

Roles of Migrant Organizations as Transnational Civil Societies in Their Residential Communities: A Case Study of Nepalese Organizations in Japan

Masako Tanaka

Faculty of Global Studies, Sophia University

Abstract

Japan is an immigration country whose economy cannot be sustained without foreign workers. However, the national government has done little for migrants, and municipalities and non-government organizations (NGOs) provide nominal services. The study examines the roles of migrant organizations through a case study of a self-help organization (SHO) in Gunma. Its primary role is organizing Nepalese migrants for mutual support. The secondary role is maintaining regular contact and collaboration with local governments and NGOs to provide an interface between migrants and other stakeholders to contribute to the integration of Nepalese migrants. The third role is developing transnational ties with Nepal, which is limited to emergency support. As the case of the SHO shows, migrant organizations can promote themselves as an interface between migrants and local stakeholders. Maintaining regular contact and collaboration with various stakeholders, they can be proactive civil society organizations that go beyond episodic participation in their residential communities.

Key words: Migrant organization, Transnationalism, Nepal, Japan

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Today, Japan is a de facto immigration country that cannot be sustained without foreign migrant workers (Komine 2014). According to the Government of Japan, 2.73 million foreign nationals were registered residents in Japan at the end of 2018 (MOJ 2019). By nationality, the largest group was Chinese, followed by Koreans, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and Brazilians. Totaling 88,951 people, migrants from Nepal constitute the sixth largest group.

However, the Government of Japan does not have a migration policy as such, and refers to this group as a “foreign human resource,” not as migrants. The Government of Japan revised the Immigration Control and Refugee-Recognition Law in December 2018, and opened its doors wider to unskilled labor in April 2019 without enough preparation for their integration.

While the integration policy at the national level remains underdeveloped, local governments such as the foreigner’s assembly in Kanagawa prefecture and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the local level have made efforts to develop local initiatives. Tsuda refers to such arrangements as “local citizenship,” which is granted by

local municipalities and NGOs that offer nominal services like health examinations and Japanese language classes to migrants living in their communities (Tsuda 2008). He highlights the low civic participation of newly arrived migrants, who perceive themselves as temporary sojourners with the objective to save money. They do not assimilate or claim their rights. Shipper's study terms migrants' involvement in labor unions or contributions to Japanese NGOs as "episodic participation" (Shipper 2008). Consequently, Japanese NGOs lead most of the activism defending and fighting for migrants' rights. Therefore, studies on migrants' civic participation in Japan focus on NGOs formed mostly by the Japanese, and scant attention has been paid to migrant organizations established by foreign residents in Japan.

This study examines the roles of migrant organizations formed by the Nepalese residing in Japan, especially their contribution to integrating members into Japanese society. It focuses on Gunma, which hosts the seventh largest Nepalese community in Japan after other prefectures, such as Tokyo, Aichi, Chiba, Kanagawa, Fukuoka, Saitama, and Osaka.

The paper consists of five main parts. First, I review the studies on migrant organizations in the migration studies literature. Second, I outline the migration trend from Nepal to Japan. Third, I classify migrant organizations not by ethnic concerns, but by membership and the major impacts of their activities. Fourth, an in-depth case study of a self-help organization (SHO) in Gunma is presented to examine its potential to integrate members into their residential communities. Finally, the study concludes with the classification of three roles played by migrant organizations and suggests their potential as an interface between migrants and local governments and NGOs. This is followed by a brief discussion on the levels of

participation of migrant organizations in civil society in Japan.

For this study, I employed data from key informant interviews with leaders of Nepalese migrant organizations in Japan from July 2014 to September 2019. Furthermore, focus group discussions and individual interviews were conducted with members of migrant organizations, along with desk research on statistics on migrants and the websites and social networking services used by migrant organizations.

Besides academic works, I directly engaged with the issues through my participation in various events organized by Nepalese migrants and my volunteer work as an interpreter and a certified social worker for these Nepalese migrants in hospitals, at schools, with lawyers, and so on. The insights gained through my interactions with clients and in other informal occasions including listening to their personal problems on visas, marriage, and maternal and child health care are reflected in this study. However, to protect anonymity, I do not mention specific events or the names of individuals or use their personal information.

Migrant Organizations in Migration Studies

There is no universal definition of a migrant organization. In this study, migrant organizations are defined as those formed by individuals with a transnational migration background (Pries and Sezgin 2012). However, this does not imply that citizens of the host country—for example, migrants' spouses, children, or in-laws who do not have direct experience of transnational migration—are not allowed to be members. Therefore, this study defines migrant organizations as those established by immigrants that do not limit membership to immigrants but extend it to other well-wishers as

well.

Practitioners working with refugees in the United States, for instance, consider migrant organizations as interfaces between migrants and their countries of residence, and as stakeholders with a key role in their integration (Newland et al. 2007). Migrant organizations are also a popular topic in transnational studies (Khagram and Levitt 2008), although the academic focus is slightly different. Many studies aim to identify the extent to which migrant organizations can be considered transnational development organizations and participate in the development of their home country (Levitt 2001; Portes et al. 2007; Lacomba and Cloquell 2014). Previous studies contributed to identifying the roles of migrant organizations, but focused more on emigrants' influences on their home countries than on their countries of residence.

Such studies on migrant organizations are limited in two ways. One limitation is “methodological nationalism,” for which Glick Schiller offers the critique that “even scholars of transnational migration or diaspora have often bound their unit of study along the lines of national or ethnic identities. They have generally failed to link their descriptions of migrant local and trans-border connections” (Glick Schiller 2010: 111). That is, their attention is limited to communal and cultural identities. Prior to this criticism, Glick Schiller and Çağlar cautioned against applying ethnic groups as units of analysis, because “the methodological ethnicity of these scholars shapes—and, in our opinion obscures—the diversity of migrants' relationships to their place of settlement and to other localities around the world” (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2008: 41). However, studies on migrant organizations are still limited to either the activities of cultural identities or their contributions to their home countries, not to their interaction with the host community and

migrants from other parts of the world.

Another limitation of existing studies on migrant organizations is the lack of organizational analysis of how a migrant organization is formed and how it can be transformed from a member-based support group for migrants to a transnational civil society organization that benefits both the residential community and society of origin. As a useful unit of analysis, migrant organizations are well recognized. Pries emphasized the advantage of focusing on organizations based on their operationability, explicit structures, and boundaries (2008: 19).

The roles played by migrant organizations were perceived as controversial in terms of “whether they tend to promote or hinder the integration of people with a migration background since they are heterogeneous and influenced by interactions with other actors as well as migration policies at their destination countries” (Pries 2013). In Germany, most migrant organizations remain marginalized from mainstream society, as they were traditionally perceived as “a challenge to integration or as a potential risk to public security” (Pries 2013). This idea is based on the perception that migrants who are strongly involved in social issues related to the country of origin are less likely to integrate into their host country (Breton 1964). However, successful internal ethnic integration increases the risk of separation from the society of arrival, but too deep an involvement in their own ethnic group of reference may be a “trap” that prevents socio-economic advancement, because educational systems and integration with the host country can only be successful if immigrants learn the value of their host communities (Pries 2013).

Pries classifies migrant organizations into two types: member-based organizations, which aim to work for their own internal affairs, such as cultural migrant associations and mosque communities, and advocacy organizations that prioritize political or social recognition

and seek external impact, for example, political, refugee, and ethnic minority organizations (Pries 2013). The former type of organization has a bonding character, providing opportunities for migrants to meet and share a common language and culture. The latter type has a uniting and bridging character and creates connections between migrants and other local associations or government agencies to influence policy in the country of residence. However, this does not mean that the two types of organizations are contradictory or mutually exclusive. A member-based organization may transform into an advocacy organization according to the needs of its members or based on the external environment.

Though Pries mentioned the controversy of migrant organizations, as presented above, he also addressed the fact that researchers need to identify the roles migrant organizations play, their effects on social spaces under certain conditions, and how their potential is used to promote the participation of the migrant population under a specific condition, rather than asking whether migrant organizations promote integration or segregation (2013). From the findings of his research, which was based in Germany, he makes three conclusions. First, migrant organizations have multidimensional tasks with more than a single role and their goals can change over time. Second, the behaviors of migrant organizations are affected by their interactions with outside organizations including NGOs and government agencies. Third, the multidimensional roles of migrant organizations need to be assessed through their active contributions to both their country of origin and country of residence. These observations are applied to the analysis of the Nepalese migrant organizations later in this study.

In Japan, most migrant organizations are yet to be acknowledged by national/local governments and NGOs. A few umbrella organizations of migrant organizations exist at the national level,

although many foreign residents such as Filipinos or Brazilians organize their own small-scale migrant organizations at the grassroots level. The potential of migrant organizations to contribute to the integration of migrants in Japanese society has not yet been explored. Minami studied some Nepalese migrant organizations in the 2000s (2008), but the research focused on the ethnic backgrounds of members, not on their roles in the integration process or partnerships with other stakeholders.

An exception is a case study by Yamanaka on ALA Brasil, an organization of Brazilian immigrants (Yamanaka 2006). The organization was established by Brazilian women to bridge the gap between the Brazilian and Japanese cultures in 2000. It became an official channel for disseminating information on behalf of the city administration in Hamamatsu city in the early 2000s. Furthermore, the organization negotiated with the local administration to support after-school classes in Japanese and Portuguese for Brazilian children including those previously unschooled. Organization members also collaborated with a Japanese citizen's group interested in cultural exchange and providing learning support to Brazilian children. However, the organization needed to redefine its goals and relationships with the Japanese collaborators after a few years, because of "demographic, organizational, and community changes such as children's graduations, immigrants returning home, internal friction, and cultural assimilation" (Yamanaka 2006: 111). Some members felt their organization was "used" to disseminate municipal information while their primal interest, Portuguese language classes for Brazilian children, was not supported by the city administration. Furthermore, their children no longer sought out other Brazilians for socialization and assistance, because of their assimilated lifestyles. A few years later, the organization became inactive.

ALA Brasil's story demonstrates the difficulties migrant organizations face in negotiating with the local government. Its relation with the local government can be explained with the classic "Ladder of Citizen Participation" model by Arnstein (1969), as shown in Figure 1. The steps of the ladder indicate the different levels of citizen's engagement and power relations between civil society and powerholders such as the government. The bottom groups, manipulation and therapy, do not indicate real participation. Manipulation means that citizens are mobilized by the powerholders, not to express their own opinions, but to support these powerholders. Therapy, second from the bottom, implies that the citizens, often marginalized groups, are used as a decoration of the powerholders, such as when political leaders take photos with marginalized groups. The groups feel honored or acknowledged; however, such treatment does not make any difference in their daily lives. The next group, tokenism, is also not exactly participation, although citizens often believe they are participating in a meaningful process. Informing citizens of their rights or municipal services does not mean they can access them, and consultation with citizens does not ensure their opinions are counted by the powerholders. At the placation stage, citizens can demand their rights. However, the powerholders negotiate with them and provide something different, they do not fulfill citizens' demands. The last three steps at the top can be considered participation. A partnership between the civil society organization and government is the beginning of meaningful participation followed by delegating decision-making power. Citizen control is the ideal situation, which means that the powerholders endorse the ideas of civil society organizations.

Members of migrant organizations are often mobilized to participate in cultural or food festivals, but not in other functions

8	Citizen Control	Citizen Control
7	Delegation	
6	Partnership	
5	Placation	Tokenism
4	Consultation	
3	Informing	
2	Therapy	Non-participation
1	Manipulation	

Figure 1. Ladder of Citizen Participation

Source: Arnstein 1969

such as town meetings on municipal services and so on. This relation cannot be categorized as the partnership expected by the members of ALA Brasil. They were informed and consulted, but not able to control their activities. Thus, their relationship with the local government can be represented by tokenism in Figure 1. While migrants differ from citizens based on barriers caused by nationality in the political arena, migrant organizations can seek more meaningful participation, for example, through a partnership with local authorities as part of civil society in Japan.

Considering the above, this study focuses on migrant organizations as a unit of analysis and pays attention to their diversity and roles. The study classifies the various Nepalese migrant organizations according to membership criteria, not only by ethnicity. Furthermore, it highlights the roles of SHOs at the grassroots level in the integration of migrants with their country of residence, Japan.

Japan as a Destination for the Nepalese

According to Ganesh Gurung, founder and chair of the Nepal Institute of Development Studies, which publishes the Nepal

Migration Year Book¹, Nepalese migrants are categorized into the following five groups based on their destinations: (1) migrants in English-speaking countries, namely the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia; (2) migrants living in Non-English speaking European countries; (3) migrants living in Japan and South Korea; (4) migrants living in Malaysia and the Gulf countries, e.g., Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates; and (5) migrants in India. There are, of course, other countries to which the Nepalese migrate, but these represent the most common choices and the simple framework for analyzing their migration decisions.

English-speaking countries are typically expensive destinations, because Nepalese migrants need to first invest in their education to acquire English proficiency or professional skills (e.g., nursing) before their departure from Nepal. North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand are typically lucrative destinations for nurses, because they can be employed as professionals with a handsome salary and not as cheap labor (Adhikari 2013). Relatively privileged Nepalese with urban backgrounds have been migrating to the United States for both education and employment since 2000 (Bohara-Mishra 2011).

The internationalization of higher education enables Nepalese youth to study abroad as educational migrants and enter the labor market in non-English speaking European countries (Valentine 2017). Such migrants study at English universities or learn local languages through classes for migrants subsidized by local governments.

Malaysia and the Gulf countries are common destinations for migrants in the working class from both rural and urban Nepal. No educational migrants are found in the Gulf countries and very few in

¹ Personal interview, March 2015.

Malaysia, where courses taught in English are available for migrants' children. Migration to these countries is not very expensive compared to destinations from categories (1), (2), and (3).

There are currently no limitations on Nepalese immigration to India; thus, this country remains a popular destination for immigrants seeking higher education and in some cases, is a reasonable choice for the rural population as well. In India, various options for employment are available ranging from seasonal agricultural labor to engaging in the informal sectors in urban commercial areas in India.

Japan and Korea lie between the first two categories and the fourth one. While the migration procedure for Korea, in which migrants must pass a language proficiency test before departure, differs from that of migrating to Japan, the socio-economic background of migrants heading to these two countries has about the same impact. The majority cannot move to countries in categories (1) or (2) as international students or skilled labor, but also do not want to travel to Malaysia and the Gulf countries as unskilled laborers.

Many migrants have clear aims in choosing their destination, such as learning particular skills. However, once they arrive, their circumstances may modify their educational or employment pursuits. For example, though Japan seems to be a relatively easy and desirable destination, migrants face numerous potential setbacks. First, changing visa categories is quite difficult unless migrants are able to obtain formal contracts. Once a person has entered Japan with a visa for skilled labor (e.g., as a cook), in principle, it is almost impossible for this person to acquire a different job. In addition, dependent family members and students are allowed to work after obtaining work permits, but only on a part-time basis for less than 28 hours per week. Under these regulations, migrants cannot typically earn enough

money to sustain their own lifestyle, much less send remittances to their families in Nepal. Moreover, language barriers are higher in Japan compared to other countries where the Roman alphabet is used. It is not difficult for Nepalese migrants to find work as unskilled workers, even if they cannot read and write Japanese letters (kanji). However, if they want to obtain a more secure position in the formal sector, reading and writing Japanese is essential. It takes several years for the Nepalese to reach that level of competency in Japanese.

Therefore, previous studies on Nepalese migrants did not pay attention to Japan as an attractive destination for Nepalese migrants, with a few exceptions (Yamanaka 2000, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Minami 2008a, 2008b). However, for the period 2008–2017, Japan was the tenth most popular destination for foreign employment (GON/MoLE 2018) and one of the top countries for Nepalese studying abroad, evincing Japan as a unique destination for Nepalese migrants, where they have different visa options including entering as skilled labor, students, or dependent families according to their educational and financial background.

The migrant Nepalese population has increased almost tenfold over a decade, from 9,384 in 2007 to 88,951 in 2018. Today, the Nepalese constitute the sixth largest migrant group in Japan after Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Brazilian migrants. Table 1 shows that the five most common visa categories among the 88,951 migrant Nepalese are “Students” (28,987), “Dependents” (26,017), and “Skilled labor” (12,547)—mostly cooks in Indo-Nepal restaurants—followed by “Engineer, Specialist in humanities and international services” (8,541) and “Permanent resident” (4,480). The visas for “Designated activities” (4,056) were usually issued to students who graduated from school but are still looking for a job or

Table 1. Number and ratio of Nepalese in Japan and Gunma by residential status at the end of 2018

Types of residential status	Total in Japan		Gunma	
	Number	%	Number	%
Student	28,987	32.59	400	13.74
Dependent	26,017	29.25	823	28.27
Skilled labor (cook)	12,547	14.11	203	6.97
Engineer, Specialist in humanities and international services	8,541	9.60	712	24.46
Permanent resident	4,480	5.04	98	3.37
Designated activities (Others)	4,056	4.56	562	19.31
Business manager	1,531	1.72	21	0.72
Spouse or child of Japanese national	821	0.92	24	0.82
Long-term resident	817	0.92	24	0.82
Spouse or child of permanent resident	631	0.71	34	1.17
Technical trainee	257	0.39	5	0.17
Intra-company transfer	75	0.08	2	0.07
Professor	49	0.05	0	0
Highly skilled professional	35	0.04	1	0.03
Provisional stay	N.A.	N.A.	0	0
Unknown	N.A.	N.A.	2	0.07
Others	107	0.12	0	0
Total	88,951	100.00	2,911	100.00

Source: Ministry of Justice, 2019. *Zairyu Gaikokujin Tokei* (Statistics of Foreign Residents): December 2018

Unpublished data provided by Gunma Prefectural Government 2019.

to asylum seekers trying to find full-time employment opportunities².

² The Government of Japan no longer provides money to protect asylum seekers. Therefore, they need to earn money by themselves when they obtain a “designated activities” visa, which allows them to work as full-time employees. It usually takes six months to obtain this visa.

Nepalese migration can be categorized into three stages that occurred over three decades from 1986 to 2018.

In the first stage from 1986 to 1999, the majority of Nepalese in Japan were over-stayers, who predominantly entered Japan with the legal “short-term visitor” status. This status does not permit individuals to work, but the Nepalese visitors found employment and extended their stay beyond the validity of their visas (Tanaka 2017). In 1989, 1,215 undocumented workers from Nepal overstayed their visas (Minami 2008a: 90). At the same time, the number of registered Nepalese was 380, including 89 permanent residents, their spouses and children, and spouses and children of the Japanese, and 147 students. A male Nepalese over-stayer from that time told me that Japan was a desirable destination only for relatively well-to-do people in Nepal, including government officials. Less well-off migrants found unskilled work in factories or construction sites through Japanese brokers in the Tokai and Kanto regions.

During the second period from 2000 to 2005 the Japanese government amended the immigration law in 2000, which discouraged over-stayers from continuing to live in Japan. This amendment caused many undocumented workers, not only of Nepalese origin, to voluntarily or involuntarily leave Japan. In 2003, the government launched a campaign aiming to reduce the number of illegal over-stayers by half within five years, making it a difficult period for undocumented workers to survive in the country. As a result of this move, the total number of Nepalese in the country almost matched the number of registered Nepalese. In contrast, the number of migrants with residential statuses steadily increased, partly because of the migration boom influenced by the armed conflict in Nepal. This included “skilled labor” such as cooks (Kharel 2016), who migrated mainly for employment in Indo-Nepal restaurants,

“students,” and “dependents.”

The third period started in 2006 and continues until today. The increase in Nepalese migrants indicates a reverse trend to Brazilian and Peruvian migrants, whose populations decreased because of the influence of the global economic recession in the late 2000s. The number of Nepalese students in Japanese language schools has increased dramatically, while the number of Chinese and Korean students has decreased following the Great East Japan Disaster in 2011 (Sano and Tanaka 2016: 20). The Nepalese seem to be filling the shortages of both laborers and students in present-day Japanese society. In 2012, for the first time, Nepalese ranked among the top ten largest foreign groups.

When fewer Nepalese migrants lived in Japan, they had to interact with Japanese people or other nationals in their workplaces and daily lives. This has changed. Now, they can survive without accessing any Japanese information. They can exchange information about job hunting, housing, and education through various social media among themselves in the Nepalese language. Ironically, the increased Nepalese population has accelerated its isolation from Japanese society. At the same time, the number of Nepalese migrant organizations is increasing.

The increasing percentage of those in the “dependent” category reflects the changing family structure of Nepalese migrants, namely from split households³ to dual-wage earning households. Most Nepalese migrants (both men and women) in the Gulf countries or Malaysia move to their destinations without their spouses and

³ A split household is defined as “a migrant household maintaining two family branches separated by geographical space and national borders, while remaining connected to the flow of remittances and occasional return of migrant members” (Yamanaka 2005: 338).

maintain a split-household lifestyle. However, in Japan, the migrants categorized as skilled laborers, business managers, or those with permanent visa status can invite dependent family members to join them. Therefore, for example, underpaid cooks working for Indo-Nepal restaurants invite their wives and children to “support” them by earning part-time wages in Japan. In some cases, such cooks earn a lower wage than their “dependents.” As a result, in Japan, the share of women in the total population of Nepalese migrants has been gradually increasing, corresponding to the increase in migrants staying with a dependent family status. At the end of 2018, there were 52,783 (59.3%) Nepalese men and 36,168 (40.7%) women in Japan.

The pioneers Yamanaka and Minami researched Nepalese migrants in Japan from the 1990s to the mid-2000s, when their number was still small. Both researchers focused on the transnational migration of the Nepalese (Minami 2008a, 2008b; Yamanaka 2000), their family relations (Yamanaka 2005, 2007a), and their networks based on local ties or ethnicities (Minami 2008a, 2008b; Yamanaka 2007b). Both emphasized the role played by migrant organizations as safety nets in the 1990s and 2000s, when the majority of Nepalese were undocumented workers.

Today, as mentioned, Nepalese migrants are the sixth largest immigrant group in Japan and the most rapidly increasing foreign population. Although the majority are still engaged in so-called 3D—dirty, dangerous, and demeaning—jobs at factories, construction sites, and laundries, most have a legal residential status and stable lives as permanent residents, which is very different from the scenario until 2000. Now, more Nepalese work in retail shops, restaurants, bars, and nursing homes and frequently interact with local Japanese residents.

In addition, the migration pattern has changed from individual migration for employment only to family migration seeking better opportunities: not only the youth enter the country with student statuses. In addition, 10,013 Nepalese aged less than 20 years now live in Japan, most on dependent family statuses (MoJ 2019). Such changes may trigger differences in the roles and significance of Nepalese migrant organizations for Nepalese migrants and other stakeholders in the host community in Japan.

Nepalese Migrant Organizations in Japan

Today, Nepalese migrant organizations can be categorized into six types, as shown in Figure 2. The figure shows the membership criteria for each organization and major impacts of their work in the home country Nepal or country of residence, Japan. All six types of organizations work for the people in Nepal, their members, and other members in Japan. Therefore, the figure only shows comparative measures of priorities and the frequency of different types of work. As seen, membership in different types of organizations overlaps. However, the characteristics and leadership of individual members are not analyzed or reported in this paper, but could be further explored in another opportunity.

Type 1: Pan-Nepalese Associations

The first category comprises Pan-Nepalese associations that originated in Tokyo. These include all Nepalese migrants, regardless of their ethnicity and caste. The Nepali Association in Japan (NAJ), one of the oldest Nepalese organizations, was founded in 1988. It aimed to develop friendly relations between the two countries—Japan and Nepal—by providing a forum to bring both the Nepalese and

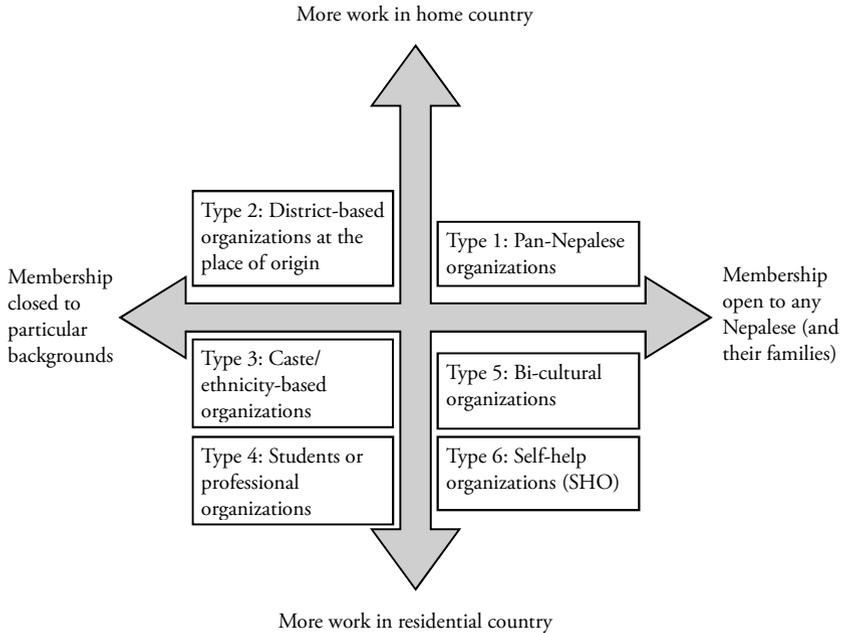


Figure 2. Nepalese migrant organizations by membership criteria and major impacts of their activities

Source: Tanaka (2017) and interviews conducted by the author

Japanese together.

In the beginning, mostly Nepalese students and employees working in the formal sector formed the NAJ. Later, in the mid-2000s, it evolved into a bi-cultural association including Japanese nationals and the spouses of members of its board. The NAJ was registered as a non-profit organization (NPO) under the NPO Act of Japan in November 2011⁴. The NAJ organized the “Nepalese Festival” for the first time in Tokyo in 2006 in collaboration with the Japan-Nepal Society, a bi-national association established by Japanese

⁴ Interview with the former president of the NAJ in Tokyo on April 7, 2017.

nationals⁵. The aim of the festival was to promote Nepalese culture and tourism and provide opportunities for Japanese nationals to enjoy Nepalese cuisine. The NAJ continued organizing similar festivals in Tokyo from 2007 to 2010 until the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) of Japan took over the role in 2011.

In May 2009, when Nepalese migration to Japan dramatically increased after the global recession, the NAJ sent a letter to the Embassy of Japan (EOJ) in Nepal to draw their attention to the emerging problems of jobless/homeless Nepalese in Japan. Such Nepalese migrants were often duped into engaging in illegal businesses and were ultimately deported consequent to false job assurances at fictitious companies such as restaurants registered by mastermind agents interested only in earning a commission. The NAJ wrote a letter to the EOJ to alert them of these problems and request that they check the authenticity of visa applications to prevent human trafficking from Nepal to Japan. However, the EOJ, did not respond to this alert, disappointing those who wrote the letter. The NAJ had also confused the matter with negative reactions from some Nepalese migrants who had been earning commissions through recruitment businesses. Unfortunately, the NAJ's concern well represented the reality. Nevertheless, even leaders of the NAJ could not have forecast the rapid influx of Nepalese migrants and false asylum seekers observed in Japan today.

As shown, the NAJ played a unique role in its effort to solve the problems caused by its own community members' excessive migration from Nepal to Japan. It differed from other Nepalese migrant organizations engaged only in cultural events at that time.

⁵ It is a public interest incorporated association established in 1964. As of the end of 2018, two Nepalese migrants serve as its board members.

The NAJ is a community organization originally established to organize social and cultural activities. However, it later took on the role of an advocacy organization highlighting unsafe migration through and high commissions of recruitment agencies. The members took action against the EOJ and tried to collaborate with other stakeholders.

The NAJ was founded only in Japan, while local chapters of political parties and the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) described below were established as branches of their mother organizations in Nepal or as part of international networks. The NRNA was established in 2003 and registered with the Government of Nepal with a global network covering 78 countries at the end of 2018. Its primary roles were to deliver messages externally for publicity, advocating for migrants' rights for dual citizenship, and improving conditions for investment in Nepal (Uesugi 2017). Its membership is limited to Nepalese nationals or other nationals of Nepalese origin. The Japanese chapter was established in 2004 and registered under the NPO Act in August 2011⁶. It aims to promote mutual support and solidarity among the Nepalese in Japan for cultural and economic development. By June 2017⁷, it had 10,276 members in 13 chapters, namely Hokkaido, Sendai, Niigata, Nagano, Kanto, Tochigi, Gunma, Shizuoka, Nagoya, Kansai, Hiroshima, Fukuoka, and Okinawa.

As part of the NRNA international network, NRNA Japan acts as a transnational Civil Society Organization, contributing to Nepal

⁶ It has ten regional chapters: Hokkaido, Kanto, Tochigi, Gunma, Nagano, Tokai Hokuriku, Kansai, Hiroshima, Kyushu, and Okinawa. Its registration under the NPO Act was cancelled in June 2017.

⁷ The list of members is provided on the NRNA Japan website: <http://www.nrnjapan.org/> (Accessed on 13 August 2017).

through fundraising for activities such as the reconstruction of earthquake-affected areas and so on. However, the NRNA Japan plays a limited role in integrating Nepalese migrants with Japanese society. Most of its board members are businessmen who achieved success in the Japanese market. The Nepalese who have lived in Japan for many years joke that the abbreviation NRNA stands for “Nepali Restaurant Network Association.” This is because the core members of the NRNA Japan own the Indo-Nepal restaurants that participate in the widespread brokerage of migrant Nepalese cooks.

The fact that the NRNA Japan is registered in English, not Japanese, also makes it difficult for the Japanese to recognize the organization. Interactions between the NRNA Japan and Japanese citizens are limited to a few cultural events like the Nepal Festival, although some leaders of the local chapters actively participate in events organized by prefectural governments.

Type 2: District-based Associations at the place of origin

The second type, district-based associations at the place of origin, became prominent in the 2000s when Japan became a popular destination for the Nepalese. One example is the Galkot Samaaj established in 2006. It originated in Baglung district, which has many cooks in Indo-Nepal restaurants in Japan. Its members share common interests and concerns regarding their places of origin and contribute to development projects in their home districts, such as constructing schools.

As community-based organizations, they raise funds for their members' places of origin. However, they are not good at supporting each other in everyday life in Japan unless their members face emergencies such as accidents or surgery, since they do not see each other frequently. Furthermore, they are not good at developing

partnerships with NGOs in Japan. It is beyond their scope to promote the integration of their members with Japanese society.

Type 3: Caste or Ethnicity-based Associations

The third category is caste or ethnicity-based organizations, such as the Thakali Sewa Samiti Japan (Thakali support committee). Established in 1991⁸, it was the first ethnicity-based Nepalese organization formed in Japan. Certainly, there are many others such as the Newa International Forum Japan⁹, Newa Jagaran Manch – Japan, World Newa Organization Japan, Tamang Society Japan, and Sherpa Kyidug Tokyo. As an umbrella organization of Janajati¹⁰ migrant associations in Japan, the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities Japan (NEFIN JAPAN) was founded in Nagoya in 1999. Later, Janajati's leaders, based in Tokyo, established its headquarters in Tokyo in 2008. Currently, only seven ethnic organizations from the Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Rai, Sherpa, Tamang, and Thakali communities participate in the NEFIN JAPAN. There is no representation from other ethnic minorities such as the Chepang, possibly because they live in remote villages of Japan. NEFIN JAPAN coordinates cultural festivals jointly with its member organizations. There are also associations formed by the Dalits, a group oppressed by caste-based discrimination.

These organizations are affiliated with caste and ethnicity-based organizations in Nepal and have influenced related movements at

⁸ Interview with the ex-chairperson of the Thakali Samaj in Japan and an advisor of NEFIN JAPAN at an interaction program in Tokyo on April 9, 2017.

⁹ Interview with the current chairperson of the Newa International Forum Japan on July 11, 2017.

¹⁰ Non-Hindu ethnic group in Nepal

home. They facilitate mutual support among members through rituals and communal gatherings. However, similar to district-based associations, mutual support for economic needs are not prioritized, since their primary aim is to maintain the cultural identities of their own groups.

Type 4: Member-based Associations of particular groups

The fourth type of organization is professional and student associations based on particular groups of migrants with the same visa categories, for example, the Nepali Student's Association in Japan (NESAJ)¹¹ and Nepali Engineers Association, Japan (NEAJ). These associations are platforms for the career development of migrants, providing networking and mentoring sessions by peers and opportunities for students.

NESAJ was established in 1997 to promote close contact between Nepalese students and Nepalese graduates of Japanese universities and facilitate academic and professional exchanges between Nepal and Japan. Today, it has a few hundred members including language school students. This number is too small to represent Nepalese students in Japan, where more than 20,000 Nepalese have student visas. NESAJ has been trying to provide information about career opportunities in Japan as an organization of Nepali students. However, students no longer feel it necessary to join NESAJ for the sole purpose of collecting information, because they can access a large volume of information through social media. However, according to my research in 2014, NESAJ was a relatively popular organization among Nepalese returnees from Japan (Sano and Tanaka 2016),

¹¹ Interviews with the former president of the NESAJ on January 8, 2015 and February 24, 2017.

although the NRNA is now more popular, even among Nepalese with student visas.

Type 5: Bi-cultural Associations

The fifth type of organization is the bi-cultural association jointly run by Nepalese migrants and Japanese citizens for mutual understanding, such as today's NAJ and the Hatemalo Society. They include Japanese citizens on the board and differ from the other types of organizations listed above. For example, Nepalese living in Chiba and nearby prefectures established the Hatemalo Society in 2006¹². "Hatemalo" means a garland of hands in the Nepalese language. The association tries to enlarge the "garland" of the human network by enrolling more Japanese members interested in Nepal and its people.

According to the founder of the Hatemalo Society, the organization was founded to differ from other migrant organizations. Its *raison d'être* is explained as follows: "Though there are as many as 200 Nepalese organizations in Japan today, most of their memberships are limited to a particular caste, ethnicity, or place of origin, and/or most of their objectives are focused on political or economic purposes. Further, their membership fees and entry fees for events are too expensive and their activities are not suitable or interesting for Nepalese migrants. We, the Hatemalo Society, want to fill this gap and create such an organization that anyone interested in Nepali culture can easily join regardless of his/her nationality, caste/ethnicity, occupation, etc."¹³ Today, the Hatemalo Society has 120 members including Japanese citizens and 200 listed volunteers.

¹² Interview with the leader of the Hatemalo Society on February 16, 2017.

¹³ The website of the Hatemalo Society: <http://www.hatemalo.org/> (Accessed on 11 April 2017).

In addition to organizing cultural programs in both the Nepalese and Japanese languages, it also advises and consults with new Nepalese migrants to Japan.

This type of organization promotes multiculturalism beyond national boundaries. It plays an important role in the integration of migrants by developing a mutual relationship between the Nepalese and Japanese. However, their interactions thus far have been limited to the individual level, and such organizations have not developed institutional partnerships with service providers in Japan.

Type 6: Self-Help Organizations

The last type of organization is the SHOs established at the grassroots level in particular localities. An example is the Kanagawa Nepali Community and Tochigi Nepali Samaaj. Most Nepalese SHOs in Japan were established in the mid-2010s. Similar to the NAJ, which existed in the late 1980s and other organizations studied by Yamanaka in the 1990s, they are pan-Nepalese associations that include all Nepalese regardless of ethnicity or caste. SHOs of this type, however, differ from the NAJ in terms of their location. Their members live in nearby locations, share daily concerns such as the use of municipal services, and often engage in volunteer work together with Japanese citizens living in the same locality, like cleaning campaigns and disaster preparedness drills (Tanaka 2017). In addition, they collect donations for survivors of natural disasters that strike not only Nepal, but also Japan. SHOs maintain closer communication with Japanese local governments than the other associations we examined. Thus, they have a broader scope to play an active role in integration by bridging the gap between migrants and host communities in Japan.

Common Characteristics of Nepalese Migrant Organizations

As the population of Nepalese migrants increases in Japan, so too do the number and types of Nepalese migrant organizations. Excepting SHOs, their contribution does not go beyond introducing Nepalese culture to Japanese people. They are effective only in strengthening internal unity among members, not in contributing to the promotion of mutual understanding or cooperation between different migrant organizations or strengthening their ties with stakeholders in Japan. They do not represent or advocate Nepalese migrants' social or political interests with the Japanese government or civil societies.

An SHO in Gunma prefecture

Characteristics of the Nepalese in Gunma

In the 1990s, Japanese-Brazilians and Peruvians migrated to the eastern part of Gunma—Ota city and Oizumi town—where several firms manufacturing transport equipment and electrical items were concentrated. Nepalese “temporary visitors” or “trainees” also moved to Gunma from other parts of Japan. They were then recruited by brokers when visiting convenience stores or nearby train stations.

In the mid-2000s, the immigration office of the Japanese Government deported many Nepalese with other undocumented foreign workers. Furthermore, the number of Nepalese in Gunma decreased after the 2009 global economic recession. However, some obtained permanent resident status in different ways such as by marrying Japanese nationals or other permanent residents—usually Brazilian and Filipino women. Some migrants with school-aged children settled in Gunma permanently, where they bought houses. By the end of 2018, the Nepalese constituted the sixth largest group

of migrants in the area after those from Brazil, Vietnam, the Philippines, China, and Peru.

As Table 1 shows, the Nepalese in Gunma differ from those living in other parts of Japan. Student visa holders do not constitute the largest group, because there are fewer Japanese language schools in Gunma. The largest group holds a “Dependent” visa and those in the second largest group are considered an “Engineer, Specialist in humanities and International services.” These groups are dramatically increasing in Gunma. However, many are actually working as blue-collar workers in manufacturing factories, despite being designated as “interpreters” for their Nepalese colleagues working as part-time workers. The third largest group is the Nepalese with “Designated activities” visas, which are issued to graduated students still looking for jobs or to asylum seekers trying to find full-time employment¹⁴. In contrast, the ratio of Nepalese with a “Business manager” visa status in the Nepalese population in Gunma is lower than that in the whole of Japan. These visa status characteristics of the Nepalese in Gunma indicate that they belong to the unstable labor class, not to the middle class. Furthermore, they are not relatively well-off entrepreneurs in the ethnic enclave where many Nepalese migrants have their own businesses, for example, in Shin-Okubo in Tokyo (Tanaka 2017).

At the end of 2018, two Nepalese migrant organizations are established in Gunma. One is the local chapter of the NRNA, a pan-Nepalese association led by a founding member of another

¹⁴ Asylum seekers are allowed to work as full-time employees after obtaining a “designated activity” visa for approximately six months until their refugee application is screened. This system attracts students and dependent status migrants who are currently restricted to 28 hours of work per week, encouraging them to exploit the system.

migrant organization, the United Nepalese Community Japan (UNCJ)¹⁵, an SHO founded in 2013. He joined the NRNA Kanto regional committee in 2013 before its Gunma chapter was established in August 2015 to develop a link between the Nepalese in Gunma and other parts of Japan. As of June 2017, there were 111 members including those of the UNCJ. Activities by the NRNA Gunma are similar to those of the UNCJ, such as cleaning campaigns, cultural programs, and serving Nepalese food at local government events. The National Coordination Council of the NRNA's chapter in Japan positively recognized the activities of NRNA Gunma. However, the leader receives fewer inputs from the central committee of the NRNA than expected, although members in Gunma also contribute annual fees to the central committee. This seems to be a common problem in the hierarchical relationship between the National Coordination Council of the NRNA and local chapters.

Trajectory of Nepalese Self-help Organizations in Gunma

Hereafter, the focus turns to Type 6, local SHOs in Gunma, which have more autonomy and no hierarchical relationship with other migrant organizations.

In 1997, the first SHO in Gunma, Nepali Samaaj, was formed by Nepalese migrants, mostly over-stayers. Various events were held on the Nepalese annual festivals such as Teej and Dashain to celebrate their culture. Members of the Nepali Samaaj collected donations to support Nepalese people suffering from severe diseases or injuries caused by accidents. However, it did not collect money for development projects or relief activities in Nepal, limiting its activities to mutual support among Nepalese migrants in Japan.

¹⁵ Interview with the leaders of the NRNA Gunma on January 15, 2017.

Unfortunately, the SHO was not sustainable, because its core members had to leave Japan or were deported after the 2008 global economic recession.

After 2010, a few survivors of the recession in the manufacturing sector reorganized Nepalese migrants in Gunma to help each other regardless of ethnicity, caste, place of origin, and political affiliation in collaboration with Nepalese graduates from Japanese language schools in Gunma. Compared to the 2000s, different needs were emerging, such as the arrangement of medical interpreters at hospitals, providing information about public services in Japan like National Health Insurance, and responding to enquiries from local governments.

To fulfill these needs, the UNCJ was formed in August 2013¹⁶. Through membership fees and members' donations, the UNCJ organizes monthly meetings; cultural events based on the Nepalese calendar; recreational activities such as barbecues, volleyball tournaments, and day trips to promote friendship among members; and charity drives to raise funds from members and non-members. It also provides members with emergency support such as loans for medication and air tickets for those who cannot afford to go home.

As of June 2017, the UNCJ had 118 members including 11 women living in Gunma or the adjoining prefectures of Saitama and Tochigi. The organization is led by a committee of 30 migrants including 5 women. Committee members contribute 500 Japanese Yen as an annual membership fee. They come from the dominant Hindu castes or Janajati—indigenous people—and are aged from their late 20s to 50s. Among the committee members, a few are permanent settlers who have lived there for more than 25 years. With

¹⁶ Interview with the leaders of the UNCJ on January 15, 2017.

some exceptions, their visa statuses are “Permanent Residents”; “Dependents”; “Business managers”; or “Engineers, Specialist in humanities and International services.” Only a few completed tertiary education in Nepal or Japan, but many speak Japanese fluently.

Ordinary UNCJ members do not need to pay the annual membership fee. However, all members often donate cash to organize cultural events or extend their services to non-members in emergency need. The UNCJ donates the funds to the Nepalese including survivors of natural disasters in Japan and Nepal, Nepali migrants living in other places needing medication, or the families of migrants who lost their lives through suicide or accidents in Japan. These contributions and volunteer activities are reported in local newspapers, increasing their visibility. Furthermore, members attend funerals and help transport the bodies of Nepalese migrants who lost their lives in Gunma to Nepal.

It also contributes to Nepal, although the frequency of these contributions is limited to being a disaster response. The UNCJ started raising funds for relief and rehabilitation of the disaster-affected population of the 2014 landslide in Nepal. After the earthquake in Nepal in 2015, the UNCJ collected 1.75 million Japanese Yen from Nepalese migrants and Japanese citizens through a public donation campaign in Takasaki and Ota railway stations in Gunma, donation boxes in 16 Indo-Nepal restaurants in the region, and the organization’s bank account. Approximately one-third of contributors who sent money to the account were Japanese and Non-Nepalese residents, indicating that the UNCJ does not limit its activities as an SHO, but establishes connections with local residents other than Nepalese. In June 2015, three UNCJ representatives visited Nepal, delivering their cash contributions and material including corrugated iron sheets to affected communities.

The UNCJ provides opportunities for interactions between members and local citizens. “Curry Kitchen,” a voluntary feeding program for survivors of natural disasters, is a common volunteer activity among South Asian migrants in Japan. Nepalese migrant leaders in Gunma also actively participated in volunteer activities after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 before forming the UNCJ. In 2015, a team of UNCJ members led by an Indo-Nepal restaurant owner served curry meals for victims in Jyoso City in Ibaragi prefecture nearby Gunma. When members cannot visit the affected area, they donate cash to the community, for example, to Kumamoto City when it was hit by a large-scale earthquake in 2016. Volunteer activities and fundraising for victims of natural disasters constitute part of their regular programs. Leaders believe that these activities gain recognition for their organization from the local governments of Japan. For instance, they were invited by the local government in Ota City to serve curry meals during disaster preparedness events.

The UNCJ also collaborates with local service providers. Nepalese migrants did not obtain social services from Japanese NGOs in Gunma until the 2000s. However, today, the UNCJ has access to various local NGOs including Kita-Kanto Iryo Sodan-kai (Association of Medical Consultation Support in North Kanto)¹⁷ for free medical checkups and Hohoemi-no-Kai (Smile Association)¹⁸ for the cremation and funerals of Nepalese migrants who passed away in Gunma. However, opportunities remain for collaboration in other sectors such as multi-lingual education. Nepalese migrants in Gunma

¹⁷ The website of the Kita-kanto Iryo Soudan-kaiis: <http://npo-amigos.org/gaiyou.html> Accessed on 17 April 2017

¹⁸ The website of the Hohoemi-no-kai: <http://npohohoemi.com/index.php> Accessed on 17 April 2017

organize cleaning campaigns or join cleaning events organized by the local police. They also orientate newcomer Nepalese migrants toward proper hygienic practices such as solid waste disposal, instilling a positive image in local Japanese communities of Nepalese migrant communities.

As an interface between local administrations and Nepalese migrants, the organization maintains regular contact with the prefectural government of Gunma and the four local city/town governments of Takasaki, Isesaki, Ota, and Oizumi. The officials of Oizumi town government acknowledge the contribution of the core members of the UNCJ, which also helps the local administration disseminate messages to the Nepalese community¹⁹. The UNCJ mobilized its members to join disaster preparedness training²⁰ and deliver curry meals at food stalls at public events in Gunma. In response to the request by the Oizumi-town office, a member of UNCJ taught the Nepali language to local non-Nepalese residents in September 2017 in collaboration with a leader of the NRNA Gunma. The various contributions of UNCJ members to the local community were well recognized and broadcast by Gunma television.

Today, local governments recognize UNCJ well. The UNCJ organized the first Nepali festival in Gunma from September 28–29, 2019 with the assistance of Oizumi-town. The mayor of Oizumi-town, assembly members of Gunma prefecture and Ota City, and Nepalese leaders participated in the inauguration ceremony of the festival. The event attracted local Japanese residents and contributed toward promoting tourism and the culture of Nepal.

¹⁹ Interview with the Chief of the International Collaboration Section in Oizumi Town on July 4, 2016.

²⁰ In Oizumi in July 2016 and Ota in February 2017

Members of the UNCJ brought their Japanese colleagues and neighbors to the event and proudly showcased their ethnic dances and cuisine. Japanese participants enjoyed an exotic experience at the festival, making it a successful event. However, it was not necessarily the relevant occasion at which members of the UNCJ could share their daily struggles and needs with their counterparts or appeal for their rights as local residents and taxpayers.

Leaders of the UNCJ are concerned about the rapid increase of newcomer Nepalese in their locality. Therefore, they help newcomers to settle down to avoid trouble and claims from the neighborhood, for example, of segregation, the disposal of waste according to local rules, or following traffic regulations. However, their support to individuals may ironically make migrants dependent on the SHO, because they do not need to learn anything in Japanese. SHOs can play a role in the integration of migrants if they proactively develop relationships with local stakeholders. However, if they only focus on mutual support among members, their service may accelerate the isolation of Nepalese newcomers in their localities. It is difficult to maintain the balance between work for mutual support and that to extend links with other stakeholders.

Roles of the UNCJ as a Migrant Organization

The primary role of the UNCJ is organizing Nepalese migrants for mutual support. Although UNCJ leaders previously experienced hardships as undocumented workers, they are now settled in Japan with their families, earn a relatively stable income, pay taxes, contribute to Japanese society through paying health insurance and national pension premiums, and obtain detached houses with housing loans from local banks. Based on their experiences, they show new Nepalese migrants how to survive in Japan. Actively

participating in the committee of the SHO, they are gradually recovering from the disgrace, stigmatization, and discrimination experienced as undocumented workers. Now, they have gained the respect of community members, local service providers, and the local government by representing the Nepalese community as leaders of the SHO. However, the UNCJ has limited human resources to run the organization and guide newcomers. Leaders of the UNCJ attribute their difficulties in expanding its membership to the younger generation, whose communication based on social networking services differs from the face-to-face communication of their elders.

As a secondary role, the UNCJ contributes to the integration of Nepalese migrants into local societies in Gunma through regular contact and collaboration with local governments and NGOs, serving as an interface between migrants and other stakeholders. Actions to organize Nepalese migrants and develop relations with local stakeholders have a synergetic effect on the integration of these migrants with local societies in Japan. Current UNCJ leaders attend meetings organized by local administrations and convey their requests to its members by translating official documents from Japanese to Nepalese. Their actions remain reactive, as they do not proactively address issues of their own such as social security (e.g., insurance and pension schemes). I conducted a workshop with UNCJ members on social security issues in 2017 in collaboration with a local social insurance labor consultant, because few UNCJ members were familiar with the occupational accident insurance and other social security system. The participants raised several questions and showed an interest in learning more. This can be attributed to the lack of a needs assessment of members. Furthermore, no sectorial collaboration between the UNCJ and local service providers such as schools and

health centers exists. Recently, the members of the UNCJ were connected to a local Japanese NGO that trains foreign residents as medical interpreters. It is a new challenge for the UNCJ to develop linkages with Japanese NGOs.

The tertiary role is the development of transnational ties with Nepal, for example, with communities affected by disaster, through fundraising. However, this has not extended from one-time emergency support to longer partnerships for rehabilitation or reconstruction. This aspect may not be a priority of the UNCJ.

Discussion

The study analyzed the diverse Nepalese migrant organizations not only according to ethnicity, but also by membership criteria and organizational functions.

Based on the UNCJ case study, migrants' SHOs in specific localities—a Type 6 organization— seem to have more potential than other types of organizations in terms of contributing to their integration into the country of residence. This is because members of SHOs tend to be concentrated in a limited geographical space and share common interests with local host communities. It is important in improving their access to public social security and/or private social services, and essential in protecting human rights such as a basic income, minimum standard of health and hygiene, and primary education of migrants and their families.

The UNCJ differs in two ways from ALA Brasil, the Brazilian migrant organization in Hamamatsu, namely in the aim of the organizations and level of collaboration with other stakeholders. The UNCJ was originally formed to provide mutual support, while ALA Brasil was formed to bridge the gap between the Brazilian and

Japanese cultures. The activities of the UNCJ are event-based rather than regular programs, and organized by themselves without sponsorship from Japanese stakeholders. ALA Brasil had a closer and more substantial collaboration with the local government; for example, they organized language classes for children. However, the members of ALA Brasil felt they were “used” by the local government to disseminate information to Brazilians (Yamanaka 2006: 111). UNCJ members were mobilized to participate in various events organized by the local administration, but have not requested support in maintaining their cultural identity. In short, the UNCJ is at a premature stage of partnership with other stakeholders in Japan. At this stage, the UNCJ does not have bargaining power against local administrations. Therefore, its position is still in the consultation stage shown in Figure 1. However, it may have a different destiny if its members explore potential partners and opportunities to strengthen their organization to rise higher up the ladder of participation.

Conclusion

This study examined the roles of migrant organizations formed by the Nepalese residing in Japan, especially their efforts to integrate members into Japanese society.

I categorized the types of Nepalese migrant organizations by membership criteria and the major impacts of their work. SHOs are open to all Nepalese regardless of their ethnicity/caste or homeland and do more work in their residential localities than other types of migrant organizations.

Three major roles were evident in the case study in Gunma. The primary role is organizing Nepalese migrants for mutual support. The

second role is maintaining regular contact and collaboration with local governments and NGOs as an interface between migrants and other stakeholders, which contributes to migrants' integration into local societies in Japan. The third role is developing transnational ties with Nepal, although this is limited to emergency support.

If conscious of their role to integrate members into host communities, migrant organizations need to promote themselves as an interface between migrants and local governments and NGOs. Maintaining regular contact and collaboration with various stakeholders positions them as a proactive civil society organization that goes beyond episodic participation in their residential communities. Then, other actors will understand that the integration of migrants is difficult without mainstreaming migrant organizations in civil society in Japan.

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