

IIDS INSIGHTS

The official newsletter of the Institute for Integrated Development Studies



WORDS OF WISDOM

“At IIDS, we believe in providing space for ideas, diverse and different. In a public and open democratic space, we constantly engage and evolve in dialogue even when our ideas don’t always match. My best wishes to IIDS Insights for its premiere edition”.

AKHILESH UPADHYAY, SENIOR FELLOW, IIDS

“I think it's essential not to limit ourselves to predetermined notions of or paths to success. The fear of change is one of the greatest barriers to creativity, innovation, and leadership. Thus, I aspire to embody courage, boldness, and authenticity. I encourage young people to not be intimidated to express their views, to embrace mistakes and learn from them, to claim their space, and to be unapologetically themselves”.

DIVYA RL RANA, PROGRAM OFFICER AT THE CENTER FOR HUMAN ASSETS, IIDS

IN THIS ISSUE

NEPAL'S AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE: SEEKING AUTONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE TRADE

DIASPORA: FOSTERING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGE AND HUMAN CAPITAL

THE DIGITAL GENDER DIVIDE IN NEPAL: THE IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL INCLUSION

IMPERATIVE FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION IN UNDERSTANDING INGOS

GLOBAL RISK REPORT HIGHLIGHTS (FROM THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM)

BUZZWORTHY TOPIC OF THE MONTH: COFFEE IN THE OFFICE



FROM THE EDITORS:

We are thrilled to announce the first edition of **IIDS Insights**. This would not have been possible without the motivation of the IIDS family. We ensure that **IIDS Insights** will sustain its objective of being a space for creativity, free thinking, and freedom of opinion. We welcome ideas, blogs, policy summaries, and op-eds in IIDS's areas of work and beyond. We encourage writings that showcase the creative dimensions of IIDS. As we embark on this journey, we embrace the three **C's for quality and sustainability: Creativity, Consistency, and Commitment**. We encourage interested contributors to submit their writing in the next edition. Lastly, we thank Dr. Biswash Gauchan and Dr. Sucheta Pyakuryal for their encouragement. As the old Chinese adage goes 'The Journey of a Thousand miles starts with a single step'. Hence, we believe that perfection is an evolving process and small decisions of today can have a profound impact tomorrow. We look forward to sharing **IIDS INSIGHTS** every month.

With Regards,

Ashish Ghimire
Kshitiz Jha
Dilasha Joshi
Kamakshi Shah
Bibhuti Thapa
Aaryan Rijal

FEB RECAP

Here's what happened this month:



February 1

LEARNING THURSDAY

Post-covid Global Order: China's Challenges to the US Supremacy and its Potential Implications for Nepal.

APPRENTICESHIP FAIR

Selected Candidates across various centers were called for interviews and activities.



February 8



February 9

MOVIE ON THE HOUSE (MOTH)

The screening of 'Who's Counting?' followed by an Interactive panel discussion with Dr. Kalpana Khanal, Hon. Dr. Uma Shankar Prasad, Dr. Resham Thapa-Parajuli. The session was moderated by Astha Bhatta.

LEARNING THURSDAY

Effective communication working LARA (Listen, Affirm, Respond, Ask Questions). Facilitated by Kamakshi Shah.



February 15



February 23 & 24

WORKSHOP/WRITESHOP

Developing Policy Briefs on Agricultural Transformation.

Nepal's Agricultural Landscape: Seeking Autonomy and Sustainable Trade

by Sneha Vaidya 

Nepal, a country of farmers, has become a food importer. The competitive advantage of India in supplying food and other household goods has surged because of an increased reliance on the market for food and consumer items. Nepal has long been dependent on India for agricultural products, with non-basmati rice being the largest export from India to Nepal. However, India's ban on rice products to Nepal due to natural disasters should be a lesson for Nepal to produce its agricultural goods. For an agricultural country like Nepal, self-sufficiency must be the agriculture policy priority. However, Nepal should have its production to compete and withstand any future bans without being negatively impacted.

Over the past 20 years, Nepal's agriculture has been governed under the Agricultural Perspective Plan of 1995, which was a flawed policy, according to experts. India's competitive advantage in supplying foods and other household items expanded along with the country's reliance on the market for consumer goods and food. According to Krishna Prasad Pant, an agro economist, Nepal should increase its food production, which helps to diversify its agricultural products and reduce its dependence on India. Nepal heavily relies on the domestic production of crops or plant products, and the deficit is met through imports mainly from India. About 15% of the country's GDP comes from agriculture, employing about 66% of the population.

India's export tariff on rice has sparked food inflation fears in Nepal. It has recently increased the export duty on rice that isn't basmati. Nearly all of Nepal's fine and basmati rice (19,000 tonnes in 2021/22) is imported from India, in terms of value it came up to over Rs 60 billion, but dealers claim the nation has enough stock to last three months.

India's recent on-and-off decision to ban rice exports to Nepal is likely to impact Nepal drastically as most of the rice Nepal imports come from India. This decision could hugely affect the market and food prices in Nepal. The increased duty and ban imposed by India will not only quicken food inflation and disrupt supplies but also encourage illegal trade and push rice industries to the brink of closure. The ban on the export of broken rice will significantly disrupt the beverage, trade, and livestock industries. This shows that Nepal needs to be self-sufficient in producing its rice to avoid such situations in the future.

Nepal's agriculture sector needs to be developed to achieve self-sufficiency. The country must mainstream trade policy, create positive synergies, and avoid contradictions with productive sectors. Nepal should also consider devolving property rights to wildlife to the local level, including the right to allow safari hunting. Community leaders with local knowledge about wildlife and its interface with humans should opt to establish sustainable hunting quotas. Hunting may assist in providing jobs to the people, pay for damaged crops and property, raise money for the construction of clinics, schools, and water wells, also providing meat for the villages, which will, in return, help them to be financially stable to face any consequences.

Subodh Kumar Gupta, president of the Association of Nepalese Rice, Oil, and Pulses Industry, said Nepal should have been excluded from the recently imposed restrictions. The rice export from India to Nepal is nominal compared to its overall exports, but it could hugely affect Nepal's market and food prices. There is a crucial need to seek a solution through diplomatic channels.



The invasion of Ukraine and climate change have widely affected food security worldwide. In such a situation, our policymakers must place relevant agriculture priorities first. Nepal should take the recent ban on rice exports from India as a lesson and start producing its goods such as paddy wheat and barley. Good economic relations with India are essential for Nepal's economic growth and development. On the other hand, Nepal should specialize in the production of goods and services in which it has a comparative advantage.

In response to the pressing agricultural challenges faced by Nepal, a series of policy recommendations have been identified to promote sustainable rural development. These recommendations encompass various facets of agricultural sustainability and address critical issues such as loss of agricultural land, inadequate extension services, limited access to credit and inputs, poor market access, rural electrification, adoption of solar-powered irrigation systems, and climate resilience.

Enforcing strict regulations to combat land fragmentation: To mitigate the loss of valuable agricultural land due to fragmentation, strict land use regulations should be enacted and enforced. This includes implementing zoning policies that designate certain areas as agricultural zones, thereby restricting conversion to non-agricultural use. Furthermore, incentivizing land preservation through measures such as tax breaks or subsidies for landowners committed to maintaining agricultural land integrity can play a pivotal role in preventing fragmentation.

Extension Services: Expanding extension services is crucial for equipping farmers with modern farming practices. Allocating resources towards recruiting and training more agricultural extension officers, establishing mobile extension units to reach remote communities, and fostering partnerships with NGOs and agricultural institutions can significantly enhance the reach and effectiveness of extension services.

Access to Credit and Inputs: Facilitating access to credit and inputs is essential for farmers to optimize productivity. Introducing special agricultural credit programs with favorable terms, providing subsidies for high-quality agricultural inputs, and facilitating the establishment of microfinance institutions targeting farmers can alleviate barriers to agricultural growth.

Market Access: Improving market access is vital for enhancing farmers' income and agricultural production. This can be achieved through investments in market infrastructure development, promotion of market information systems, and support for value-added processing facilities near agricultural production areas.

Rural Electrification Programs: Extending electricity access to rural areas is critical for unlocking agrarian potential. This involves infrastructure investment, subsidies for energy access, and training programs to maximize the benefits of rural electrification, particularly for agricultural purposes.

Solar-Powered Irrigation Systems: Promoting the adoption of solar-powered irrigation systems offers a sustainable solution for enhancing water access in agriculture. Providing subsidies, technical assistance, and investing in research and development initiatives can accelerate the adoption of this technology tailored to the needs of Nepalese farmers.

Climate Resilience: Integrating climate resilience considerations into rural electrification projects and agricultural practices is imperative. This includes climate-resilient infrastructure, promoting climate-adaptive agricultural practices, and establishing early warning systems to mitigate climate-related risks and enhance the resilience of farming systems.



In conclusion, Nepal stands at a critical juncture, recognizing the urgent need for agricultural self-sufficiency. Recent bans on rice exports from India highlight the vulnerability of Nepal's agriculture sector to external disruptions. Moreover, Nepal should leverage diplomatic channels to ensure fair trade practices with neighboring countries. By adopting a holistic approach and fostering partnerships, Nepal can build a resilient and prosperous agricultural sector that serves the needs of its people. As Nepal navigates its path towards agricultural self-reliance, stringent regulations to safeguard agricultural land, expansion of extension services to empower farmers, and facilitation of access to credit and inputs are imperative.

Moreover, enhancing market access, rural electrification, and the adoption of sustainable irrigation systems are pivotal steps towards bolstering agricultural productivity and resilience. Concurrently, integrating climate resilience measures is imperative to mitigate risks associated with climate change.

By embracing these multifaceted strategies, Nepal can forge a path toward a more resilient and prosperous agricultural future, one that ensures food security, empowers rural communities, and fosters sustainable development.

Diaspora: Fostering Socio-economic Change and Human Capital

by Ashish Ghimire 

Historical Context

Britannica defines diaspora as members of an ethnic or religious group, that originated from the same place but dispersed to different locations. The word Diaspora originates in ancient Greek, *dias sperio* meaning 'to sow over'. The terminology became popular in the social sciences after the 1960s. After the fall of Jerusalem in the 6th century BCE with Babylonian captivity, Jewish people had no option but to scatter outside their ancestral land. The Jews, who were deported from their own land, were forced to live in Babylonia for decades until it was lifted by Persian conqueror, Cyrus the great. In Babylonia, Jewish people faced the stark decision of whether to stay or depart. Many people who chose to stay in Babylonia at that time constituted the first diaspora.

Expansion of Diaspora and their contribution

Today, more than 250 Million i.e. 3% of the population live and work outside their country of origin. The dispersion of people across different parts of the world has its own history. For example, the history of the expansion of the Indian diaspora can be rooted in India's colonized past. Today we see many Indian diasporas in the UK, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa. Early Indian diaspora was the result of indentured servitude. The indentured immigration, first accounted in 1830 rose to approximately two million in the next hundred years across different colonies wherein the diaspora's impacts were unparalleled in various sectors such as sociocultural, economic, and political.

Similarly, colonial subjects of Chinese, Japanese, Javanese, and Melanians, working under long-form written contracts, had an impact on the 19th and 20th-century colonial plantation world. The laborers were taken abroad to plant tea, coffee, rubber, and sugar, mine gold, and construct railroads in the British colonies. As far as the history of migration of Africans in North America and Europe is concerned, the transatlantic slave trade resulted in a significant increase in the diaspora. Between 1500 and 1800, around 12-15 million people were forcefully taken and used as enslaved labor in the Americas. It is estimated that more than two million enslaved people died in the middle passage. Since the 19th century, the migration of unskilled laborers to get jobs in agriculture or industrial sectors has resulted in the expansion of the diaspora. Today, more than 250 Million i.e. 3% of the population live and work outside their country of origin.

Nearly 10 years ago in 2015, this group of people contributed \$600 Billion. In the 2017-2021 cycle, the Asian diaspora's average contribution to Global GDP was 0.5%. This contribution was possible through remittances. This phenomenon underscores the vibrant diaspora of Global North could reform the Global South, their ancestral land with underutilized resources.

Some Diasporic Initiatives

There have been many diasporic initiatives undertaken by various countries. Considering the example of Diaspora bonds, they are issued by the state as well as non-state actors such as private companies to raise financing from diasporas overseas. These bonds are useful in the developing world where long-term growth and employment opportunities are impacted by the shortage of capital. Such bonds assist countries in crises by diversifying funding sources by borrowing from expatriates.

To keep the Jewish diaspora engaged, the government of Israel has issued diaspora bonds by providing "patriotic" discounts on borrowing costs since 1951. Indian authorities, on the other hand, issued diasporic bonds during the balance of payment crisis in 1991. \$1.6 Billion was raised by India Development Bonds (IDBs). In another instance, after the imposition of sanctions in 1998 following the nuclear explosion, the diasporas came to the rescue. It is assumed that home bias towards their ancestral land also compels them to purchase such bonds.

The International Organization of Migration (IOM), based on the lesson from the Return and Reintegration of Qualified African Nationals program (RQAM) launched Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA). MIDA aims to build institutional capacity and create collaboration between African migrants and the demand of the country of origin wherein skills and resources are transferred. It targets qualified human resources such as Professionals, Skilled Workers, Teachers, and Specialists.

For instance, "Ethiopian diaspora.info" funded by the Italian government provides accurate information about the Ethiopian diaspora. The database will be useful for assessing skills and human resources, also facilitating the contribution towards the prosperity of ancestral land.

MIDA optimizes impact of migrant remittances to Africa by promoting relevant policies for migration and development. Long back in 2003, MIDA launched a pilot distance-learning program aimed at transferring skills and reach a wider audience using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The output was possible with cooperation of universities in Belgium and Democratic Republic of Congo. Such programs have extended to Rwanda and Burundi as well.

Large numbers of Chinese and Indian diaspora have acted as bridges between their country of origin and the globe. These groups of people provide transnational professional services, transfer technology from academia and scientists and accumulate foreign currencies in their home countries. These countries offer concession on citizenship and voting rights to bolster their contribution in knowledge, technology and skills. India receives highest amount of remittances (US\$83 Billion) followed by China (US\$60 Billion) and Mexico (US\$43 Billion).



Santa Clara County of California distributed multilingual stickers during 2020 elections.

Evolving Nepali Diaspora

The history of the expansion of the Nepali diaspora goes long back. Nepali diaspora's quantity and influence have increased over the years, and so has their responsibility. Newari traders and artisans of Kathmandu valley traveled to Shigatse, Gyantse, and Lhasa region of Tibet when Nepal was the main trade route between India and Tibet. There is evidence that a large number of Nepali Brahmins settled in Kashi in the 18th century for the learning purpose. The prevalence of Gorkha rifles in the British and Indian Army expanded Nepali diaspora across multiple countries such as the UK, India, Singapore and Myanmar. Above mentioned group is a tiny portion of Nepali population.

A few decades back, most Nepali citizens had very few alternatives when choosing their preferred destination for work or study abroad. A large portion of Nepalese went to India for work and study. Things started changing in the early 2000s when Nepalese started preferring Gulf countries, thanks to higher wages, low cost of migration, and high accessibility.

Nepali diaspora has expanded and grown significantly in Western countries, propelled by globalization and a wide array of opportunities. Nepali diaspora has contributed culturally, economically and politically in their ancestral land. Considering economic contribution, remittances have helped the country sustain financially. Senior Fellow of the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS), Ambika P. Adhikary estimates the annual income of Nepali diaspora (excluding Nepali diaspora in India) to be around \$35 Billion.

Considering Adhikary's estimation, the Nepali diaspora's income is more than two-thirds of Nepal's GDP. According to the World Bank, personal remittances per GDP stand at 22.8% (\$9.29 Billion) in 2022. Notably, 33% of Nepalese who obtained Permanent Resident (PR) in the United States engaged in professional and managerial work whereas 60% of Nepalese diaspora in Australia are considered highly educated. In Gulf countries, most Nepalese migrants are less educated and semi-skilled. The former group earns more money than the latter but the contribution of both groups is matchless across various sectors of Nepal. It is mentionable that the everyday life of the Nepali diaspora in the Gulf region and Global North may be different and subjective.

The identity-based attachment to the country of origin inspires the diaspora to be involved in philanthropic and developmental works. The relationship is such that the diaspora acts as cultural brokers in a transnational setting with the possibility of transforming the economic and social life of their ancestral land. Established in 2003, Non Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) aims to develop a strong network of diaspora representing the interest and concerns of their ancestral land. Similarly, initiatives like The Great Nepali Diaspora have been able to facilitate cross-border learning and knowledge transfer and build a network of professionals for the collective benefit of all involved.

Diaspora for Education Development

The increasing Nepali diaspora can contribute to Nepal's education through technology, knowledge and skills transfer. Their contribution to Nepal's education can have a spillover effect in the socio-economic, cultural and technological development of the country. The contribution of the Nepali diaspora in the establishment of Nepal Open University stands as a notable example of their contribution to the education sector. Open University Nepal initiative led by diaspora leaders of the USA, Canada and Australia and hundreds of diaspora globally in 2009 was materialized as Nepal Open University in 2016 under the act of parliament. This university offers distance learning education to people of marginalized communities and remote areas.

At a time when more than 100,000 Nepali students are obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) with more than 550 colleges about to be dysfunctional, there is a pressing need to evaluate Nepal's education system and consider possible intervention. The status of Higher education is in crisis as the nation's oldest Tribhuvan University is embroiled in political interference, corruption, and organizational discontent. These issues are likely to jeopardize the future aspirations of the students. The retention rate is quite low at the secondary level as two-thirds of students enrolled in grade one drop out of school when they reach class 12. This is why the support of the Nepal diaspora is crucial to support skills, resources, and networks, thereby improving the system.



The nation's oldest Tribhuvan University is entangled with political interference and corruption, leading to a decline in quality education.

Brajesh Panth, former Chief of the Education Sector Group at ADB, believes that brain circulation is possible beyond Brain drain or brain gain. He thinks university can be a suitable place where the diaspora can be integrated for knowledge sharing. At the IIDS Policy Conclave in December 2023, the diaspora's role in education development was highly considered a top policy priority expected to yield positive results. To engage the diaspora in education, the role of the Non-Resident Nepali Association as well as the Government of Nepal is equally important for effectiveness. Most importantly, the Nepal government should make policies that can match local needs and the diaspora's aspirations.

The Digital Gender Divide In Nepal: The importance of digital inclusion

by Kamakshi Shah 

The digital divide can be defined as unequal access to technology, including smartphones, laptops, tablets, cellular networks, and the internet. The digital gender gap refers to the disparity in women's access to digital infrastructure, digital skills, and participation in technical education.

According to the World Economic Forum, even though most people live in places covered by broadband networks, 33% of the global population are offline. Most of this number includes women and girls from developing countries. Similarly, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) state that internet use is tied to countries' overall development. While 93 percent of high-income countries are online, only 27 percent of the Global South are.



ITU's data also shows that only 20 percent of women (and 34 percent of men) in least developed countries are online. Similarly, women and girls are 13 percent less likely to own a mobile phone. According to the UN Women's Gender Snapshot 2022 report, the exclusion of women from the digital realm has cost the world \$1 trillion from the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of low- and middle-income countries in the last decade. Without a gender responsive approach to technological innovation, this loss is expected to grow to \$1.5 trillion by 2025.

Nepal is far behind in digital transformation. In the Digital Quality of Life Index (DQL), Nepal is ranked 94 out of 121 countries. Similarly, in the most recent Networked Readiness Index (NRI), the country was ranked 114 out of 139 countries. The picture of the digital gender divide holds true for Nepal. In 2022, it was found that less than 22 percent of Nepal's women/girls own smartphones. Additionally, while the country has made reasonable progress in the digital financial ecosystem (with 22.6 million mobile banking customers and 17.9 million internet banking customers), only 3 percent of women have used the internet or a mobile phone to access bank accounts. In an increasingly digitized world, access to technology and digital literacy is no longer a luxury—it is a necessity.

According to the OECD, "The Internet, digital platforms, mobile phones and digital financial services offer 'leapfrog' opportunities for all and can help bridge the divide by giving women the possibility to earn additional income, increase their employment opportunities, and access knowledge and general information". Digital inclusion is essential for education, employment, and access to (basic) services. Increasing women's access to technology supports financial inclusion and digital literacy among other things. Since regions with higher internet use have higher gender parity scores, access to technology cannot be overlooked while discussing gender equality. Digital transformation has the potential to place Nepal in the global digital ecosystem. Doing so with a gender responsive lens can help carve a pathway towards gender parity within the country.

Some Ways Forward:

- **Investments in Digital Infrastructure:** Now more than ever, investments in technology should be prioritized. Budgets need to be put towards increasing connectivity to close the digital gap between urban and rural parts of the country. There needs to be an intentional effort from public and private entities to:
 - Increase internet access in rural areas: There is a stark difference in connectivity between urban and rural parts of the country leading to a major digital divide. The cost of internet services is a barrier for people with limited resources. Given the already existing inequality due to patriarchal norms and expectations, the divide affects rural women more. Without an intervention, the lack of connectivity will cost the overall development of the country.
 - Increase the number of physical infrastructures: The number of computers is extremely low in Nepal (4.37 computers per 1000 people), which harms quality education and skills development.



- **Digital Literacy:** According to the Digital Nepal Framework (DNF), the internet's full potential is yet to be utilized among (low-income, less educated) Nepali citizens. This literacy among women and girls would empower them to independently navigate the digital world.
 - Vocational Training: Nepali women tend to have lower enrolment than men in technical and vocational training programs. Bridging the digital gender gap requires women's active participation in them. Creating spaces for women (both with and without formal education) to learn the basics of technology can help advance digital literacy. As part of the UNDP's COVID Response and Socio-Economic Recovery Project, they collaborated with Laxmi Bank to provide skills training to 150 people (from vulnerable backgrounds) to use QR codes and digital transactions. This is evidence highlighting how such programs empower women to be digitally aware and active.
 - STEM Workshops: The DNF also acknowledges that despite the prevalence of technology in various spheres of everyday life, digital education has not been prioritized in the education system. Promoting STEM education among young girls through workshops and non-academic settings has the potential to spark their interest in technology, which could later increase the representation of women in STEM.

Imperative for Ethnographic Exploration in Understanding INGOs

by Vibhav Pradhan 

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) (in this article, the more popular term INGO/International Non-Government Organisations is used henceforth) are often critiqued for their service delivery or humanitarian role; they are subject to criticism for being contextually naïve and normative in their approach, thus making their policy solutions too abstract for practice. They are also seen as part of a compromised institutional structure that reflect established structures of power. Critical Gramscian scholars particularly focus INGOs as a medium through which governments rule through consent as much as coercion to propagate existing hegemonies. Others point to INGOs being ethnocentric or essentially a western concept and raise questions as to whether the Global South even requires west-centred development strategies, that continue their biases towards what scholar David Lewis calls 'big D' development, anymore. Among such critiques, an ethnographic perspective is an alternative to study INGOs' roles and functions and presents itself as a good management tool to add to our understanding of INGOs. The following essay looks three key insights that have emerged as a result of employing ethnographic perspective in understanding INGOs.



First, there exists a dilemma in the management of INGOs. Owing to their diluted and often conflicting definitions that range from 'civil society' or 'third sector' to 'non-profit' or 'development partner', as well as the presence of multiple stakeholders and a workforce that is often voluntary and transient in nature, INGOs face an identity crisis which has resulted in the problem of its effective management. Effectively managing such diversity and finding solutions is tricky as INGOs deal with consolidating ideological differences, variation in access to power and agency, and other functional differences and points of contentions. These tensions and change in INGOs comprise of components that presents as management challenges; evolving change, episodic change, inherent dilemmas, and conflicting logics.

Consequently, INGOs rely on a normative management practise which entails symbolic rewards, context-based solutions, and an appeal to shared values and idealism rather than on standardised management tools, practises and other remunerative techniques as is the case with profit-based business or organisations. Normative management stresses on social capital as the key measure to influence discretionary value-driven behaviour of stakeholders and its effect on INGOs. In fact, utilisation of normative management to enforce compliance and commitment of their workers has given rise to 'third sector' INGOs which are distinct from public and private sectors in terms of their working motivations, management, and organisational structure.

Second, among such normative management tools, ethnography is part of the larger anthropological approaches in managing INGOs that have yielded consequential outcomes. Anthropological approaches especially explore the 'everyday lives' of development aid workers as a comparatively less-researched approach to normative management style. Taking up Robert Chamber's proposal to make 'primacy of the personal', Anne Meike Fechter in 2012 looked at the agency and visibility of the workers in international aid and development as being crucial in understanding how development INGOs function. Fechter problematise the motivations of development INGO as being based on a selfless and altruistic act. In fact, she found that INGO workers are often motivated by the material privileges provided to international aid workers (increased salary and wealthy lifestyle, diplomatic passports, per diem salary, opportunity to travel, etc.) that instead influence many to join. While the focus on the ethnographic approach to include development workers and their 'daily lives' questions the altruistic motivations, it also raises doubts on the perceived apolitical image of workers. Especially those working for high-profile UN agencies, the World Bank, and international partners were often treated with a heightened biased regard by aid recipients which helped them acquire more engagement and contextual on-ground knowledge. While INGOs often negate the personal elements of their workers, who are expected to be invisible facilitators whose only job is to link policy with practice, this bias suggests INGO workers also have agency and political interest that influence their functions.

Keeping the ethnographic focus on the 'daily lives' of aid workers, scholar Mona Girgis found that face-to-face interaction between international aid workers and aid recipients through long-term field visits and participant observations not only result in better aid outcomes, but it also leads to improvement in capacity development, mutual friendships, and future partnerships between them. It particularly provides agency to the aid-recipient as their concerns and wants are perceived to be acknowledged by the INGO which helps to form need-based solutions. This two-way dynamic process of interaction between aid-giving INGOs and aid-recipients is an especially important progress in INGOs working in development sector as it sets a precedent that challenges the frequent critique of INGOs in foreign aid and development work as being one-way, west-centric process. As has been documented well, humanitarian INGOs have received particular resistance from Global South for the hegemonic and democratising role western INGOs play through the politics of humanitarian aid and imposition of their political, socio-cultural agendas and other priori pre-conditions.

Third, participation of ethnographic actors as policy workers and consultants in development work has generated a new epistemic methodology for studying INGOs effectiveness. Ethnographic methods have shown to be well suited to study interrelations, local impact of development, and other political-economic associations which are building blocks for potential future research and INGO involvement. Studies from the Global South that have employed ethnographic perspective have yielded rich bottom-up insights and cross-cutting data that look at intersecting and nuanced dynamics, which is only possible through deeply embedded ethnographic studies which help in policy making for INGOs involved. Since international development work is inherently international, intercultural and multi-scaler, it therefore requires extensive networks and active participation of local partners that ethnographies provide. In fact, scholars like JA Scholte, 1998 argue that in a truly globalised context, the effectiveness of donor aid can only be studied in specific specialised locations like offices, churches, restaurants, farms, etc. which makes ethnography the ideal form of study for development INGOs. Despite this, scholars have pointed to the continued tendency of ethnographic studies to give continuation to binary divisions of aid-giver and aid-recipient, and the resulting power dynamics at play. Ethnographic studies thus continue the practise of the 'othering' in INGOs' theory and practice, which explains why many development INGOs continue the jargon that propagate politics of foreign aid and myopic policy solutions.

In conclusion, taking an ethnographic perspective has yielded three key insights. First, owing to the diverse set of definitions, INGOs face a dilemma in its management of workers which requires normative tool that focuses on symbolic, value-driven, and context-specific solutions. Second, ethnography is one such normative management tool that places the focus on 'everyday lives' of development INGO workers whose agency and visibility problematises their motivations of joining INGOs. Understanding the 'political' nature of INGO worker also challenges INGO workers being invisible. While this personalisation of the development worker through ethnographic approach helps to yield interactional engagement and partnership, it also helps avoid the criticisms INGOs face of being west-centric. Third, ethnographic approach has changed the methodology of gauging INGOs effectiveness as ethnographies become more accepted, especially in the Global South. Despite its tendency towards othering between the aid-giver and recipient, ethnographic studies provide avenue for context-rich data that have increased the utility of INGOs.



In the recently published 19th edition of The Global Risk Report 2024, stakeholders such as Civil Society, International Organizations, Government and Private Sectors contributed in the research. This report was published in January 2024.

Global Risk ranked by severity over short-term (2 Years)

1. Misinformation and disinformation
2. Extreme weather events
3. Societal polarization
4. Cyber insecurity
5. Interstate armed conflict
6. Lack of economic opportunity
7. Inflation
8. Involuntary migration
9. Economic downturn
10. Pollution

Global Risk ranked by severity over long-term (10 Years)

1. Extreme weather events
2. Critical change to Earth systems
3. Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse
4. Natural resource shortages
5. Misinformation and disinformation
6. Adverse outcomes of AI technologies
7. Involuntary migration
8. Cyber insecurity
9. Societal polarization
10. Pollution

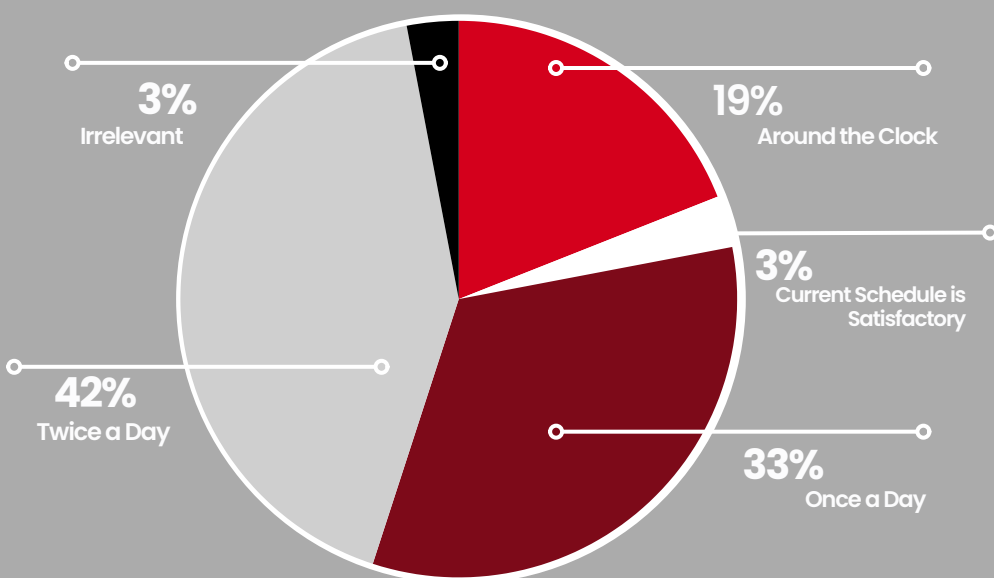
Source: World Economic Forum Global Risk Perception Survey

THE BUZZWORTHY TOPIC OF THE MONTH

Survey by Dilasha Joshi



Coffee in the Office



"Around the clock because everyone will be immune to it soon and it will be like once a day"

"It will not work if we open Bi-monthly"

"Can we have a coffee maker like the one in the executive floor"

"We can manage the coffee ourselves if a coffee maker is installed"

"I think we could have coffee option in addition to the regular tea"

IIDS

Institute for Integrated
Development Studies • 1979