INTRODUCTION

This case study provides insight into how migration and the capitals migrants possess can be harnessed to promote rural local development through homestay tourism services provided by migrants’ families and supported by the diaspora. Oftentimes, migration is a direct result of the local conditions migrants live in, including poor infrastructure, lack of access to services (health, education, employment) and limited livelihood opportunities. Indeed, in many countries, under-development can result in large-scale migration (from rural to urban areas as well as internationally) in search of better living conditions and increased employment prospects. Rapidly increasing rural to urban or international migration can pose severe development challenges, such as the absence of an active workforce (between ages of 15-49 years) who have migrated, creating a dependency on remittances of the elderly and dependent persons (children) to meet their basic needs. Therefore, viable income generation opportunities within communities of origin, which also promote rural development, are essential to mitigate this as well as overall development. To do this well, an ‘all-of community’ approach is essential to ensure that development efforts have positive outcomes for the entire community and are not restricted to migrants’ families.

Given that business creation and support is usually a competency of local authorities due to the grass roots nature of entrepreneurship, together with the fact that diaspora associations can provide transnational linkages between territories, it is local actors that are best placed to link up these two processes and ensure that homestay business development has an integral approach that benefits the entire community. Moreover, given the local-to-local dimension of migration, whereby migrants tend to move from the same territory of origin and settle in the same territory of destination, diaspora members and diaspora associations that launch development initiatives or businesses tend to prefer to do this for their communities of origin, where the results of their efforts will be more visible and where their families and friends will benefit directly. Finally, diaspora members can bring much needed knowledge, human and financial resources and link businesses back home with their host territories for business growth and internationalisation.
The homestay initiative by migrants and families in Nepal was designed under a project supported by the UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI) entitled “Sustainable Local Development by Promoting Local Tourism through the Homestay by Migrants and their Families (HOST)”. The project is implemented by civil society actor Asian Forum in close collaboration with local and national authorities, the private sector, and other key actors. It aims to expand avenues of income generation for local youth (potential migrants, returnees and migrant families) by initiating homestay tourism services with a focus on community well-being. This was achieved through the promotion of diversified livelihoods opportunities in the target communities for potential migrants, return migrants, families of migrants, and the general community. The Government of Nepal (GoN) first introduced the homestay programme in 2010, with the aim of encouraging and generating employment and economic growth in rural communities. Since the start of the programme, homestay tourist services have been governed by the Homestay Working Procedure (2010) guidelines of the national authorities.

Foreign employment is indeed the most significant motivation for international migration from Nepal in the twenty-first century. More than 3.8 million permits to work abroad (excluding India) were issued by the Government during the 1993-94 – 2014-15 fiscal years, which represents almost 14 percent of the current population. Nearly half of all Nepali households have at least one family member currently abroad or living in Nepal as a returnee. As per the census conducted by the Government in 2011, 12 percent of the population in Kaski (Western Development Region) and 14 percent of the population in Tanahu (Central Development Region) had migrated and were counted as ‘absent population’.

Rural to urban migration as well as international migration is a prominent phenomenon in both the villages, mainly among men. During the time of a baseline survey conducted by the JMDI at the initial stage of the project, almost one fourth (25 percent) of the population in Kala-bang and Ranagaun had left the village. Of those, 16.6 percent were outside the country (i.e. 2.9 percent in India and 11.7 percent in Gulf Countries and Malaysia). Moreover, the survey revealed that the main reason for Nepalis from the Kalabang and Bhanu municipalities of the Kaski and Tanahun districts to consider emigrating was to seek employment (43 percent). Further important factors included the interest or willingness to go abroad (38.4 percent), pressure from family members to do so (9.5 percent), and debt bondage (7.9 percent), among other unidentified reasons (1.2 percent). Since the majority of those who migrated were previously working in the agriculture sector (68 percent), the sector has been adversely impacted, agricultural lands being left uncultivated. Also, the migration of predominantly male family members have overburdened female family members.


Setting up the office of the HOST Project
OVERVIEW OF THE PRACTICE

Firstly, in order to identify beneficiary villages, a consultative process was carried out with the District Development Offices (DDO) of the Kaski and Tanahu districts and relevant tourism authorities. The Kalabang Ghaderi, Kaski, Ranaguan Bhaldanda, and Tanahun districts were selected using a set of rural development indicators. These indicators looked at the geographic isolation and under-development (i.e. those deprived of essential support services such as schools, hospitals, financial institutions), the concentration of an ethnic minority, as well as the scale of labour emigration. Kalabang Ghaderi was prioritised due to the large scale of emigration from the community and also because of its geographic cross section with popular trekking trails. Ranagaun Bhaldanda was also prioritised as a result of various factors, including: under-development, migration and inhabitation by ethnic Magar communities.

A baseline survey was then carried out to assess the socio-demographic context, migration dynamics, local economy, and livelihood options as well as to gauge the interest of identified communities to participate in the homestay initiative in Kalabang and Ranagaun Bhaldanda, thus ensuring a whole-of-community approach. Specific activities (such as training and infrastructure support) planned under the initiative were modified based on the results of the baseline survey. This ensured a tailored approach that responded to the needs of the targeted communities.

To identify potential beneficiary households to operate homestays, information centres were established and information campaigns conducted in Kalabang and Rangaun. Community members that expressed their interest in establishing the homestays were then selected based on criteria developed by Asian Forum and local authorities in line with the operational guidelines of the GoN. As a result, a total of 29 households, 18 in Kalabang and 11 in Ranagaun Bhaldanda mainly made up of returnees and migrant families were selected to open the HOST business.

A sub committee of women that is responsible for organising the welcome functions of the homestay community, welcoming guests with flower garlands.

To ensure successful management and operation of the homestay businesses, the following committees and advisory groups were established:

1. Homestay Management Committees were created for technical and managerial support and coordination among the homestay operators. Senior and influential leaders and homestay operators were comprised of an eight member management committee, including 1 chairperson, 1 vice chairperson, 1 secretary, 1 treasurer and 4 member positions. The committees were entrusted with the responsibility to upgrade and operate the information centre, set and review the standard fees, reach out to clients, support client’s placements in the homestays (ensuring that all selected households have equal opportunities to cater to a
uniform numbers of clients), manage finance, organise technical training, and initiate coordination with other sub-committees.

2. **Advisory Groups** were established and were comprised of local authorities, senior and influential leaders in the community, chairpersons of Homestay Management Committees, and the Kalabang women’s sub-committee to provide technical and advisory support to the homestay management committee. The role of the Advisory Group was to link homestay initiatives to overall community development efforts through advisory and technical guidance, for instance by allocating certain funds for education, community development, and tourism promotion that would allow the benefits of the homestay initiatives to spread to the general community. Their role was also to be a liaison with local and national authorities, assist in the mobilisation of development budgets, and promote the homestays to potential clients.

3. In a further effort to ensure the participation of other community groups, **sub-committees** composed of women were created and were responsible for organising the welcome functions of the homestay community. The welcome functions incorporated the traditional way of welcoming the guests, presenting flower garlands and serving traditional snacks. A group of school volunteers were responsible for organising environmental, hygiene, and sanitation campaigns to promote proper waste management and a clean environment in the homestay community. Finally, a group of youth were involved in the cultural sub-committee, which is responsible for organising cultural performances and other cultural events in order to entertain the guest arriving with traditional folk lore music and dance.

4. Given their experience in the hospitality sector and linkages with the potential clients, **tour operators were also actively involved in supporting the initiative.** These operators, including the Trekking Agencies’ Association of Nepal (TAAN), Hotel Association Nepal (HAN), Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN) and Village Tourism Promotion Forum for Nepal (VITOF – Nepal), who lent their expertise to the advisory committees and assisted in attracting clients to the homestays.

During a one year period, each of the 29 participating households in Kalabang and Ranaguan hosted 12 to 14 guests. As a result of the homestay initiative, there was a steady rise in household income (as each participating household made approximately 12,000 to 14,000 NPR) and the popularity and demand for homestays increased, as noted by the Homestay Management Committee. Towards the end of the project, there were instances when some clients had to be turned away since all rooms were already taken.

Furthermore, capacity building was provided to the homestay staff as well as other community members who were not directly involved with the homestays but have a role to play in their development. Training was provided in various areas, such as organic farming, cooking, hygiene, tourist guide training, and coffee growing. This was done to enhance the services of the homestays; thus enhancing further income generating opportunities around the homestays as the services become more desirable for tourists. Additionally, in order to improve the experience of the visiting tourists and widen the client base of the homestays, a village interaction programme on culture and environmental conservation was carried out. This was also done to sensitise the community.
members on the importance of environmental conservation and also utilise cultural promotion for the benefit of the community. This helped reinforce their cultural values and identities, while also promoting cultural tourism in the village. A total of 40 individuals from the community participated actively in this.

Moreover, due to the monetary incentives linked to homestays and the training provided, there has been a noticeable behavioural change in the community. Many community members have taken on further efforts to construct appropriate latrines and bathing spaces and many have become more active in improving waste management and livestock rearing practices. Access to quality education has also become more of a priority for the community, as seen in the increased financial investments in schools thanks to migrants’ remittances and the profit generated from the homestays. In addition, enhancing the conditions of infrastructure, such as roads and reinstating cultural heritage sites have also been recognised as other key ways to facilitate and promote tourism. Furthermore, tapping into the enhanced skills of returnee carpenters, plumbers, and electricians has also allowed for the more successful reintegration of returnees. Finally, traditional division of labour between men and women also saw a significant change, as more men engaged in activities traditionally considered to be responsibilities for women, such as cooking, cleaning and house maintenance.

Acknowledging the positive development effects that the homestays have had for the communities, the District Development Offices of Kaski and Tanahun have now mainstreamed support to the homestay initiatives of migrants and their families in their Annual District Development Plans and Annual Municipality Plans of the respective districts through the allocation of appropriate funding to support them. Thus far, specific budgets have been allocated for the construction of roads (an amount equivalent to NPR 300,000 and NPR 150,000 in Kalabang and Ranagaun respectively) and essential infrastructure to promote the homestay facilities and the local economy of the community. Moreover, the municipality of Tanahun had allocated NPR 50,000 to construct stairways to the famous Kali Temple in the village and also allocated NPR 100,000 to erect a hall to showcase Margar cultural arts and artefacts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Refer to JMDI Case study #14 “Mitigation of caste-based and ethnic exclusion in rural areas through migration and development”
- and JMDI Case Study #5 “Incubation of youth-led enterprises at the local level with the support of the diaspora”
- Or refer to the My JMDI Toolbox on Migration and Local Development that is accessible here: http://www.migration4development.org/en/resources/toolbox/training
  - Core module: Introductory module on migration and local development: Topic 3: Migrants as local development actors
  - Module 4: Creating jobs and economic opportunities through migration at local level

Cultural performance by Dalits promoted among the homestay community to entertain tourists in Kalabang Gharedi of Kaski district
KEY LESSONS LEARNED

PARTICIPATORY, INCLUSIVE AND CONSISTENT COORDINATION MECHANISMS WERE CRUCIAL TO ENSURE THE ENGAGEMENT OF ALL ACTORS AND THE SUCCESSFUL SET UP OF THE HOMESTAY BUSINESSES

The experience of the homestay initiative shows that its success is contingent on a strategic coordination mechanism that is participatory, inclusive, and consistent with the engagement of all relevant actors (local authorities, tourism entrepreneurs, beneficiaries, migrants, youth, women, and the community more generally). Indeed, a multi-stakeholder approach and coordination has been helpful not only to tackle the daily challenges related to homestay management, but for the effective functioning of the homestay services so that each actor provides their own expertise and resources.

HOMESTAY INITIATIVES PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO FOSTER DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

While homestay businesses can enhance household livelihoods, they also possess great potential to foster overall community development when the right conditions are in place. This can be achieved by linking homestay initiatives to broader community development approaches and tapping into the resources of return migrants, investing in community infrastructure and cultural heritage sights, and promoting further income generation by providing services for tourists using the homestays.

HOMESTAY INITIATIVES CAN INFLUENCE KEY BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES THAT ARE ESSENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The experience from the HOST initiative demonstrates that key behavioural changes of the community can be triggered when linked to the economic incentives and development benefits derived from the homestay businesses. It is crucial for businesses operators and interested community members to follow the standard operating guidelines of homestay management as well as to ensure quality services for the users in order to maximise the financial gains that the homestays generate. These gains can then be used for community development efforts in areas like infrastructure, education, hygiene, waste management, and further services to cater to tourists. This then also encourages ownership over the development initiatives and thus enhances their sustainability.

CONTINUOUS CAPACITY BUILDING IS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF HOMESTAY SERVICES AND FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN COMMUNITIES OF ORIGIN

Capacity building is particularly important as it helps to enhance existing skills and identify new areas and opportunities that allow for the continued improvement of homestay services, as well as the creation of complementary income generating initiatives that build on the positive impact of the homestays. The effectiveness of capacity building in the case of the HOME initiative was reflected in the low dropout rate of the beneficiaries of the training, along with the increasing number of newcomers, including returnees, interested in opening homestay businesses due to the perceived benefits of doing so.
ENSURE MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARE PART OF THE NATIONAL GUIDELINES ON HOMESTAY TO IMPLEMENT IMPROVEMENTS FOR ENHANCED EFFECTIVENESS

To maximise the impact of the homestay services in the long-term, mechanisms and tools should be developed that allow for monitoring and evaluation in order to ensure the progressive improvement of services. In order to do this, consultations with the relevant national and local authorities, homestay entrepreneurs, and beneficiaries should be carried out to ensure changes and improvements are responsive to the perceived needs of the relevant stakeholders.

STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION BETWEEN NATIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND ENSURE THE LESSONS LEARNT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL ARE MAINSTREAMED INTO NATIONAL POLICIES

Although national guidelines exist on homestays, support to homestays has not been mainstreamed into national policies and plans. Enhanced coordination among the relevant national government authorities (i.e. the Ministry of Tourism) and the local authorities/development offices would help ensure that national policies respond to real needs at the local level. It is also important to ensure that the lessons learnt from the experiences on the local level are also fed into a revised set of homestay guidelines at national level, to enhance effectiveness and ensure the replication of good practices in other territories.

INCREASE AGGREGATE FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT BENEFITS OF HOMESTAYS THROUGH CONTINUOUS CAPACITY BUILDING AND UPGRADING OF THE HOMESTAY SERVICES

Given that capacity development in the communities, through skills training, has been an important factor in the success of the HOST initiative, it will be essential to enrol the community in the community skills development programmes as well as the follow up training to enhance their recently acquired skills. The role of local authorities and development partners are crucial in this regard as they can ensure that community members are included in the government run employment and self-employment programmes or in any new learning opportunities. Moreover, in view of the increasing demand for homestays, host business operators can therefore be supported to increase the homestay occupancy and thus ensure the delivery of consistent services so that the aggregate monitory benefits can be maximised. The role of homestay technical committees and management committees will be key in facilitating this process.

WHAT IS THE UN JOINT MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE?

The JMDI is a programme led by UNDP in partnership with IOM, ITC-ILO, UN Women, UNHCR, UNFPA and UNITAR. It focuses on the local dimension of migrants’ contribution to development. The JMDI supports civil society organizations and local authorities seeking to contribute to linking migration and development. To achieve this, the JMDI is currently supporting 16 on-going projects funded in eight target countries: Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Morocco, Nepal, Philippines, Senegal and Tunisia that all efficiently link migration to local development. This series of case studies seeks to highlight the challenges, good practices and lessons learnt from these projects.

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