

Promoting a Healthy, Protected, and Productive Workforce; and Addressing the Expanded Riskscape in Asia and the Pacific. Extended Scope: Latin America and the Caribbean

Promoviendo una mano de obra sana, protegida, y productiva; y abordando la expansión del panorama de riesgos en Asia-Pacífico, Latinoamérica, y el Caribe

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Abstract

This position paper, drafted by Nepal's delegate to the National Model United Nations 2024 (NMUN), which received the Outstanding Position Paper Award, presented at the closing ceremony at the United Nations headquarters directly addresses two of Nepal's main objectives: promoting a healthy, protected, and productive workforce and addressing the expanding risk landscape in Asia-Pacific. It advocates coordinated policies for formalizing employment, strengthening occupational safety, and achieving universal health coverage. Recommendations include targeted skills training, incentives for formalization, improved early warning systems, and integration of disaster risk reduction into national development planning. The paper also draws lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean to enrich the analysis and promote collaborative, sustainable resilience strategies.

Keywords

Workforce, Riskscape, APAC, Latin America and the Caribbean, ESCAP, United Nations.

Resumen

Este documento de posición, redactado por el delegado de Nepal en el Modelo Nacional de las Naciones Unidas 2024 (NMUN), que recibió el Premio al Mejor Documento de Posición, presentado en la ceremonia de clausura en la sede de las Naciones Unidas, aborda directamente dos de los principales objetivos de Nepal: promover una fuerza laboral saludable, protegida y productiva, y abordar el panorama de riesgos en expansión en Asia-Pacífico. Este aboga por políticas coordinadas para formalizar el empleo, fortalecer la seguridad laboral y lograr la cobertura sanitaria universal. Las recomendaciones incluyen la formación profesional específica, incentivos para la formalización, la mejora de los sistemas de alerta temprana y la integración de la reducción del riesgo de desastres en la planificación nacional de desarrollo. El documento también extrae lecciones de América Latina y el Caribe para enriquecer el análisis y promover estrategias de resiliencia colaborativas y sostenibles.

Palabras clave

Mano de Obra, Desastres Naturales, APAC, Latinoamérica y el Caribe, CESPAP, Naciones Unidas.

Introduction

In the wake of global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic aftermath and the escalating risks of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, promoting a healthy, protected, and productive workforce stands as a critical imperative for nations across Asia and the Pacific. This imperative is particularly resonant in the context of Nepal, as articulated by its engagement with the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to address the multifaceted issues surrounding labor protection, health, and productivity. The intricate global landscape underscores the urgency of these efforts. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, a profound job crisis loomed, accentuating poverty and inequality worldwide. UN statistics reveal a significant increase in global unemployment rates, with millions either jobless or withdrawing from the labor market (United Nations Statistics Division [UNSD], 2022). Besides, a substantial portion of the global workforce operates within the informal sector, facing vulnerabilities further exacerbated by evolving labor realities like digital work (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). Regionally, the impact is profound as highlighted by the vulnerabilities exposed within the informal economy during the COVID-19 crisis. Policy interventions from institutions like the International Labor Organization (ILO) and regional bodies such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have sought to safeguard and empower workers while transitioning towards formality to ensure decent work and job creation (ILO, & The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020). This paper is guided by the central question: How can Nepal and other ESCAP Member States design integrated strategies that simultaneously strengthen labor systems and disaster resilience?

Nationally, Nepal confronts these challenges amidst socioeconomic complexities. A significant proportion of the population remains entrenched in the informal economy, contributing substantially to the country's GDP but also susceptible to adverse health and labor conditions (ILO, 2018). Alarming rates of job-related illnesses and vulnerabilities underscore the imperative for workplace safety and health regulations. Recognizing these challenges, Nepal positions itself within global and regional frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2023a). The commitment to enhancing health systems and achieving universal health coverage exemplifies Nepal's dedication to improving the well-being of its citizens (Karkee & Comfort, 2016). In response to these pressing issues, Nepal advocates for intensified international collaboration through platforms like ESCAP, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive strategy to

transition workers from the informal to the formal sector, advocating for training modules tailored to evolving job landscapes, and incentivizing formalization within the ESCAP framework.

Moreover, the expanded riskscape in Asia and the Pacific requires robust Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) strategies to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters, since it is the most disaster-prone region in the world, with almost 45 percent of all natural disasters occurring here, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2018). Nepal, being highly vulnerable to natural hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, and floods, emphasizes the importance of international cooperation in enhancing disaster resilience; this involves improving early warning systems and emergency response mechanisms and integrating DRR into broader development planning (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). Through ESCAP, Nepal aims to foster collaboration with Member States to share knowledge, best practices, and technologies to enhance resilience and response capabilities for natural disasters (ESCAP, 2022b).

The expanded analysis also includes perspectives from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), another disaster-prone region with unique challenges in fostering a healthy, protected, and productive workforce. LAC faces significant economic inequality, a high level of informality, and varying degrees of labor rights enforcement, which collectively impact the labor market (UNDP, 2021). The region's vulnerability to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods further complicates efforts to ensure workforce safety and productivity (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2022a). By examining these broader contexts, this paper aims to present a broader analytical lens of the necessary strategies and collaborative efforts required to address the complex issues of labor protection and disaster risk in a changing global landscape.

1. Context Statement

Two critical issues are presented before the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP): Promoting a Healthy, Protected, and Productive Workforce in Asia and the Pacific and Addressing the Expanded Riskscape in Asia and the Pacific. The government of Nepal acknowledges the importance of these topics for the social and economic development of the society in the region and, therefore, is looking forward to and disposed to discuss these matters to cooperate in finding effective responses that enhance the integral well-being of the population. This commitment aligns with Nepal's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act (2074), Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Rules (2076) (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019), and the ILO's and Nepal's 2024 joint Safety + Health for All

Programme (ILO, 2024b), which provide a legislative and strategic framework for advancing workforce protection and natural disaster resilience.

2. Promoting a Healthy, Protected, and Productive Workforce

2.1 Global Context

As Nepal endeavors to engage constructively with the United Nations ESCAP to promote a healthy, protected, and productive workforce, the delegation emphasizes the profound importance and contextual intricacies surrounding this issue. On a global scale, after the COVID-19 pandemic, a worldwide job crisis posed a severe risk of exacerbating poverty and expanding inequality, with the possible long-term effect of transitioning from an employment problem to a societal one (Silva, Sousa, Packard, & Robertson, 2021). As stated by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), the unemployment rate worldwide increased by one percentage point to six-point-five percent, the jobless population amounting to 220 million individuals, with another 81 million abandoning the labor market altogether (UNSD, 2022). Additionally, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) indicates that over two billion individuals, or more than 60 percent of the working population worldwide, live in the informal sector (UNDP, 2022). Furthermore, non-traditional types of employment are expanding, as evidenced by the growth of digital labor platforms, among other new labor realities (ILO, 2024a). In summary, global evidence underscores the urgency of coordinated policy responses that address informality, enhance workplace protections, and promote equitable access to decent work.

2.2 Regional Perspectives: Asia-Pacific and LAC

The vulnerabilities of the informal economy have been abundantly clear by the COVID-19 crisis, emphasizing the need for policy efforts to protect and empower informal workers and enterprises while easing their gradual transitions to formality to promote decent work and job creation and prevent the spread of poverty and inequality (ILO, & The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020). Specific policies and decisions within the UN that advocate for advancing these issues are significantly reflected in the International Labor Organization (ILO) programs. One in particular that has advanced this agenda around the world is the "Safety + Health for All" program, which has, with its sub-regional project targeted to Plantation Workers in South Asia, improved occupational safety and health

(OHS) conditions for workers by strengthening national and local institutions, creating initiatives to improve and standardize workplace and industry level practices and more (ILO, 2024b). Approaches that stand out in the global sphere are the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDG's) efforts, specifically for Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG Eight) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2023a) and Good Health and Well-Being (SDG Three) (UN DESA, 2023b), both setting an international standard and a roadmap on how to tackle the issues at hand. Also, significant research by the ILO is presented in the Global Employment Policy Review of 2023, its main findings contrasting the necessity of targeting comprehensive labor market interventions, like conditional cash transfer programs or expansionary measures by the introduction of employment and income-support measures towards the youth and women since the pandemic had a disproportionate impact on them (ILO, 2023).

Additionally, at the regional level, the efforts go way back, with the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) showcasing noteworthy work by adapting and narrowing the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for the South Asian region to allow for cooperation within by the sharing of methodologies and practices to better adapt policies and programs to the everchanging and demanding labor market, among other efforts (Heyzer, n.d.). Concretely, actions by the ESCAP do not fall behind, with the committee implementing and setting up multiple comprehensive reports and initiatives, for instance, the Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific 2022 policy report on "The Workforce We Need" (ESCAP, 2022a) and the seventh session of the sixth-eight September 2022 Bangkok meetings on the ESCAP Committee on Social Development, which both reinforce the need of nations in the region to improve access to decent jobs through active labor market policies, to develop normative frameworks and dedicated institutions, and provide universal health coverage and social protection to workers (ESCAP, 2022b). Finally, the ESCAP's 2021 Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific provides a multifaceted course of action powered by policy recommendations set to inspire necessary bold reforms to reprioritize expenditures supported by tax reforms, all on the basis that a robust social contract between the government and its people should be built on the principles of fair employment for all and developed social security and healthcare (ESCAP, 2021).

On the other hand, Latin America and the Caribbean have particular difficulties in fostering a safe, healthy, and effective labor force, with significant economic inequality, an elevated level of informality, and differing levels of labor rights that define the labor market in the region. Economic inequality in LAC is among the highest in the world (second, to be precise) (United Nations Development Programme

[UNDP], 2021). Despite progress in poverty reduction over the past decades, significant disparities remain. The wealth gap is evident in income and access to education, healthcare, and social protection (UNDP, 2021). High levels of informality exacerbate these issues, as informal workers typically lack job security, health benefits, and social protection.

The vulnerability of informal workers who lacked access to primary healthcare and social protections was further highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), around 76 percent of independent contractors and slightly more than one-third of salaried employees were informal (Maurizio, 2021); this includes a wide range of jobs, from street vending and domestic work to informal agricultural labor and gig economy roles. These workers may be more susceptible to health and financial shocks as they often face unstable employment, low pay, and restricted access to social security benefits. Addressing these issues requires targeted policy interventions and a commitment to formalizing employment (Abramo, 2022). Furthermore, workplace health and safety are critical concerns in LAC. Informal workers often face hazardous working conditions without adequate protective measures; this includes exposure to dangerous materials, long working hours, and a lack of healthcare services. Formal workers, while somewhat better protected, still face significant challenges. For example, industrial accidents and occupational diseases are common in the mining, construction, and agriculture sectors (*Organización Internacional del Trabajo* [OIT], 2022).

Regional efforts have been made to improve labor conditions and promote decent work. The “Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation” framework adopted by the ILO in 2015, acts as a powerful tool for moving closer to achieving the SDGs (ILO, 2024c) as well as the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions guidelines, which, alongside participating agencies like the ILO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and more, provides a clear pathway to tackle the issue of high informality by suggesting strategic objectives and actions lines with aims of being tailored by country. These initiatives promote policies to improve labor inspections, enhance social protection, and encourage informal enterprises' formalization (Global Accelerator, 2022). Access to social protections and labor rights varies widely across the region. Countries like Brazil and Argentina have relatively robust labor laws and social security systems, but enforcement can be inconsistent (Cossio & Di Pietra, 2023). In contrast, countries like Guatemala may have weaker labor protections and limited social safety nets associated with manufacturers' inadequate adherence to labor laws and the labor inspectorate's lax enforcement (U.S. Department of Labor, 2024). Ultimately,

these regional perspectives highlight the shared need for targeted interventions, social protection expansion, and cross-border cooperation to build resilient labor markets.

2.3 National Efforts: Nepal, Brazil, and Mexico

Nepal acknowledges the significance of this topic as reflected in the national context, where the average salary stands at USD 7,391, with 20.3 percent of the population living below the National Poverty Line, according to the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) jointly developed Multidimensional Poverty Index report (2021). ILO estimates that more than 70 percent of the economically active population is involved in the informal economy, accounting for 38.6 percent of the country's GDP (ILO, 2018). Dejectedly, the latest World Bank development update pointed out the lowest GDP growth rate since 2020, powered by a considerable labor productivity deficit compared to regional and structural peers (landlocked and with high remittances). In terms of labor protection and labor health, Nepal suffers from a high rate of child workers, lofty percentages of mental and respiratory diseases, and towering reports of anemia cases due to inadequate nutrition and high workload (The World Bank, 2024). The delegation acknowledges that adverse environments, challenging work circumstances, and mental strain all contribute to a high rate of job-related illnesses. As a result, steps should be taken to enhance workplace safety and health regulations.

Reflecting on both international and national precedents, Nepal has demonstrated a commitment to the well-being of its citizens as a signatory to the 1978, convened by the WHO and UNICEF Alma-Ata Declaration, which focuses on primary health care as the key to achieving an effective health system (Adhikari, Mishra, & Schwarz, 2022). It is also evident through the "New Nepal, Healthy Nepal" initiative addressed by the Ministry of Health and Population, where all citizens can access primary healthcare centers (Karkee & Comfort, 2016). Furthermore, with the Nepal Quality Health Systems Program, a USD 103.84 million joint venture with the World Bank, the Nepalese government is further propelling its journey towards universal health coverage, enhancing efficiency and responsiveness of the health system, promoting sustainable financing and social protection in health, and promoting equitable access to quality health services (The World Bank, 2023).

As for Latin America, national efforts in the region are present, like in Brazil; for instance, the "*Simples Nacional*" tax regime simplifies tax obligations for small businesses, encouraging them to transition from the informal to the formal sector (The World Bank, 2021). Similarly, Mexico's

"Prospera" program provides conditional cash transfers to low-income families, linking financial aid to school attendance and health check-ups, thereby addressing poverty and informality (Sevilla, 2023). Additionally, regional cooperation is crucial in promoting labor standards and protections. Organizations like the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) facilitate dialogue and cooperation on labor issues. These bodies work to harmonize labor standards, share best practices, and coordinate efforts to protect workers' rights across the region. However, despite these efforts, significant challenges remain. Political instability, corruption, regional division, and weak governance can undermine labor reforms (Bermúdez, 2018). Additionally, the rapid technological changes due to digitalization pose new challenges and opportunities for the labor market. The rise of digital platforms, for example, has created new forms of informal employment that often fall outside traditional labor protections (Junfeng, 2024). This comparative overview illustrates how tailored national policies, supported by strong institutional frameworks, are critical for driving sustainable labor reforms.

2.4 Going Forward: Policy Recommendations

In light of the challenges outlined, the delegation of Nepal proposes a multifaceted approach to address the complex issue of promoting a healthy, protected, and productive workforce. Firstly, advocating for intensified international collaboration through platforms like ESCAP, emphasizing the need for coordinated efforts in developing policies that safeguard and empower workers. Moreover, it recognizes the success of programs like the ILO "Safety + Health for All" (ILO, 2024b), urging Member States to support and replicate such initiatives, particularly those targeted at vulnerable sectors like the informal economy. Nepal believes a comprehensive strategy should be adopted to transition workers from informal to formal employment, promoting decent work conditions and job creation. To this end, the establishment of training and skill development modules tailored to the evolving job landscape within these programs is recommended. Within the ESCAP, a program can be established to provide financial incentives for businesses embracing formalization, which would be pivotal in driving this transformation. In conclusion, Nepal emphasizes the importance of collaborative, innovative, and context-specific solutions to address Member States' workforce challenges. By pooling resources, knowledge, and experiences, states can pave the way to build within the ESCAP an initiative to assemble a more resilient, inclusive, healthy, protected, and productive workforce.

For the LAC region, moving forward, it is apparent that there is a somewhat urgent need to prioritize comprehensive

labor reforms that address the root causes of informality and inequality; this includes strengthening labor inspection systems, expanding social protection coverage, and promoting inclusive economic growth. Investments in education and vocational training are also crucial to equip workers with the skills needed for the evolving job market (UNDP, 2021). Furthermore, embracing digitalization can create new opportunities for formal employment and social protection. Digital platforms can facilitate access to financial services, healthcare, and market opportunities for informal workers (Cadena, White, & Lamanna, 2023). However, regulatory frameworks must be adapted to ensure that workers in the gig economy and other non-traditional forms of employment are adequately protected (Global Accelerator, 2022). In conclusion, promoting a healthy, protected, and productive workforce in Latin America and the Caribbean requires a multifaceted approach that combines robust labor policies, regional cooperation, and innovative solutions. The region could then build a more inclusive and resilient labor market that benefits all workers by addressing the structural issues contributing to informality and inequality.

3. Addressing the expanded riskscape

3.1 Global Context

Natural hazards have become more acute since the worsening of climate change worldwide, disrupting industrial sectors, damaging economies, and increasing social and health risk exposure, exacerbated by environmental impacts (Vernick, 2024). In 2022, the Emergency Event Database EM-DAT powered by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recorded 387 natural hazards and disasters in the world, resulting in the loss of 30,704 lives and affecting 185 million individuals, economic losses accounted for USD 223.8 billion during the same year (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters [CRED] Université Catholique de Louvain, & United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2022). In Asia and the Pacific, the region remains the most disaster-prone in the world, with 140 disasters registered in 2022 that impacted over 64 million people and resulted in an economic blow estimated at USD 57 billion (ESCAP, 2023). According to the United Nations Population Fund, nearly 45 percent of the world's natural disasters occur in the region, and more than 75 percent of those impacted by natural disasters globally live in Asia and the Pacific (UNFPA, 2018). These realities stress the need to further research and implement strategies related to Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR), as well as incrementing the funding available to attend to these situations, since

according to the ESCAP calculations, the current level of disaster and climate risk-informed adaptation and risk-reduction investments finance flow covers 8.04 percent of the current adaption costs in the Asia-Pacific region (ESCAP, 2023). In summary, global evidence underscores the urgency of coordinated policy responses that address informality, enhance workplace protections, and promote equitable access to decent work.

3.2 Regional Perspectives: Asia-Pacific and LAC

These critical international issues have set in motion a range of necessary resolutions by the UN, like the 2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted in 2015 during the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, that outlines goals and priorities to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks over the next 15 years, by (i) Understanding disaster risk; (ii) Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk; (iii) Investing in disaster reduction for resilience and; (iv) Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response, and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction (UNDRR, 2023a). Alternatively, the "Making Cities Resilient 2030" campaign by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) provides a three-step plan for enhancing local resilience to improve risk governance across ministries and sectors, directing national disaster risk reduction strategies (UNDRR, 2023d). Notably, the ESCAP efforts have been focused on strengthening the Member States' abilities to enhance coastal resilience and provide an early warning regarding numerous hazards, for instance, with the ESCAP Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster, and Climate Preparedness established in 2005 successfully benefiting 19 countries by pooling resources to improve disaster bounce (ESCAP, 2024a). Since 2009, the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction has been implemented as a vessel to meet periodically in Thailand to achieve regional cooperation for multi-hazard disaster mitigation and climate adaptation (ESCAP, 2024b).

Now focusing on LAC, it is a fact that this region is the second most disaster-prone in the world, facing a wide array of natural hazards such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, landslides, and volcanic eruptions (Zea, 2023). Regional geographical diversity and climatic variations exacerbate these risks, making comprehensive disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures essential for resilience (Diaz, 2022). The UNDRR notes that LAC experiences significant economic losses and human impacts due to natural disasters, like the 190 million people who suffered 1,534 disasters in the region from 2000 to 2022 (UNDRR, 2023b). Additionally, climate change is intensifying the frequency and severity of these events. Several factors,

including rapid urbanization, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic inequalities, influence the region's vulnerability to natural disasters (Vernick, 2024). Urban areas, especially megacities, are at risk due to high population densities and inadequate infrastructure; more than 17 million people in the region may have to leave their homes by 2050 in order to avoid the effects of slow-onset climate change (UNDRR, 2023b). Informal settlements are often located in hazard-prone areas, such as riverbanks and hillsides, making them highly susceptible to floods and landslides. Rural areas also face significant risks, with agriculture-dependent communities vulnerable to droughts and extreme weather conditions affecting crop yields and livelihoods (Vernick, 2024).

The economic impact of natural disasters in LAC is profound. Disasters cause immediate destruction and have long-term effects on economic growth and development. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), natural disasters have cost the region an estimated 437 billion dollars in damages over the past decades (ECLAC, 2024). These events disrupt economic activities, destroy infrastructure, and lead to significant losses in productivity. The social impacts are equally severe, with vulnerable populations bearing the brunt of the consequences (Vernick, 2024). Disasters have been shown to exacerbate poverty, displace communities, and increase health risks due to inadequate sanitation and medical services in the aftermath. Climate change is a critical driver of LAC's increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters. Rising temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events contribute to the expanded riskscape (UNDRR, 2023b). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has highlighted that the region is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with significant implications for water resources, agriculture, and human health. Environmental degradation, including deforestation and soil erosion, further increases vulnerability by reducing the natural buffering capacity of ecosystems (Castellanos et al., 2022).

Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have worked collaboratively through various regional initiatives and frameworks to address these challenges. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 provides a global blueprint for reducing disaster risk, emphasizing the need to understand and strengthen disaster risk governance, invest in resilience, and enhance disaster preparedness (UNDRR, 2022a). Countries in LAC have adopted this framework and are working towards its implementation at national and regional levels. Although nations have made significant strides in reaching the targets, there are still difficulties in reporting on the relevant SDG indicators and monitoring these developments using the digital Sendai Framework Monitor (SFM) system (UNDRR, 2022a). This gap could be primarily due to problems with

data and information gathering issues, systematization, consolidation, and assessment of indicators resulting from organizational and methodological concerns rather than a lack of progress per se (UNDRR, 2022a). The Andean Community, comprising Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, has developed a Disaster Risk Management Strategy to enhance regional cooperation and capacity building. This strategy, named "EAGRD – Decision 819," improves risk assessment, early warning systems, and disaster preparedness (Comunidad Andina, 2017). Similarly, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) is vital in coordinating disaster response and recovery efforts in the Caribbean region, promoting a collaborative approach to DRR since 1991, working as a proactive, integrated approach for disaster management aims to improve regional sustainable development by lowering the risk and damage brought on to technological, and natural, climate change-related hazards (CDEMA, 2024).

Effective DRR in LAC could benefit from a community-based approach that involves local populations in risk assessment, planning, and decision-making processes. Empowering communities to participate in DRR activities ensures that strategies are tailored to local needs and conditions, enhancing their effectiveness and sustainability. Inclusive approaches considering different populations' specific vulnerabilities and capacities, such as women, children, and indigenous communities, are crucial for building resilience (UNDRR, 2023c). Advancements in technology and data utilization are playing an increasingly important role in DRR efforts in Latin America. Geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing, and satellite imagery are used to improve risk mapping and early warning systems. These technologies enable better monitoring and forecasting of natural hazards, allowing for timely and targeted interventions (Allen, 2023). Mobile technology and social media are also leveraged to disseminate emergency information and engage communities in disaster preparedness activities (UNDRR, 2022b). Despite progress, significant challenges remain in addressing the expanded riskscape in Latin America and the Caribbean. Limited financial resources, weak governance structures, and insufficient coordination among agencies can and have hindered effective DRR implementation. Corruption and political instability further complicate efforts to build resilience. Ongoing challenges include integrating DRR into national development planning and securing sustainable funding for DRR initiatives (UNDRR, 2022a).

3.3 National Pursuits: Nepal

Notably, Nepal is exposed to earthquakes, landslides, and floods, including Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), droughts, and hailstorms (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018). According to UNICEF, in terms of being vulnerable to earthquakes and multiple hazards, it is ranked 11th and

16th in the world, respectively (UNICEF, 2017). Because of its geographic location above the meeting point of the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates, Nepal frequently experiences massive earthquakes, having experienced its most devastating one in 2015 (Gorkha earthquake), killing more than eight thousand people, one-third of them children aged ten or younger, and injuring more than 21 thousand (Rafferty, 2024). Similarly, as stated by UNICEF, Nepal has the highest category rating of "Severe" on Maplecroft's Climate Change Vulnerability Index, placing it the fourth most vulnerable country in the world. Pressingly, these catastrophes affect livelihoods by disrupting agricultural productivity and heightening the spread of diseases (UNICEF, 2017).

Seeing as Nepal faces these critical issues, it has remained a member of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) since 1966, an organization that has provided crucial frameworks that made it possible for Nepal to take steps into DRR (WMO, 2024). In 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act, 2074, and Rules, 2079, essential directives to govern the country's overall disaster management strategy, covering a range of concerns, such as disaster risk reduction, recovery, response, overall disaster management, security agencies, and local disaster management committees (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). Moreover, the country has been working on implementing the 2017 Local Government Operation Act, mandating the establishment and operation of disaster management funds and the path of conduct for the mobilization of resources (Government of Nepal, 2017).

3.4 Moving Forward: Resilience Strategies

In response to the heightened risk landscape faced by the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in Nepal's vulnerability to various natural disasters, the delegation proposes a comprehensive set of solutions and recommendations. First and foremost, recognizing the urgent need for increased funding for Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) initiatives, Nepal advocates for the mobilization of resources to bridge the significant gap highlighted by ESCAP calculations, ensuring that the current adaptation costs in the Asia-Pacific region are adequately covered; ESCAP can work to advance this funding by actively engaging with international donors, seeking partnerships with relevant organizations, and exploring innovative financing mechanisms. Collaboration with the private sector, development banks, and philanthropic foundations can also be explored to secure the necessary financial support. To strengthen disaster risk governance, the delegation of Nepal proposes establishing a centralized multi-hazard risk management authority, improving inter-agency coordination through a unified

command system, and adopting transparent monitoring frameworks to track DRR implementation at local and national levels.

Secondly, the delegation urges Member States to prioritize research and implementation of strategies related to DRR, fostering international collaboration to share knowledge, best practices, and technologies that can enhance resilience and response capabilities for earthquakes within Nepal, to be added to training for government and non-government officials. Finally, the delegation of Nepal remains committed to working collaboratively with the ESCAP and fellow Member States to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters and build a safer future for all, providing swift and collaborative action to strengthen adaptability, reduce risks, and pave the way for a more secure and sustainable future.

As for the future of the LAC region, this zone could benefit from prioritizing the integration of DRR into broader development strategies, ensuring that disaster risk considerations are embedded in urban planning, infrastructure development, and environmental management policies (Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations [ECHO], 2023). More so, strengthening regional cooperation and knowledge sharing is essential for building collective resilience (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2024). Individual nations could also explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as climate bonds and disaster risk insurance, to support DRR investments (UNDRR, n.d.). As seen in this analysis, addressing the expanded riskscape in Latin America requires a multifaceted approach that combines robust regional collaboration, community-based strategies, technological innovations, and sustainable financing (U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID], 2022). By building on existing frameworks and leveraging new opportunities, Latin American and Caribbean countries can enhance their resilience to natural hazards and mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of disasters, ultimately contributing to a safer and more sustainable future for the region.

4. Conclusions

This paper underscores Nepal's proactive engagement and steadfast commitment to addressing critical issues related to labor protection, health, productivity, and disaster risk reduction within the frameworks of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and other international bodies. The multifaceted challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and exacerbated by climate change highlight the urgent need for collaborative, innovative, and context-specific solutions. Nepal's participation in ESCAP discussions on promoting a healthy, protected, and productive workforce

reflects a comprehensive strategy that includes transitioning informal workers to formal employment, enhancing workplace safety and health regulations, and advocating for universal health coverage. The country's alignment with global initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underscores its commitment to improving the well-being of its citizens and contributing to regional development (UN DESA, 2023a). Nepal's efforts to enhance health systems and achieve universal health coverage exemplify this dedication (Karkee & Comfort, 2016). Future actions should include longitudinal studies on the effectiveness of formalization incentives, pilot programs for community-based disaster preparedness, and periodic regional reviews within ESCAP to assess progress and adapt strategies as needed.

Moreover, Nepal's proactive approach to addressing the expanded riskscape in Asia and the Pacific, particularly its vulnerability to natural disasters, demonstrates a readiness to collaborate on disaster risk reduction and management. By advocating for increased funding, knowledge sharing, and the implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies, the country aims to enhance resilience and response capabilities, which are crucial for safeguarding livelihoods and communities (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2019). The emphasis on improving early warning systems and integrating disaster risk reduction into broader development planning is pivotal (ESCAP, 2022b). In summary, Nepal's proposals within ESCAP highlight the importance of coordinated international efforts to build a more resilient, inclusive, and secure future for its workforce and communities. By leveraging partnerships, sharing best practices, and embracing innovative approaches, Nepal is positioned to significantly contribute to regional efforts to address these complex and interconnected challenges (ILO & OECD, 2020).

The inclusion of LAC's experiences further enriches the analysis, offering valuable insights into diverse strategies necessary to foster resilience and sustainability. Latin America and the Caribbean's challenges with economic inequality, high levels of informality, and varied enforcement of labor rights highlight the need for targeted policy interventions and regional cooperation (UNDP, 2021). By examining these parallels, the paper emphasizes the importance of a multifaceted approach that combines robust labor policies, regional collaboration, and innovative solutions to address the interconnected challenges of labor protection and disaster risk (UNDRR, 2022a). The exploration of new forms of employment, such as those emerging in the gig economy, adds to this comprehensive analysis (Junfeng, 2024). Ultimately, these regional perspectives highlight the shared need for targeted interventions, social protection expansion, and cross-border cooperation to build resilient labor markets.

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