



Chapter 6

In search of a living

What can you do if there is no more food in the house, and no paid work locally available - which tends to be the case in the cold winter months after the main agricultural harvest? Seeking employment outside the village is an obvious strategy, although one full of risks. Migration – both permanent and temporary - was already a well established phenomenon in Suri twenty years ago, many families having far too little land to meet their food requirements through the year. This was part of a wider, national trend.

Aerogramme home, 7 March 1990

There's been much excitement in the village recently with the return of a number of men who've been working in Sikkim¹. They've brought gifts and money for their families, of course – as well as presents and news from other Suri men working there who have not yet returned. This is particularly amongst the Sunwar community, so there's been much rejoicing and consuming of jaad (local beer). One of those to return was Mitra Man (whose young son died); I visited the family yesterday and would hardly have recognised him, dressed in jeans and a smart new jacket. Mitra Man also brought with him money and presents from Ashok, I was pleased to learn.

I was round at Birmaya's place the day before yesterday, and she was at the end of her tether. She had completely run out of food, had no money, and was just fed up with having to beg food from the Newar family below – for whom she has to work to pay off the debt. "Look at me" she said, "My clothes are in tatters, so are the little one's, there's not a mana² of food in the house; I have to beg all the time. He's not sent a single rupee to me. If I just had a little money and a friend, I'd run away to Kathmandu!" I think she would too, if the chance arose – she's done so once before, but before Pramilla was born, so then it was easier. She wouldn't leave Pramilla behind, which cramps her style now. The last time she ran away, people here sent word to Ashok who left Sikkim, found her in Kathmandu, and brought her back – she'd been cheated out of her belongings by that time and was probably glad to see him. Maybe she also earned some respect from Ashok for her pluck in the process.

Anyway, this morning when I went down to see Birmaya for a quick chat she was almost dancing with happiness, quickly preparing a morning meal of (borrowed) rice and soldar (water boiled with salt and chillies) in order to set off early to Singati to buy as much poor quality rice as she can carry back..... Birmaya also has some new clothes, and Pramilla

a multi-coloured, beribboned little synthetic dress that will fall to bits in no time but with which both mother and child were highly delighted. So all this is great - yet seeing the life that Birmaya leads, and knowing that she is well aware of life outside, I just wish better for her. She was brought up in Sikkim, had some schooling, and sometimes went to the cinema – from which she gained romantic ideas and an extensive repertoire of Hindi movie songs...

Permanent migration from rural Nepal already began over a century ago – and as mentioned previously, many people who now live in Suri (as in other villages), acknowledge that their ancestors came from elsewhere. There have been waves of human movement from ancient times, but originally, this was simply in search of land to settle, rather than to find paid employment. Individuals today are often more mobile than one might initially assume. Thus Birmaya, (who is actually Tamang by ethnicity, but married to a Sunwar), was born in a Dolakha village not far from Suri; moved with her parents to Sikkim as a small child; and returned to village Nepal on her marriage. She now lives in Bhaktapur in Kathmandu valley, as an economic migrant drawn to better opportunities.

The main original destination for Nepali migrants seeking work was India – with a strong tradition of men joining the Indian or British army (as Gurkhas) to fight in return for payment. This means of earning a livelihood was, of course, also common in Switzerland in past centuries, with the Swiss Papal Guard being an enduring legacy. However, the main traditional recruiting grounds for Gurkhas are the East and Central West of Nepal. Although there is a tradition amongst some Khadka families to join the Nepal army, most men of Suri – those who would have formed the rank and file – did not seem attracted to army life. Instead, they headed to India in search of seasonal employment in factories or on construction sites, usually leaving their women behind. Seasonal migration as (somewhat paradoxically) a means to stay in the village probably became widespread in the middle part of the 20th century.

The season for the men to leave was in late October, after the major festivals of Desain and Tihar. They would then return in April or so, in time to participate in bringing in the monsoon firewood, and in the general agricultural activities. Male labour is needed, for example, in ploughing the fields, and in repairing and maintaining

the terraces and water channels, even if it is women who do the planting of rice and millet. Of course the pattern varied, and single young men often stayed away for the whole year, or even years at a time - only returning, if they could, for the festivals. For the poor, labouring outside the village for at least several years was the only option to earn enough to buy some land, build a house, and thus gain some status and start a family. The most common destinations were Sikkim, Darjeeling and Calcutta. Most quickly learned enough Hindi or Bengali to communicate (both being related to Nepali), but as few had more than very basic schooling, options were limited. The very lucky might get a job as a guard, Nepalis being widely known for their bravery, but more usually they just did hard manual labour.

It was rare to go alone; usually a group of friends and relatives would go together, and if they found a good employer, they might write or pass a message back with a returning individual for more friends to join them. Patron-client relationships developed where employers in India knew and trusted certain Suri individuals to work well, and to supply other hard workers if necessary. Thus there was a tendency for Tamangs from one hamlet to go regularly to one place; Sunwars to another, etc. This had obvious advantages of camaraderie and mutual support - as Padam Bahadur Tamang reflected when recalling how he learned of the death of his wife Langamaya (chapter 9). A letter sent by his family when he was working in Sikkim was read out to him by his friends. Out of kindness to lessen the immediate shock, they avoided telling him the news of her death, but simply said that he should go home straight away because his wife was seriously ill.

Undoubtedly there was also complicity amongst those migrating regarding what they told people in the village and what they didn't. A group of Sunwars from Surigaon, for example, found well paid work in a shoe-making factory in Calcutta - but since this is defiling, demeaning work for a Hindu, they took care at the time to tell no-one in the village about the precise nature of their employment. It would probably not raise much of an eyebrow these days. Meanwhile, for the women left behind in the village, life was often tough, as Birmaya's situation illustrates.

Seasonal migration of unskilled labour to relatively nearby destinations continues; thus Padam Bahadur's son, Shyam, now in his early 20s, has followed very much in his father's footsteps. The only difference is that he does not need to go to India, but instead finds work in Nepal, as a porter for trekking agencies. However, for the more ambitious, other employment destinations have opened up. They no longer head for Calcutta or Gangtok, but to Dubai, Riyadh, Kuwait City, or Kuala Lumpur.

Diary extract, Mulabari, September 2007

It is 7pm or so in the evening; we have gone inside and are chatting whilst supper is being prepared. The telephone rings. I'm startled by its sound - I'm not yet used to the idea

of telephones in Suri. Jagat answers and talks briefly; it is the son of the Kami living near them, calling from Qatar where he is working as a labourer. He'd like to speak with his father. Jagat arranges a time for the son to call again, when he will have got his father to the phone, and they ring off. I ponder how 20 years ago, Padam Bahadur learned of his wife's death weeks after it occurred; now one can talk instantly from a far more distant location.

The government of Nepal officially recognised the opportunities of foreign earnings through labour migration a good while ago (in the Labour Act 1985), but that does not mean to say that Nepalis travelling overseas for paid employment are particularly supported or protected. Indeed, arrangements for foreign employment have become a major private business in Kathmandu. I cannot remember hearing the English word "manpower" slip off the tongues of villagers in the past, but now it is a part of regular village vocabulary - if you want to work overseas (in the Gulf States, Malaysia, etc), you must go to a "manpower" (agency)³.

Of course the work offered overseas is largely of a menial nature - long hours of drudgery, but for a financial reward unimaginable in Nepal for the unskilled (or indeed for the highly skilled). There is also another type of migration amongst the youth of Suri who pass their SLC and move on to higher education - something that is increasingly common due to the greater opportunity locally to study to this level. Those who have done well in their studies tend to search for office jobs within the country - so that they can "eat a salary". The dream of most of the educated from Suri, at least, is to find permanent work in Kathmandu.

The average villager is certainly more informed about the outside world than was the case in the late 1980s. Information by radio is accessible to virtually all, and perhaps more significantly, television has also recently arrived in the village. Nevertheless, first-hand experience through migration (and to some extent second-hand, from those who have migrated) is a particular eye-opener. It is striking how those who have migrated know exactly the exchange rate of the Nepali Rupee to the US \$ and the Indian Rupee, and have no compulsion against asking a foreigner exactly how much she earns and how much a return flight to Europe costs, and then rapidly calculating the equivalent in Nepali Rupees. They seem very "street wise".

Going overseas is a high risk, high potential gain option; the interest rates for loans are high and the risks of being cheated or forced into paying bribes to manpower agencies are not inconsiderable. Overseas migration is not only risky; it is also a far more lonely option than the group migration to India - even if communication opportunities today are relatively good. The financial stakes are such that often only one person from the family can go, and they are as such more vulnerable - emotionally and financially. Yet it is increasingly common.⁴

Two people recounted to me at some length their own stories of migrant labour. The first is Hem Bahadur Ghatane, a Kami who worked in Malaysia - a relatively new destination for Nepali migrant workers⁵. Hem was a young adolescent when I lived in Suri, but must have left soon after I arrived. He studied to 7th grade, at the time the highest grade offered in the village, and then headed for Kathmandu at the age of 16. There he worked as a silversmith, saving money so that he could study at a private school and eventually gain his SLC.

Diary extract, September 2008

Hem Bahadur Ghatane lives in the Kami tol – the collection of Kami houses – on Suridada, the topmost part of the ridge above Surigaon. It is no accident that the land here is steep and poor, and the Kami's houses are clustered together as if in a huddle against the odds of existence. Traditionally, they made their living from blacksmith work and owned little, if any, land. It's a morning of low cloud and dampness - emphasising the separation of the settlement from the houses of the main part of Surigaon. Hem Bahadur is semi-expecting us (the village grapevine works quite well). Straw mats are rapidly brought out for us to sit upon, and inside the house, tea (it turns out to be hot milk) is prepared.

Hem Bahadur is a lanky, dark-skinned man with a chipped front tooth, and he seems so at ease in his surroundings that it's difficult to imagine him in the diverse situations in which he's been. Yet the proof – not that it was really needed – lies in the documents and photos that he later produces. Furthermore, as he talks, his non-verbal talent for communication becomes evident.

Hem remembers his early years in Kathmandu with bitterness – his boss treated him with contempt, not even giving him decent food but expecting him to eat the leftovers from the children – “jutho ko khanna” or ritually polluted food. He worked hard to set himself up independently, continuing as a silversmith for eight years. His caste-based but reasonably remunerative work in Kathmandu corresponded with success in the eyes of his family (and indeed society). He further did “the right thing” by marrying the girl chosen for him by his father. She became the daughter-in-law helping his parents at home and in due course producing a son, whilst he remained based in Kathmandu, making only infrequent return visits to Suri. Up to this point, his was an average “success story”.

Hem Bahadur had greater ambitions, however. These first focused on a dance career, which he pursued for six years with obvious success. My colleagues are impressed as the names of the famous Nepali actors with whom he danced trip off his tongue. Sunil Chhetri, Resina Upreti, Rajesh Hamal... we pore over the photos, in which Hem Bahadur appears pale of face – yes, he says, we wore a lot of make-up. His dance troupe toured the country, putting on performances that were linked to political campaigning. We surmise that he was a prominent UML⁶ supporter in those days, although his sympathies now lie more with the Maoists. He smiles, and said that it all came to an end due to soured personal dynamics, as well as

financial concerns. The birth of his second son reinforced his concerns about providing for his family. He therefore decided to seek work overseas for a few years.

Hem's first attempt to gain overseas work, in Saudi Arabia, entailed signing up to a manpower agency and taking two courses. One was in basic English, the other in waiter skills. He paid for these by taking a loan of Rs 50,000. However, after he had applied unsuccessfully for many jobs, it became clear that he would never be offered a position without paying a bribe. Angered by this realisation, he gave up with the company, and went to another. This was recruiting men to work in an auto-parts factory in Malaysia. The total cost of going was Rs 95,000⁷ - covering his ticket, all the paperwork, and the commission of the agency - but he eventually raised the money through a variety of loans.

On 16 August 2005 Hem boarded a flight to Malaysia with 25 other Nepalis – men of varied castes and backgrounds (the list of names on the official paperwork included Bahuns, Chhetris, Gurungs and Dalits), but united by language, and the wish to earn money. On arrival in Malaysia, they were also united by sheer shock and amazement – the airport was like nothing they had ever seen before. Hem remembers them all just staring at the vastness of the building, its shiny brightness, at the moving elevators, and the conspicuous wealth. “We all fell silent, wondering if we would ever see our homes and families again.” Their discomfort increased when they found that they could not go out, as they only had copies of their official documents. The originals were with the company agent. They also couldn't collect their baggage, in which they had packed food from home – food for which their stomachs longed. Indeed, they were marooned inside the airport for 15 hours, drinking water from the hand basins in the toilet, and growing hungrier by the hour.

Hem had a little money with him, which he changed into Malaysian Ringgits and used to buy a small bun from a friendly cleaning lady, and a phone card to contact the agent. This he managed successfully, and when the agent finally materialised, he immediately took Hem to be the leader (Hem modestly put this down to the fact that he was wearing a jacket, but his resourcefulness seems a more likely reason). Apparently no-one in the mixed caste group of Nepalis objected to having a Dalit as their leader. Of course, they were out of home territory and already shaken by the new reality. The next hurdle was a medical test, which they were all required to undergo, including a blood test – despite this having already been conducted in Nepal. At the sight of a needle, some of his companions (weakened through lack of food) simply fainted. Hem took the nurse to one side, and in his simple English persuaded her to waive the blood test on all but him and three or his sturdier colleagues. He said she understood and agreed; soon afterwards, they were out of the airport and on their way to their new job in a company coach.

The accommodation provided by the company was comfortable and clean. Hem also thought that the working

arrangements were fair. Their work time on the factory floor lasted 12 hours – 8 hours was the standard working day; 2 hours extra was overtime; and a further 2 hours meant that they could have a free day on Saturday as well as Sunday. Not everyone adapted well, though. He and a Gurung from their group had responsibility to lead the men and explain things to newcomers. He saw that some men became depressed; some took to drink, and another became ill. Some were also unable to resist spending the money they were earning in bars and hotels.

The company obviously liked Hem's work and his attitude. He has photos of company "Elegant Dinner" evenings at which prized employees were entertained on company expenses. They were even taken on special trips to Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia – he showed photos of himself lounging by luxury hotel pool-sides – but after a while, he longed more and more for his family. He started dreaming of his mother and father, his wife and sons, and wondering if he would ever see them again. At the same time his stomach started to give him problems. So at the end of three years, he returned home, in keeping with his original contract.

What had he made? Hem was a little coy on the exact amount he had made – one would hardly expect him to be otherwise. Still, he could certainly pay off all his loans, buy the family a milking buffalo, contribute to the village electrification programme, and build a new house. He says proudly that on returning home, his stomach problems stopped immediately. However, just recently they started again, and he has the feeling that he will need to go away to work again, to ensure there is enough money for his sons' education. Maybe after a while the rhythm of village life is a little humdrum, after all he has experienced.....

In the past, the role of married women was generally to stay behind and look after the livestock, the land, and the children. This may still be their fate, especially when the daughter-in-law is left living in the family home, with the expectation that she will cook and care for her parents-in-law as was the case for Hem's wife, who in my presence was shy and retiring. Single young women also rarely used to look for work outside the village, mainly out of fear (at least on the part of their parents) that they might be "contaminated" by outside influences and reduce their marriage prospects. Indeed, the ideal was for them to marry in their late teens and start producing children – this being considered the norm even among groups such as the Sherpas and Tamangs who are generally more relaxed about women travelling outside their native place. These days, however, attitudes are beginning to change.⁸

Diary extract, September 2007

Niruta Gurung – everyone knows her by her pet name of Jira (Cumin) - twirls the umbrella over her head to protect her skin from the hot sun. Two large gold rings glint on her fingers, of the like I have never seen worn by a villager before – one is gold filigree, the other inset with a large sapphire and a diamond. It's easy to imagine that they are the envy



of all the girls around. Jira is also dressed in a very modern and fetching, bright orange chiffon salwaar kameez. It is so striking that we spotted her figure picking her way carefully along the path, and guessed it was her, long before she came fully into view. Jira is a pretty 20 year old who laughs a lot, particularly over what she recalls as her past naivety. She was only 15 when she went to Kuwait to work. It was, she insists, entirely her own wish – supported by her maternal uncle (who has since died). It was he who had connections with a manpower agency, who helped her to falsify her age, get a passport and then fill in the paperwork. When her parents saw her determination, they reluctantly agreed. After all, what other opportunities were there for her - a girl educated only to grade 5 who had no training and spoke nothing but Nepali? She wanted to see something of the world beyond her own village. Of course it cost a lot, Rs 1 lakh (100,000)⁹, which the family had to raise through taking a loan - but this they somehow managed.

When the time came to go, Jira was naturally worried. She admits that she had heard that girls are sometimes sexually mistreated, but she thought that this couldn't happen to everyone – and that she would somehow manage to avoid that fate. She stresses a number of times in the course of our conversation that she never experienced any sexual harassment; one can surmise that this has been a subject of much speculation on the part of other villagers. Jira says that her fears grew during the long journey; the manpower agency first took her to Delhi, where she stayed for five days in a house owned by them. Delhi was huge and frightening, nothing like her home – but by that time there was no going back.

When she boarded the plane to Kuwait, she had only the name and telephone number of the family for whom she was going to work. They, in turn, had her photograph. There was no problem, however – they came to fetch her at the airport, and she was happy to find that there was an older Nepali woman also working in the house (she used the term didi, elder sister, as one does in Nepali even if the person is not a relative). The didi had already been there for 10 years, and so was very experienced and could tell her everything she needed to know. One of the first things to learn was how to dress – ordinary clothes could not be worn in front of the man of the house; in his presence one always had to appear in a burka. You knew whether it was necessary to put it on as there were two bells to the house, one for when the master returned home, and the other one for the mistress.

For the first month, Jira had things easy – she had a medical check, and didn't have to work until the results came through as being clear. Then the lady of the house started to train her in her tasks. It was a long working day, from 4am to 12pm. She heard that others who had come had only stayed a few months and then left, but she was determined to do well. Her duties were to wash the clothes, look after the three children, and clean the house. As the climate was so hot, the children went to school at 5am, and came back at 9am; lunch was served around 2pm, and then the master and mistress took rest. However, the servants were not allowed to sleep – they had to be up the whole time, and sometimes they would be phoned to check that this was the case. She and didi were also not allowed to speak to each other in Nepali – or at least, not in the presence of the master and mistress.

Jira recalled enjoying the occasions that the children had friends around to play. They came with their maids, so whilst the children played, the maids could gossip. The other times she really enjoyed were the weekly visits to church. The manpower agency had told her to state her religion as Christian, as this would mean she would have this opportunity to get out of the house, and she had followed what they told her. Of course she was brought up Hindu, and (she giggled) when people started asking her questions about her faith, she had a lot of difficulty answering. Still, going to church was the highlight of the week. She left the house in a burka, but changed out of it in the taxi. At the church she met many others working for families, and had the chance to talk and relax. The Sunday freedom ended at 4pm, by which time she had to be home, having changed back into her burka in the returning taxi.

Jira was paid every 15 days, her mistress telling her to put her money in a box and keep it safe. Most of it she sent straight home to her mother and father. In fact, the time passed quite quickly, and when her two year contract came to an end, she was both impatient to see her family and also sad to leave her Kuwaiti family. Jira remembers the master saying he wanted to see her face before she left; when he did, he remarked how astonishingly young she looked to have worked so hard. The whole family came to say goodbye to her at the airport. Although the master explained to her what to do, she became

very emotional and confused, and kept running backwards and forth until the master called someone on his mobile to come and help her. By that time she was very late, and her name was being called over the loudspeaker. She was the last to board the plane, and the other Nepalis on it told her what a silly she was. Still, they helped her when it came to changing planes at Bharain, so she arrived back safely.

What will Jira do now? Having seen all that she has of the outside world, it is difficult to imagine her settling back into the small Gurung hamlet of Kapti - cutting fodder, collecting fuelwood and planting out millet for the rest of her life. Certainly she does not dress as if this is her intention. Asked the question, she was non-committal, but she did volunteer the information that she had been in touch with her Kuwaiti family since returning. They had suggested to her that she marry a man with a driving licence, and return to work for them as a couple – he as the driver, she as the home help. Jira was obviously pondering over her options.

It may be noted that both Hem and Jira were required to have medical checks before they could work overseas. The big concern of potential employers is of course AIDS, although tuberculosis and a number of other contagious diseases are usually also checked. The real potential health problem, however, lies not in out-going Nepali migrant workers. It is what happens to them whilst they are overseas that poses a threat to their own health and potentially that of others when they return. Jira's story is ostensibly a happy one, but she was right to be worried when she found herself in Delhi. The huge illicit trade in sex workers, particularly between Nepal and India, has resulted in a major problem of HIV transmission and other sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁰ Similarly, in terms of HIV risk, Hem implied that not all his fellow Nepali workers were as careful as he in how they spent their leisure time in Malaysia.

Hem and Jira were both drawn back to their families in Suri, but both clearly retain half an eye on the outside world, and all the excitement that they experienced there - despite the drudgery that they also endured. In this, both give the same impression. They have grown in knowledge and self confidence, something that is an asset in itself, apart from the financial rewards of migration. Of course some migrants have less positive tales to tell, and some have disastrous experiences which end in major debt or worse. From a national perspective, Hem and Jira are more typical, in that they brought money home.¹¹

How will the situation evolve in the future? The global economic downturn has resulted in fewer migration opportunities, and many migrants are returning home – some losing money in the process. More than this, however, is the fact that people like Hem and Jira are caught between two worlds. They are likely to be less and less willing to live in a village in the conditions in which they grew up. They could be a source of innovation and investment in the village; this, for example, is the

reputation of Gorkha soldiers returning to their villages after overseas postings. Hem has indeed quickly lent his support to the locally-organised electrification scheme for Surigaon. They could also become social mobilisers, pushing for political change - again, Hem has apparently already engaged himself in this respect. Or they could simply decide eventually that village life is not for them, and choose to establish themselves and their families elsewhere – thus joining the throngs of the permanent rural to urban migrants. Perhaps, though, none of these will apply. It is possible that the fate of people like Hem and Jira will be to live out life in two parts, in two interchanging roles – between hard-working foreigner in a distant land, and returning villager who is admired and envied, but no longer feels quite at home.



Endnotes

- 1 Although a part of India, the Nepali language is very commonly spoken in Sikkim – which presumably made it an easier place for Nepalis to find work.
- 2 A small volumetric measure – one mana is equivalent to 0.454 kg rice.
- 3 In 2006, there were reportedly 559 such recruitment agencies registered in Nepal, although as an indication of the corruption problems, the licenses of 117 agencies had been terminated for failing to comply with government rules and regulations (*NCCR North-South, UNIFEM and NIDS Nepal Migration Year Book 2006*).
- 4 A quick discussion with members of the community forest user group (CFUG) of Bajradada, for example (see chapter) revealed that of the 87 households, over one third had a relative working overseas. Nationally, figures exist only for those who have migrated officially (with government approval), and are thus less than the true total (*NCCR North-South, UNIFEM and NIDS Nepal Migration Year Book 2006*). However, trends are clear. The number of recorded individuals leaving Nepal to work in countries other than India rose from 3,600 in the fiscal year 1993-94 to 183,000 in 2004-05; according to the *SDC Annual Report 2010*, the number reached some 294,000 in 2009-10 (an increase on 2008-09, despite the global economic downturn).
- 5 The Malaysian government officially “opened its doors” to Nepali workers in February 2001. Within a year, Malaysia was hosting some 85,000 Nepali migrant workers (Seddon, D. 2005 *Nepal’s Dependence on Exporting Labour Country Profile Migration Information Source* <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?id=277>) Hem followed a few years after this first wave.
- 6 United Marxist Leninist party
- 7 With current exchange rates fluctuating at around NRs 70-75 to the US \$, this is equivalent to roughly US \$ 1,300.
- 8 A government ban introduced in 1998 to prohibit female migrant workers travelling to the Gulf States (to protect them from abuse) resulted in clandestine travel arrangements, usually via India. It effectively rendered the women more vulnerable, given there was no official record of them. In recognition of this problem, the government of Nepal recently lifted the ban, in December 2010 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/go/rss/int/news/-/news/world-south-asia-11955863>. Sadly, physical and mental abuse of maids working in the Gulf States is common, as documented by the charity Human Rights Watch, <http://www.hrw.org/node/93334>.
- 9 Roughly equivalent to US 1,370.
- 10 A fictional but accurate account is provided by McCormick, P. (2006) *Sold* Hyperlion Paperbacks, New York.
- 11 In 2006 (<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?id=277>), the total volume and value of remittances from Nepali workers abroad was estimated at over US\$ 1.5 billion per annum. According to the *SDC Annual Report 2010*, the current value of remittances received from migrants may be as much as 20% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product).