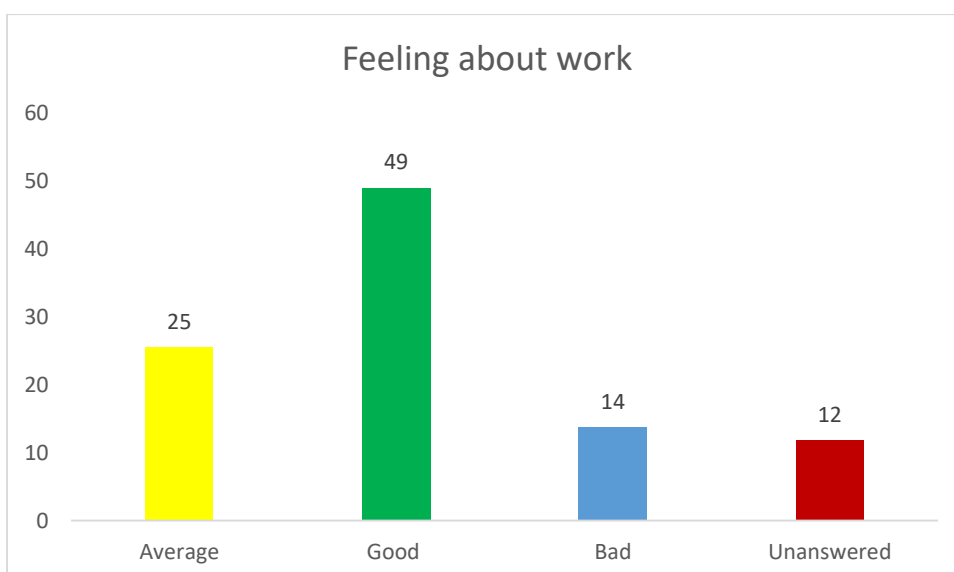
Table 10: Working hours

Working time	
Minimum	Up to 6 pm
Maximum	Up to 9 pm

In the given patriarchal social structures, women working at night are not positively perceived by society. In case of the entertainment sector, workers have to work up to 9 pm, this shows a challenge to the limitations defined by patriarchy.

In Nepal, it is generally expected from working women that they reach house before the sun sets or immediately after 5 pm given the travel time. In case of *Dohori and Dance Restaurants*, women have to work up to 2 am in the morning. This clearly shows that these women working in the entertainment sector are challenging patriarchal ideas that expect women be in the house before sunset.

Bar Diagram 6: Feeling about work



The majority of research participants (49%) felt good about their work, 25% felt average and 14% felt badly about it.

In overall, the good feelings mainly stemmed from:

- (a) Being able to sustain their family, to afford their children’s education as well as to afford their own academic studies
- (b) Women workers also found that it is pleasant to work indoors, as they had difficult past work experiences while working under direct sunlight
- (c) Three women working in massage parlors found that to get daily payment of work was convenient and as work-based income, they could take leave whenever they wanted,
- (d) Workers also found their work good, but they are affected by negative behaviour from other people.

The workers who felt average (neither very good nor bad) about their work based their opinion on the following aspects related to their work:

- (a) The feeling towards their work depends on the behaviour of the customers.
- (b) They could get job despite being uneducated, and as there were no better job opportunities.
- (c) Women running her own businesses felt on average as they don’t have to work under other people; however, the profits are not satisfactory

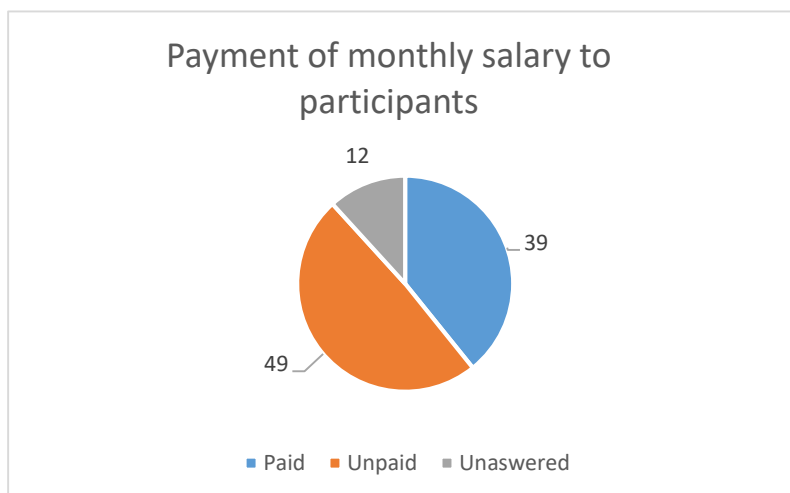
Bad feeling towards their work:

- (a) Negative social attitudes.
- (b) Being forced to talk to the customers.

Labour Exploitation

Labour exploitation of workers in the entertainment sector is major challenge in enforcing labour rights. The major labour rights issues in the entertainment sector include non-payment of monthly salary, salary amount below the government margin, working hours more than specified in the law and non-payment of overtime labour. These issues are further explored below.

Monthly Salary



Pie chart 5: Payment of monthly salary to participants (in percentage)

As seen in above pie chart, around 39 per cent of the workers were paid their salary. On the other side, there is high percentage of workers in the sector who do not get paid for their labour.

Table 11: Average monthly salary

Salary	In NRs.
Average Salary	6240
Maximum	15000
Minimum	1000

“...It is said minimum wage is 13500 but after deducting food expenses we can hardly pay 9000 to the workers”.
-Restaurant business owner union

A high number of workers do not get paid for their labour. Among those who were paid, as seen in average monthly salary of the workers in the sector is Rs. 6240 which is very low compared to minimum wage specified in the law i.e. 13,450. The above table clearly reflects wage labour exploitation of workers in entertainment sector.

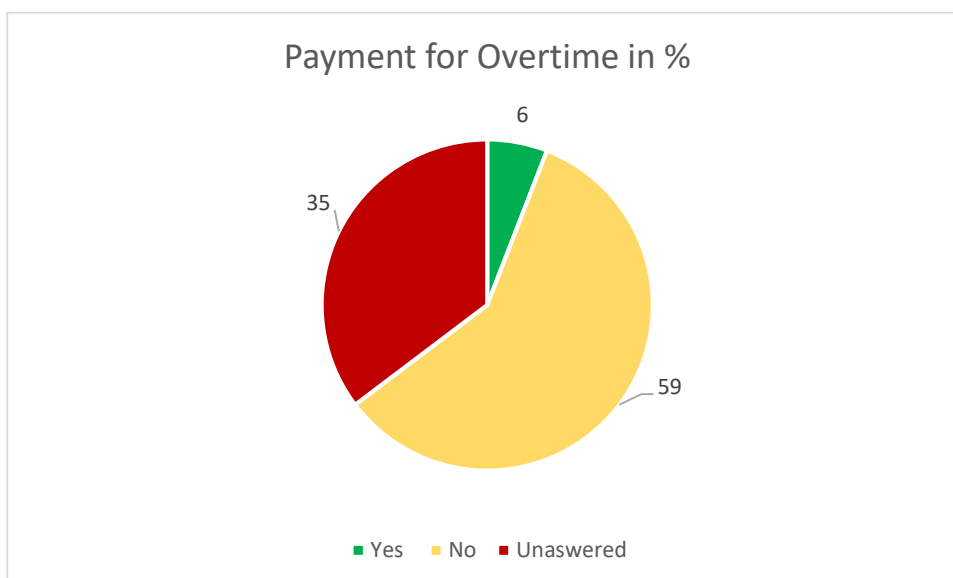
Minimum Working Hour (Average)

Table 12: Average working hours

Working Hours	Hours
Average working time	9 Hours
Maximum working time	16 Hours
Minimum working hours	8 Hours

The average working hours for the workers in the sector was reported to be 9 hours which is above the working hours specified in the law i.e. 8 hours. Some workers were found to be working 16 hours. These working hours reported in the above table depicts labour exploitation scenario.

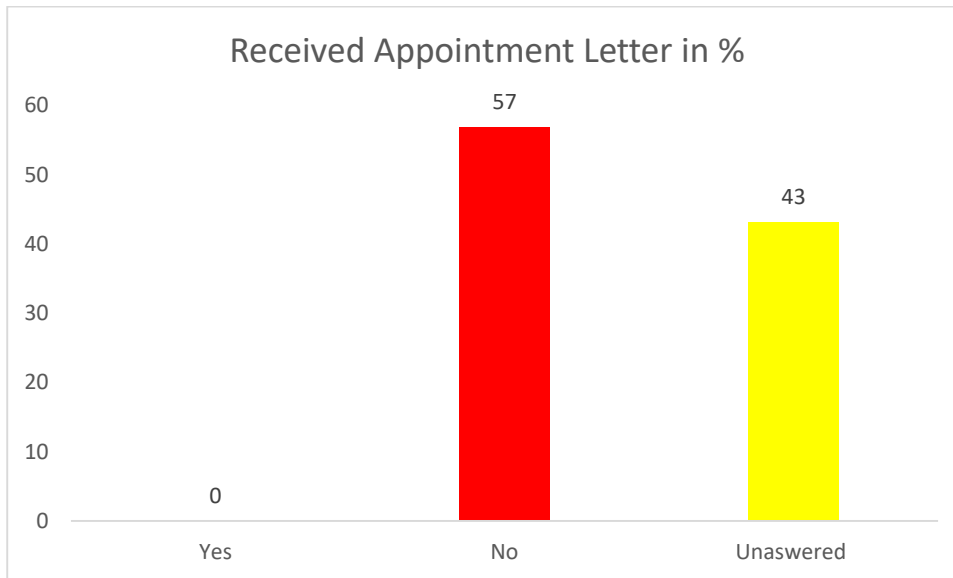
Pie-chart 6: Payment for overtime (in percentage)



As seen in the above table, workers had been working more than the working hours specified in the law. However, this overtime labour was not paid by the employers. Only 6% of the participants reported they were paid for overtime, whereas 35 % chose not to answer the question.

Appointment Letter

Bar diagram 7: Receiving appointment letters by participants (in percentage)



57 % of participants said they did not receive appointment letter for their employment and 43% chose not to answer the question.

Leave

Only 8 workers said they get a weekly day off, whereas 43 did not get any forms of leave. No facilities of leave at workplaces resulted in lack of time for personal life and can hamper their physical and psychosocial health. Eight of the participants said they could not go back to their home village to make their citizenship certificates, and another eight could not exercise their right to vote during national and local elections.

Other Facilities at Work Place

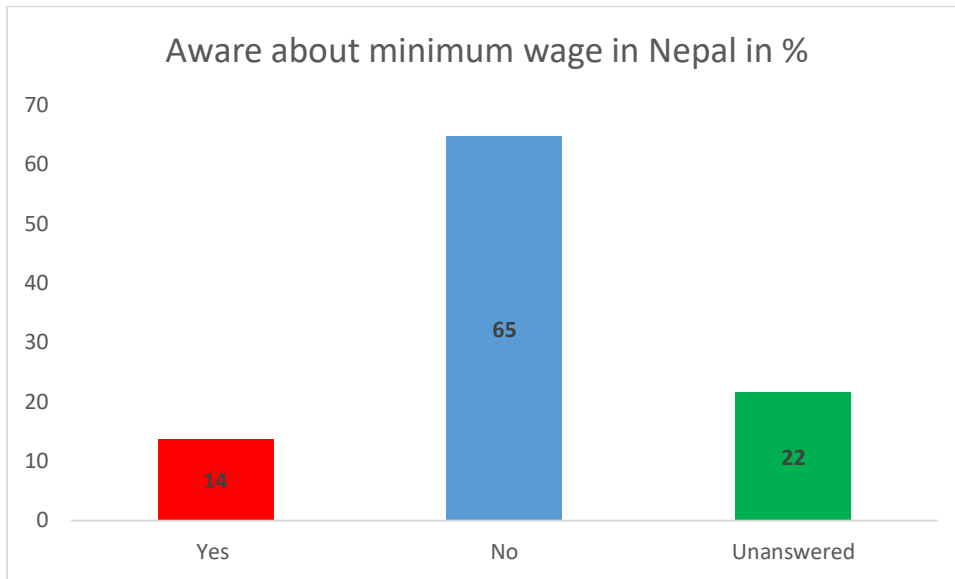
Only 2 workers could get unpaid sick leave, 8 workers can get snacks which is paid by customers, 4 workers could use free food and accommodation, whereas 2 could be dropped off to their places of residences while returning from their workplaces and only 1 research participant got irregular share from 10% service charge.

Legal Awareness

Legal awareness about labour rights is a major issue for workers in the entrainment sector as many cases of labour exploitation were reported by the workers visiting WOFOWON office. Therefore, participants were asked if they were aware about the labour rights provided for in the law to explore the extent of legal awareness about labour rights.

Minimum Wage

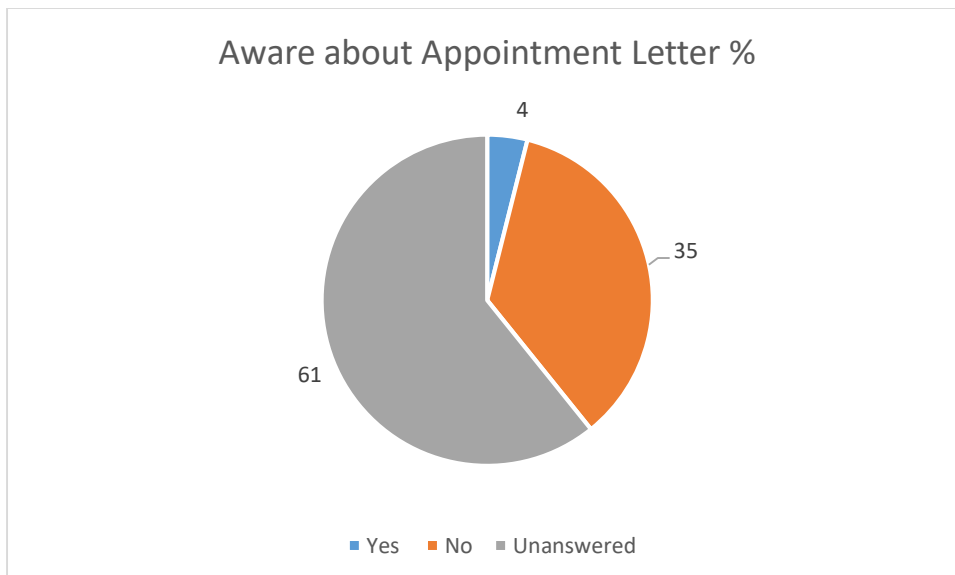
Bar diagram 8: Awareness about minimum wage



Labour Laws in Nepal have specified minimum wage as Rs. 13,450; however, only 14 % of the participants reported to know the minimum wage whereas the large majority i.e. 65 % did not know.

Appointment Letter

Pie chart 7: Awareness about appointment letter



Replying to the question whether they were aware about having appointment letter for the job, only 4% of the participant said they were aware, whereas 35% were not and 61 % chose not to answer the question.

Informal work and sense of insecure future

As internal migrants, research participants shared common challenges of not being supported by family members, not being able to make saving for their future even when they have worked for their entire life. This has generated anxiety about the future among women workers.

Organized Movement among Women Workers

Women working in the entertainment sector have initiated and moved forward collectively with organized movement building since 2008. It was found that the organized movement in the three research sectors should be encouraged. The degree of association of women workers from these three research areas in labor and women rights movements is comparatively low. Only 15% out of total 637 women affiliated as members in WOFOWON and 10.2% in the trade union area committees, out of total 118 members come from the study area. WOFOWON members had shared a common need to reach out to these segments more vigorously.

A group of women entrepreneurs running their 'small restaurants' have come together to form an informal peer support group for financial and other support to each other in the future.

CHALLENGES

1. The major challenge is implementing labor and human rights in entertainment sector and changing perception about sector and the workers employed in it. Workers in entertainment sector do not get work contract, minimum wages, workplace safety, rest and leisure, holiday and other benefits provided in the constitution of Nepal and specific labor legislations.
2. In addition, women workers are forced to take good care of male guests and in some cases are sexually abused.
3. The implementation of these labor rights is even more challenging as workers are not proactive in advocating for their rights and do not want to take action against the employer, as it may result in job insecurity or loss of job.
4. Insecurity of job and informal working status are other challenges that need to be addressed. The lack of security provisions for the babies of women workers is another major challenge.
5. Government stakeholders are not sensitive towards promoting entertainment sector worker rights, although the situation has changed slightly from a few years back.
6. Entertainment sector work is not perceived to be a decent job by society, government stakeholders and workers themselves, for example, workers in the entertainment sector do not want to disclose their profession to their family.
7. Additionally, human rights violations from state agencies through arbitrary arrests and public humiliations have made it more challenging for the workers.

8. Lack of enabling environment for organized movement building amongst women worker as well as welfare-based approach dominating the issues of marginalized women working in entertainment sectors have decreased women's negotiation power.
9. Overall, persistent patriarchal thinking, reflected in structures of family, society and state, continue affecting women working in the sector more than any other sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The entertainment sector should be recognised and protected under the labour laws.
2. Labor act and Social Security act should be inclusive and gender-sensitive towards the protection of rights and facilities of women, including those working in the entertainment sector.
3. Minimum wage standards should be applied across all work sectors with the aim to establish a living wage rate for all workers.
4. Entertainment businesses should be registered as employers and workers should be documented, whereas, non-documentation should not be considered as a factor restricting women workers from their right to security in workplaces and society.
5. Information and complaints desks should be established from local to central level government offices in order for workers to have access to accurate information as well as to file complaints.
6. Proper labour monitoring mechanisms should be formulated to address the special needs of entertainment sector workers, thereby creating spaces for listening to the workers' inputs in the formulation of mechanisms.
7. Provisions for securing women's rights should be made available at all workplaces.
8. Minimum regulatory provisions regarding establishment and operation of business in this sector should be formed, implemented and monitored by the government.
9. Provisions for learning and improveemt of related professional skills for the workers should be made accessible in order to increase the skills and capacities of the women working in the entertainment sector.
10. Wider public and stakeholder engagement should be promoted to secure identity and rights of women working in the entertainment sector.
11. For sustainable security, educational and other development of children working in the sector, integrated holistic plans should be made in close consultation with the children themselves,

without being judgemental on the occupation status, and by accounting individuality and subjectivity in life experiences of the children.

12. The human rights violations of arbitrary arrests, charging women workers with the Public Offence act, should be immediately stopped by the police and administration.

CONCLUSION

Patriarchal norms and structures have been a barrier against women's attainment of certain legal provisions as well as the full recognition of their human rights, including the right to mobility and work in Nepal. Women workers have broken these barriers at the level of families and societies by acting upon their decisions of migrating and working in the entertainment sector.

However, women in the sector face several challenges to continue their profession given the negative social and governmental perception about the entertainment sector and the workers employed therein. Besides, there are several issues of labour exploitation that need to be addressed through adequate policy and regulatory frameworks.

