



**CITIZEN' PERCEPTION
OF THE GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

INTRODUCTION

Situations like the coronavirus pandemic quickly lead to misinformation, rumors and fake news. We can all play a role in beating the virus by making sure that we are sharing validated information and using trusted sources to inform our decision-making. When COVID-19 began, Accountability Lab moved quickly to lean on our experience in feedback models to launch the Coronavirus CivActs Campaign. CivActs – or Civic Action Teams – is the new name for what was previously our Citizen Helpdesks.

The Coronavirus CivActs Campaign (CCC) gathers rumours, concerns and questions from communities across Nepal to eliminate information gaps between the government, media, NGOs and citizens. By providing the public with facts, the CCC ensures a better understanding of needs regarding the coronavirus and debunks rumours before they can do more harm.

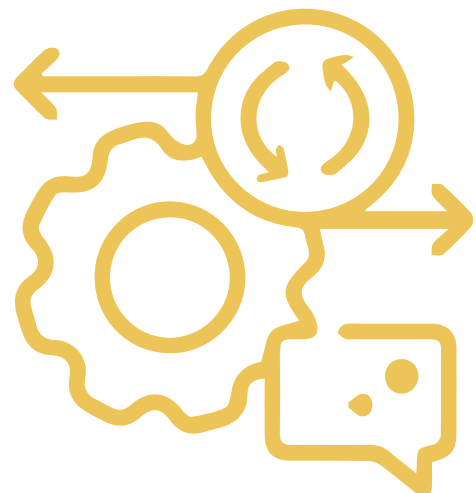
CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Learning from major emergencies demonstrates the critical importance of two-way communication between communities and responders. By listening to people's needs, opinions, suggestions and complaints, governments can adapt their responses to specific circumstances and concerns. Although challenging during an emergency response, enabling local populations to have a say in critical aid decisions increases the population's ability to be stronger and more resilient after the crisis. The Accountability Lab is collecting feedback from communities in Nepal and providing substantive analysis of this information to better understand how communities feel about the government's response to this crisis and to help support more informed decision-making.

RESEARCH

GOAL

The objective of this research is to understand people's perceptions of the government's COVID-19 response efforts and to build insights into how Nepalis are experiencing the pandemic response.



DESIGN

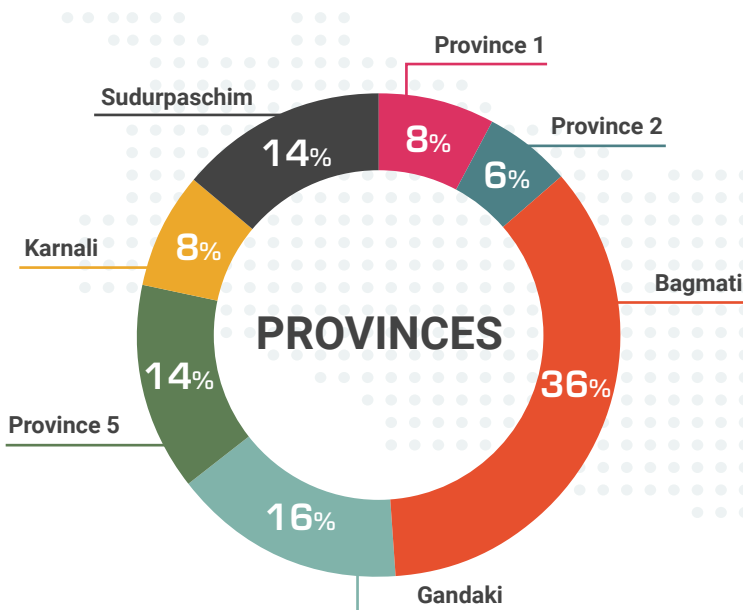
This is an applied quantitative study. This study followed an exploratory cross-sectional research design and used purposive sampling. The maximum variation among the samples in terms of age group, geography, economic status, ethnicity, etc. are deliberately practiced while collecting responses. Cross cutting issues like gender and disability are addressed while selecting participants for this study.



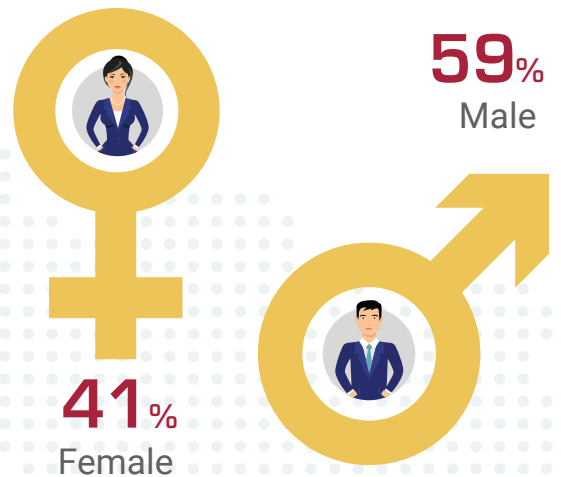
LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study was designed amidst the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown in Nepal, which made data collection and synthesis more difficult than in normal times. The project was managed remotely at all times.
- The sample size and scope of study was limited to what could be achieved given the conditions. As samples for this study were not randomized, generalizing all or parts of this study might not give exact understandings in some instances.

TOTAL SURVEY RESPONDANTS **750**



GENDER RATIO



SUMMARY

This survey revealed some important findings related to the public's perception of the government's COVID-19 response. We believe it is important for the government to understand how the public view their response to support improvement over time.



ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The survey reconfirmed that the government is not providing the public with the information they need. Many respondents were unaware as to how to respond to COVID-19 or how the government is providing relief. This has led to confusion and concern among citizens who are unsure of their rights and entitlements.

LIVELIHOODS



Over one-third of the respondents' sources of income have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic, meaning they have dipped into their savings, take loans or even sell properties just to survive. Most people do not believe government support will be sufficient but have been expecting some support from local governments. Citizens do not feel they are receiving adequate services or enough information about how government budgets are being spent. Overall, the public is unsatisfied with how the central government is spending money on the COVID-19 response.



HEALTH

Amid the COVID-19 crisis, major issues have surfaced regarding the government's prioritization of patients with special health needs or mental issues. The public does not believe the government prioritizes these issues and believes that there is a significant need for better care for these patients.

MIGRATION



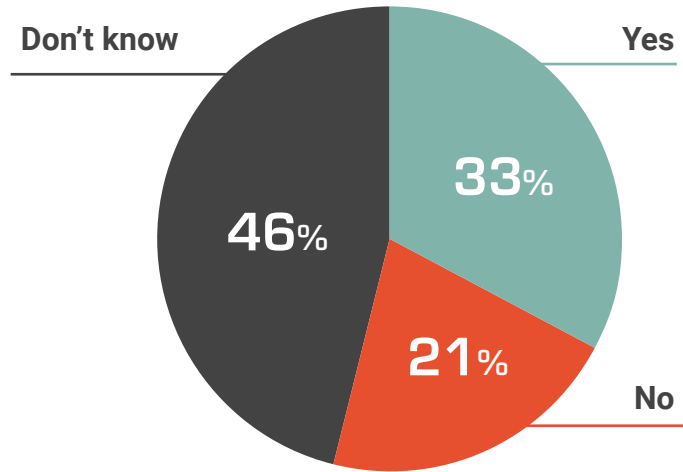
The survey also revealed that the public do not believe the government is ready for the reintegration of Nepali migrants back into society. Communities feel this may have an effect on safety. Around half of the migrants themselves have also undergone severe stigmatization and over 50% do not believe they are being supported by their local governments.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The public's perception of the government's transparency in relation to the communication of policies and decisions:

Transparency of INFORMATION

67% of the respondents were not sure whether or not the government was being completely transparent in terms of the dissemination of information.



50%
Yes



50%
No

Informed on ACTIONS TO TAKE IF INFECTED

Only **50%** of respondents knew what steps they needed to take if they had been infected by the coronavirus. Even the most basic and crucial information is not properly reaching the public.

Awareness about RELIEF SUPPORT FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT

More than half of the respondents were unaware of the relief support provided by their local government in response to COVID-19.



49%
Yes

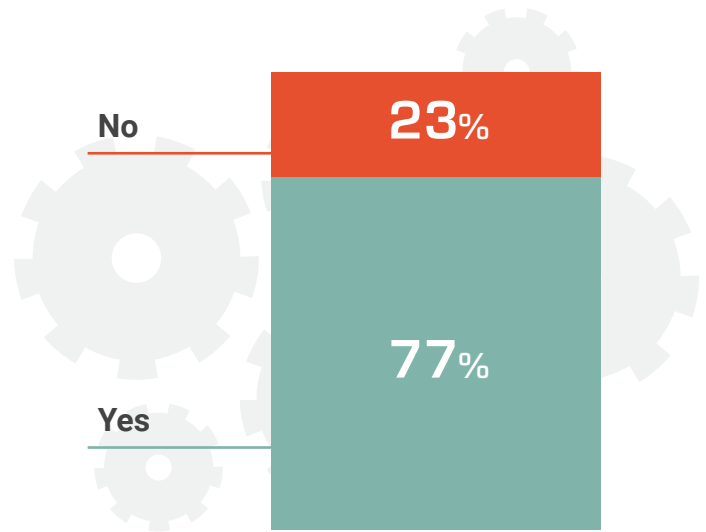


51%
No

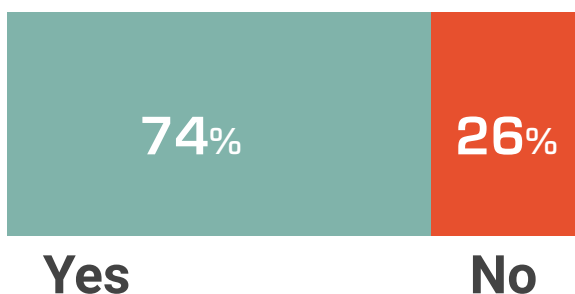
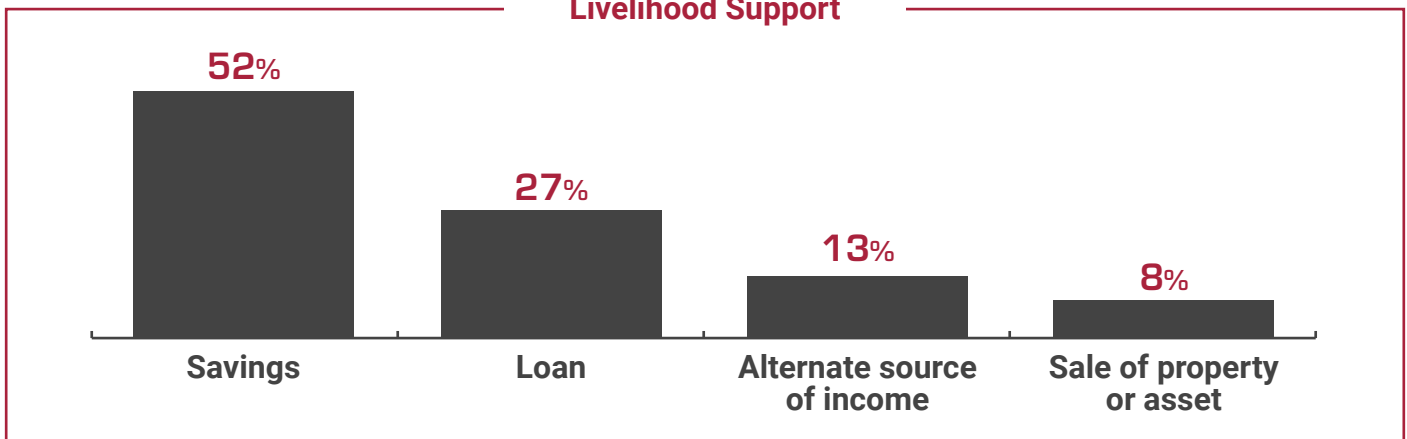
The public's perceptions of the government's response to livelihood issues in relation to COVID-19:

Disruptions in INCOME

77% of the respondents' income was affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The majority of these people have been dipping into their savings while a large number of them are taking loans or selling their assets.



Livelihood Support

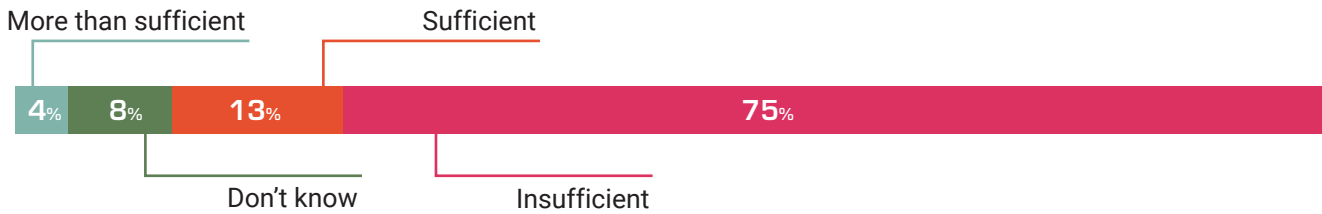


Expectations of SUPPORT FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT

74% of the respondents believed the government should be responsible for the welfare of citizens and to provide support irrespective of whether or not their livelihoods had directly been impacted by COVID-19.

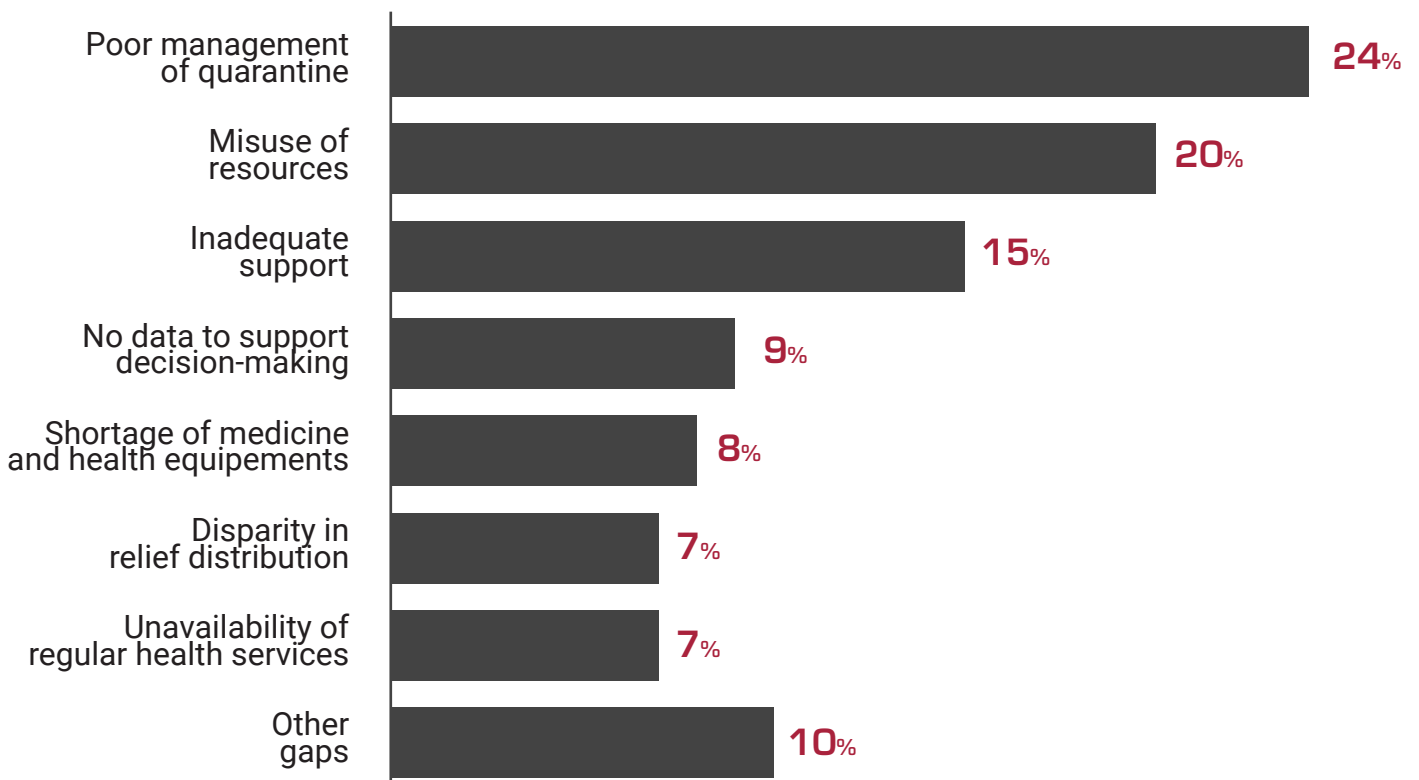
Sufficiency in RELIEF DISTRIBUTION

75% of the respondents thought COVID-19 relief provided by the government is not sufficient, despite the fact that local governments show relief distribution as their largest expenditures during the pandemic.



Gaps in SERVICE DELIVERY

Even after significant time has elapsed, poor management of the quarantine process was still the biggest gap the respondents noticed in public service delivery during the pandemic. Misuse of resources and inadequate support were also citizen concerns. Surprisingly, only **8%** of the respondents believed that a shortage of medicine and equipment were gaps in service delivery.



Awareness about LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENSES

72% of the respondents were unaware of local government spending. This could both be because of a lack of transparency or a lack of interest among the public.



28%
Yes



72%
No

Central government's EFFECTIVENESS OF SPENDING

The majority of respondents (52%) were unsatisfied with the central government's spending to fight against the coronavirus while 21% thought it was poor.



1%
Excellent



6%
Good



21%
Satisfactory



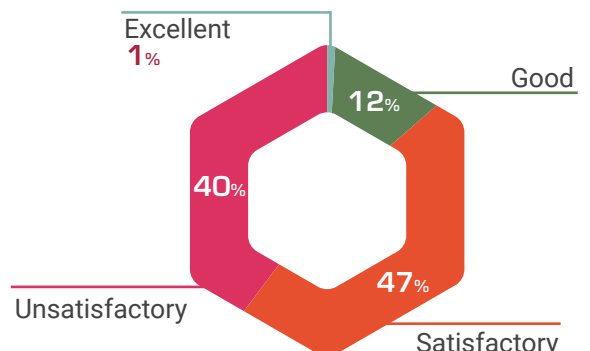
52%
Unsatisfactory



21%
Poor

Implementation EFFECTIVENESS

40% of respondents had serious concerns with the government's effectiveness in implementing decisions

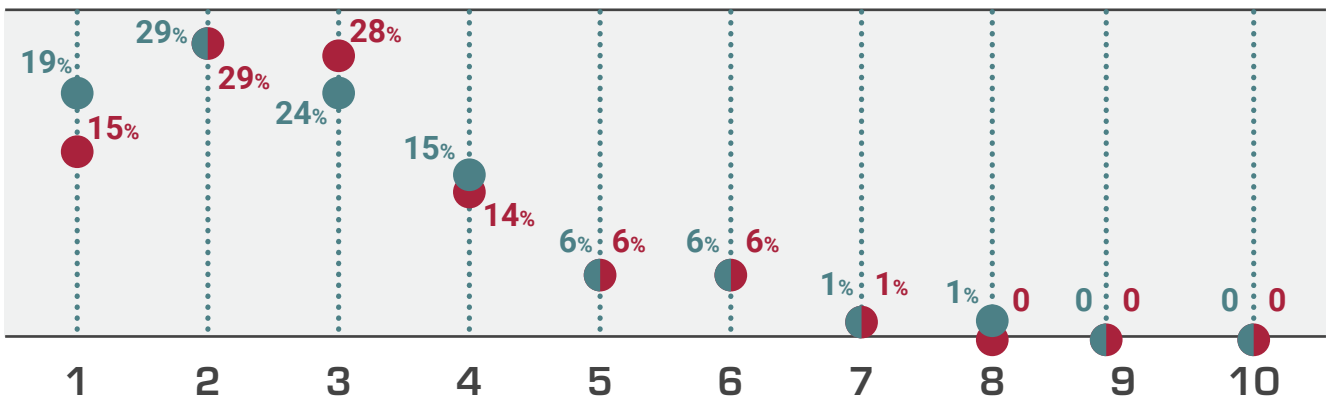


The public's perception to the government's response to health issues:

Prioritization of SPECIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

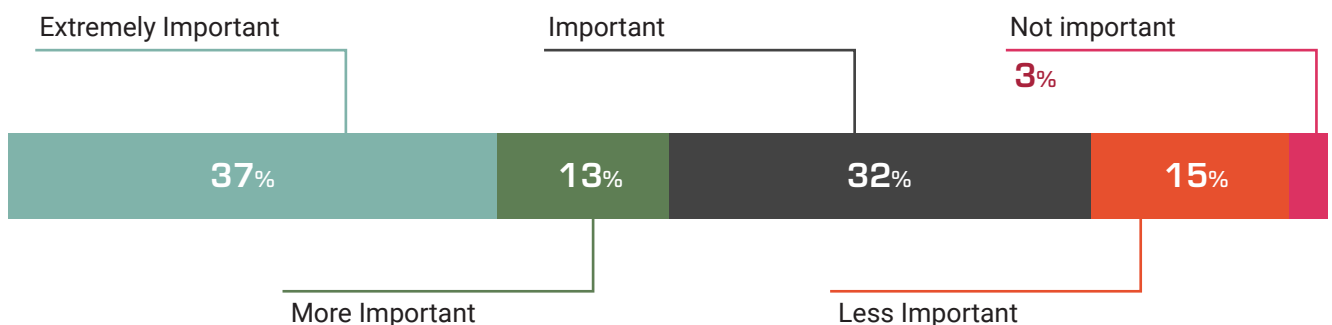
The majority of respondents rated the government's prioritization of those with special healthcare needs as **very low**.

■ Percentage of respondents for government's prioritization in mental health issues
 ■ Percentage of respondents for government's prioritization in special health needs



Need for INNOVATION

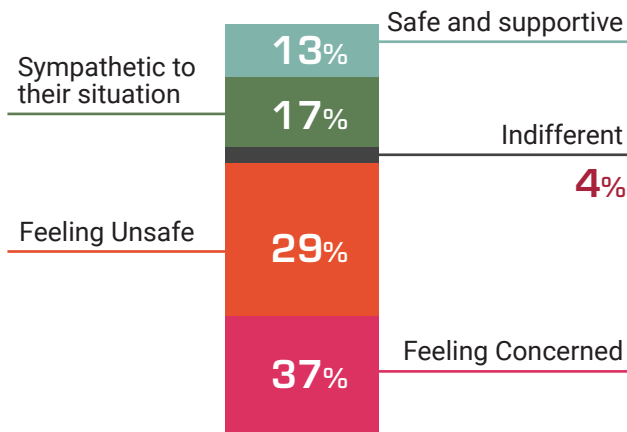
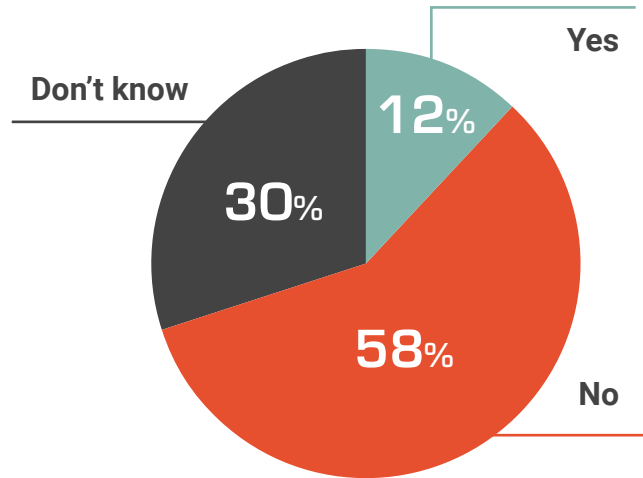
Even under emergency circumstances, **82%** of people responded **positively** when asked if new mechanisms are required to support patients with special health needs.



The public's perception towards the government's response to migrant workers and their reintegration into society:

Reintegration of MIGRANTS

88% of the respondents collectively believed or were not sure whether or not the government was prepared to reintegrate Nepali migrant workers.



Perception of migrants AMONG THE PUBLIC

The majority of people are either concerned (**37%**) or feel unsafe (**29%**) with regard to migrants moving into their communities during this pandemic. This is leading to stigmatization.

Safety of MIGRANTS AND COMMUNITIES

57% of respondents do not believe the government's actions will ensure the safety of migrant workers and the communities they return to.

20%
Good



57%
Bad



23%
Unsure



Significant STIGMATIZATION

As many as half of all migrants are experiencing some sort of stigmatization during the pandemic.



Stranded FAMILY MEMBERS

56% of respondents mentioned they had a family member stranded in a foreign country.

Local government's SUPPORT TOWARDS RETURNEE MIGRANTS

52% of respondents felt the government was not providing enough support for returnee migrants. Local governments are responsible for the management of returnee migrants from quarantine, for their health checkups and for their reintegration into society.



1%
Excellent



5%
Good



42%
Satisfactory



39%
Unsatisfactory



13%
Poor

RECOMMENDATIONS

All respondents were asked to provide recommendations on each section of the survey to the government, which we summarize below.

For **information dissemination**, the government should use social media most in order to reach citizens, while also boosting posts to reach citizens across Nepal. Using television, websites and radio outreach in addition will ensure that everyone is well informed.

The public had very specific needs as to how the government can **support livelihoods** in communities. The majority of Nepalis want the government to make policy changes to support tax payment reductions, cuts to interest rates on loans and efforts to reduce insurance costs. The support packages provided by local governments seem to be insufficient as demand.

To make the **health system more effective**, the government needs to increase the PCR testing rate and ensure safer quarantine facilities. Understanding that health workers are at a very high risk of infection, the public have also asked for better incentives for these health workers and for the procurement of more PPEs to ensure their safety.

The public believe that **engaging returnee migrants in local development** based on their skills is the best solution to reintegrate them into communities. This is also the perfect time to develop returnee migrant friendly local government policies and programs. Encouraging agro-based industry and collective agriculture is also a solution that the public think will support change.

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