Event Report: Living Abroad, staying connected: Family relationship and Emotional wellbeing of Nepali Migrant Workers

Introduction

On 19 July 2026**,** an online interactive session on **" Living Abroad, staying connected: Family relationship and Emotional wellbeing of Nepali Migrant Workers"** was conducted to create a safe platform for Nepali migrant workers to discuss their emotional well-being, personal experiences, and coping strategies. The session was started from 5 pm to 8 pm. The session recognized the significant contribution migrant workers make to their families and Nepal's economy while acknowledging that migration also brings various emotional, social, family, and occupational challenges. Participants explored how living away from home, adapting to new cultures, managing work demands, and maintaining family relationships can affect mental health. The session aimed to promote awareness of mental health, encourage peer learning, strengthen support networks, and increase knowledge of available mental health services and referral mechanisms.

Objectives

The session aimed to help participants understand the importance of mental health and emotional well-being, identify common emotional, personal, family, and work-related challenges experienced by Nepali migrant workers, and provide a supportive space for sharing personal experiences. It also focused on strengthening healthy coping skills, promoting peer support, improving family communication, and increasing awareness of available mental health support services, referral pathways, and crisis helplines.

A total of 34 participants (16 male, 15 female and 3 unknown) attended the zoom session from different countries, including Bahrain, Nepal, Australia, Japan, S. Korea, Spain, Saudi Arabia and Colombia**,** representing diverse migration experiences and perspectives.

Session overview

The session began with a welcome, introduction, and overview of the objectives, followed by establishing ground rules to ensure confidentiality, respect, active participation, and a safe environment for sharing. Participants then completed an emotional check-in using the weather metaphor**,** where they described their current emotional state as sunny, cloudy, rainy, or stormy. This activity helped participants reflect on their feelings while normalizing different emotional experiences.

A grounding exercise was conducted to help participants become more present and aware. During the discussion, participants shared different ways they naturally ground themselves during stressful moments. Examples included sitting quietly in front of a computer, eating a favorite meal such as noodles, sitting comfortably on a chair, focusing on their breathing, and taking a short pause from daily responsibilities.

Participants then engaged in an extensive discussion on their personal migration journeys. Many shared that approximately 70% had obtained employment through relatives, friends, or personal recommendation**s**, highlighting the importance of social networks during migration. Several participants described the difficulties of adjusting to new cultures, languages, and workplace environments. One participant explained how ordering something as simple as a "cup of tea" became confusing because of differences in pronunciation and local expressions. Others shared experiences of being misunderstood by supervisors, feeling discouraged from communicating, experiencing discrimination or isolation at work, and gradually losing confidence to express themselves or pursue professional growth.

The facilitator introduced the **adjustment process of migration**, explaining the different stages commonly experienced by migrant workers, including the honeymoon stage, culture shock, surface adjustment, hidden struggles, gradual adaptation and fitting into the new environment, and finally preparing to return home. Participants reflected on which stage they currently identified with and discussed how emotions change throughout the migration journey.

The emotional journey of migration was further explored through discussions on homesickness, loneliness, identity changes, uncertainty, and balancing expectations from both the host country and family members back home. Participants openly shared how emotional challenges often remain hidden because they feel responsible for appearing strong and successful despite experiencing stress and hardship.

A major part of the session focused on **family relationships while living abroad**. Participants discussed how migration affects relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and grandparents who often assume childcare responsibilities. They highlighted communication gaps due to physical distance, different time zones, demanding work schedules, and company policies that limit opportunities to contact family members. Many described increased financial responsibilities, changes in family roles, difficulties making joint decisions, emotional distance between spouses, and the emotional impact of prolonged separation on children. Participants also discussed how grandparents often experience stress while caring for grandchildren and managing household responsibilities in the absence of migrant family members.

The facilitator provided psychoeducation on stress and explained how prolonged stress can affect physical health, emotions, thinking patterns, behaviors, and interpersonal relationships. Participants recognized that stress frequently presents through sleep disturbances, irritability, headaches, reduced concentration, emotional exhaustion, and conflict within families and workplaces.

Participants also explored practical approaches for maintaining emotional well-being while living abroad. They shared various self-care practices, including deep breathing exercises, body stretching, talking with trusted friends or family members, singing songs, reading books, practicing gratitude, engaging in physical exercise, and intentionally taking time for self-care despite demanding work schedules.

During the group discussion, participants reflected on the common emotional challenges they face, how these difficulties influence their family relationships, and the ways they seek support

during stressful periods. The discussion encouraged participants to recognize that emotional distress is common among migrant workers and that seeking support is a sign of strength rather than weakness.

Several relaxation techniques were practiced during the session, including grounding exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, relaxation exercise. Participants reported feeling calmer and more emotionally connected after practicing these techniques together.

Common Challenges Faced by Nepali Migrant Workers

Participants identified numerous challenges affecting their mental health and daily lives. Homesickness and loneliness were among the most common experiences, especially during the initial period of migration. Separation from family members, adjusting to unfamiliar cultural norms, language barriers, and differences in expectations between Nepal and the destination country created additional stress. Many participants described labor-related difficulties such as delayed salaries, non-payment of wages, heavy workloads, and limited employment protections.

Several participants had taken on informal leadership roles within Nepali communities abroad, which brought additional responsibilities as they supported others experiencing crises and personal difficulties. Participants also highlighted the difficulty of finding adequate time to communicate with family due to long working hours, time zone differences, and company regulations.

Financial pressure remained a major source of stress, as many felt responsible for supporting extended family members while managing their own expenses abroad. Participants also described family conflicts, relationship difficulties, communication gaps, changing family roles, parenting challenges, and identity conflicts. Limited skills training before migration and communication barriers further complicated their adjustment and integration into host communities.

Coping Mechanisms Identified by Participants

Participants shared a wide range of coping strategies that help them manage emotional distress. Many found meaning in helping friends and participating in community service activities. Religious practices, including visiting temples, singing bhajans, and participating in spiritual activities, provided emotional comfort for several participants. Others preferred sharing their concerns with close family members and trusted friends.

Some participants reported practicing meditation, taking breaks from work, traveling to new places during holidays, drawing, listening to music, or engaging in hobbies to reduce stress. A few participants acknowledged occasionally using alcohol to cope with emotional difficulties, which opened discussion about healthier alternatives. Some participants also described communicating directly with supervisors or managers to negotiate workloads and reduce work-related stress when possible.

Peer Support and Emotional Well-being Planning

The importance of peer support was emphasized throughout the session. Participants reflected on how supportive friendships, community networks, and regular communication with trusted individuals can reduce feelings of isolation and improve emotional resilience. Practical exercises such as My Support Circle**,** My Warning Signs**,** My Healthy Coping Plan**,** and Seeking Help and Referral mechanism enabled participants to identify personal strengths, recognize early signs of stress, and develop individualized plans for maintaining their mental well-being.

The facilitator also shared information on available mental health services, referral pathways, and national suicide prevention helplines. Participants were encouraged to seek professional support whenever emotional distress becomes overwhelming or begins to interfere with daily functioning.

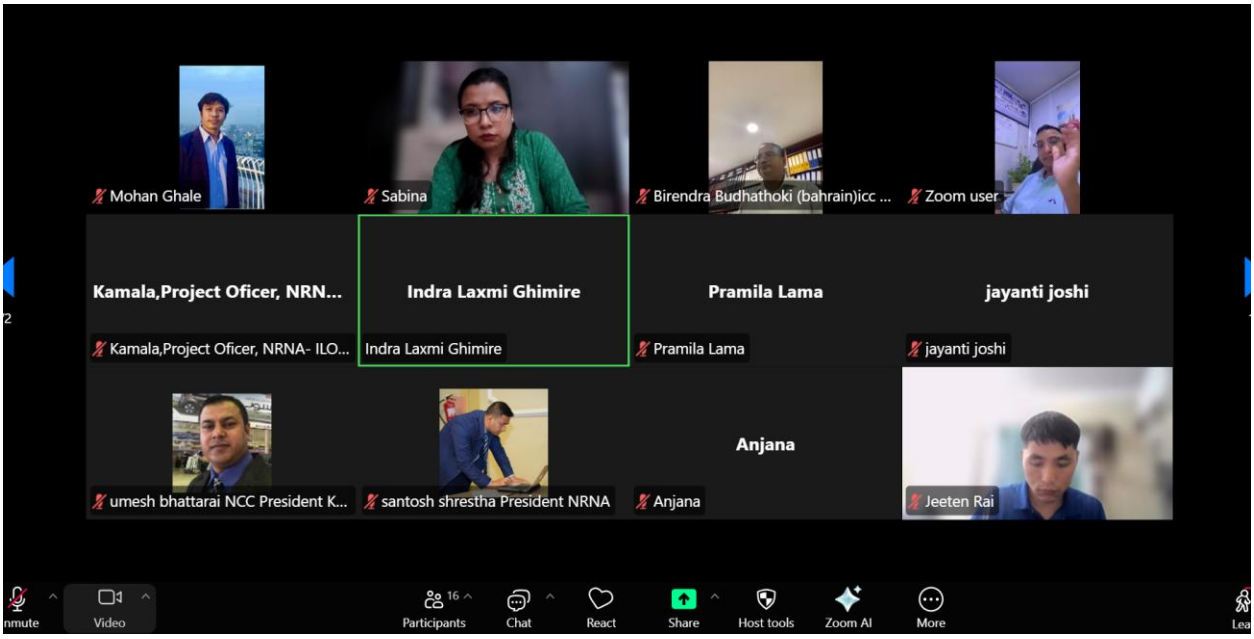
Question and Answer Session

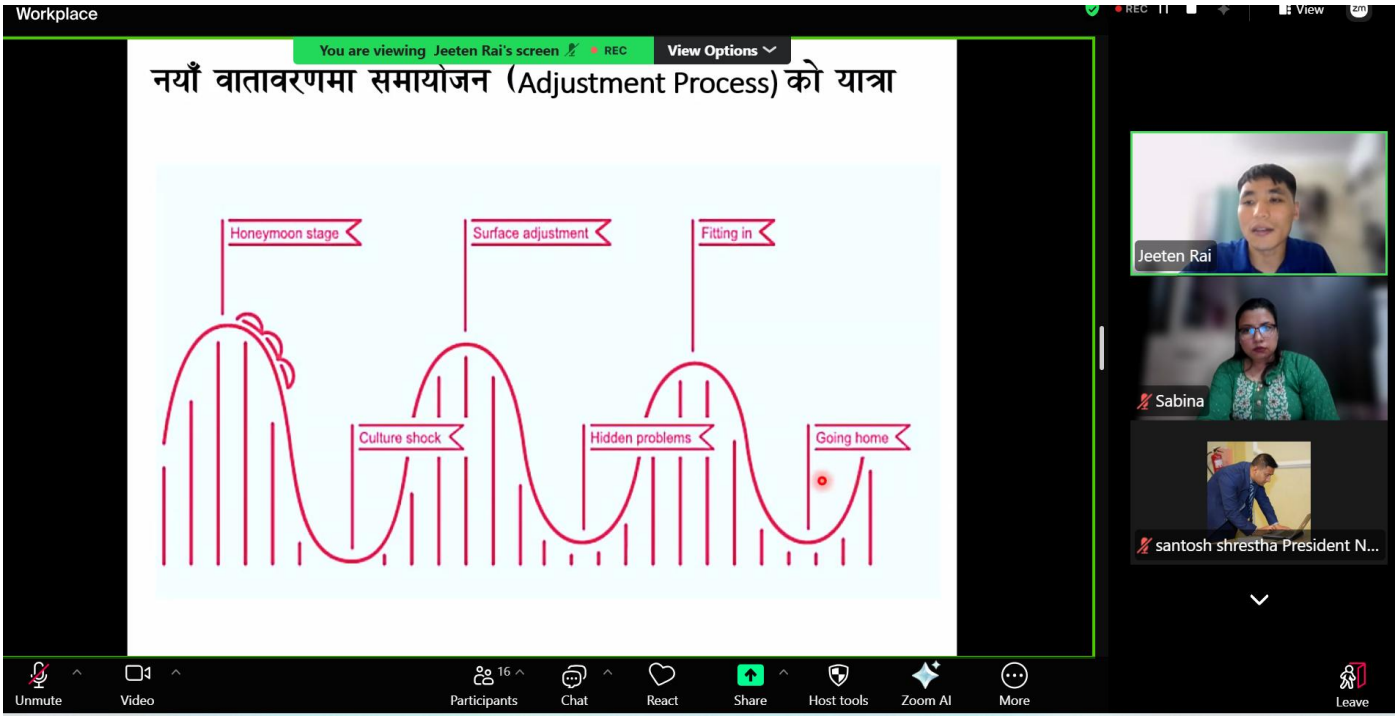
The webinar concluded with an interactive question-and-answer session where participants discussed practical concerns related to maintaining mental well-being abroad, supporting family members from a distance, balancing work responsibilities, and accessing mental health services. Participants appreciated the opportunity to openly discuss issues that are often overlooked within migrant communities.

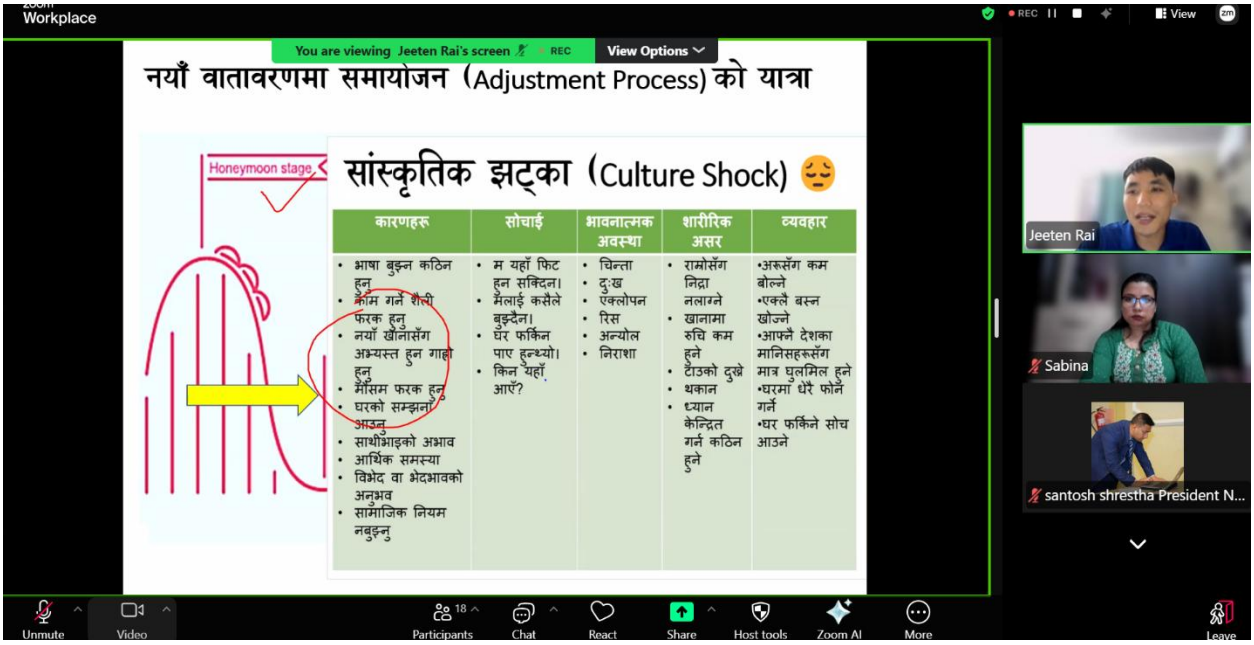
Reflection and Closing

Participants expressed that the session provided a valuable opportunity to openly discuss their migration experiences, emotional struggles, and family challenges in a supportive environment. Many reported feeling reassured after realizing that others shared similar experiences and appreciated learning practical coping strategies that could be applied in their daily lives. The grounding exercises, relaxation techniques, and peer discussions were particularly well received.

The session concluded with a reminder for participants to prioritize both **self-care and peer support** by regularly checking in with themselves and fellow migrant workers. Participants were informed that a follow-up webinar would be conducted on **19 August** through the **NRNA platform**, allowing them to continue learning, sharing experiences, and strengthening mutual support networks.


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Surface adjustment
Fitting in
Culture shock
Hidden problems
Going home
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