



National Governance Symposium 2023

Governance Innovations for Inclusive Development

Enhancing Reintegration Sustainability for Nepali Migrant Workers

SESSION
BRIEF



Summary



After the pandemic, migrant laborers from Nepal faced significant obstacles that hindered their ability to reintegrate. Their problems were made worse by financial restraints related to remittance-driven loan repayments, a mismatch between domestic industry demands and acquired skills, a lack of knowledge about available support services, and increased psychological distress, especially among vulnerable groups such as women and informal workers. The recommendations include specialized job placement assistance, funding for start-ups, legal guidance, and neighborhood-based reintegration programmes. Financial empowerment, skill alignment with requirements of the destination country, specialized mental health care, and cooperative efforts between governments, recruitment agencies, and destination countries. The main focuses of the recommendations are policy inclusivity, skill development, financial empowerment, and awareness raising.



Problem Analysis

Reintegrating back into Nepalese society is a difficult process for migrant workers from Nepal because of the many difficulties they encounter on a regular basis. The following is a deeper explanation of the reasons:

Financial Difficulties: Returning migrants face significant financial hardships due to their dependence on remittances for loan repayments, which restricts their capacity to make investments in local businesses or personal growth.

Low Skilled Migrant Workers: Labour migrants from Nepal are mostly low-skilled, making them even more vulnerable in their destinations, where they are likely to be employed in risky jobs

Relevance and Application of Skill: Foreign-acquired knowledge frequently does not correspond with Nepal's industry requirements and technological environment. The likelihood that returning migrants will successfully contribute to the domestic workforce is reduced by this mismatch.

Programmatic Invisibility: It is more difficult for migrants to obtain essential reintegration help when they are unaware of the government's existing programmes, such as skill development efforts or financial support schemes.

Psychosocial Vulnerabilities: As a result of abuse, exploitation, and traumatic experiences overseas, returning migrants, especially women and informal laborers, are more vulnerable. This can cause serious mental health problems and make it difficult for them to reintegrate into society.

Government Approach and Gender Disparities: Women migrants have particular difficulties, such as a higher risk of sexual assault, torture, and misbehaviour. They frequently struggle to reintegrate into society as a result of stigma and a lack of available resources. Furthermore, rather than actively looking for bilateral and comprehensive solutions to address the problems they face, the government has resorted to discouraging women migrants through the imposition of prohibitions in reaction to these concerns. This strategy has increased the problems faced by women seeking successful reintegration by limiting rather than providing appropriate support during migration and upon return.

Formal versus Informal Migrants: The differences between formal and informal migrant laborers are glaringly apparent in the lack of assistance provided to the latter, who face more complicated legal issues, little protection, and trouble getting back into the workforce.



Existing Policies for Migrant Workers

- The government has implemented various laws and policies to regulate labor migration, accompanied by institutional structures such as the federal-level Ministry of Labour and labor tribunal. However, there is a need for the government to decentralize these services, making them more accessible at the community level.
- The government of Nepal adopted the Foreign Employment Policy (FEP) in 2012, emphasizing the development of skills and safe migration for Nepali migrant workers. The government also signed memorandums of understanding with Malaysia (2018), Jordan (2017), Israel (2015), Bahrain (2008), Qatar (2005), UAE (2007), South Korea (2007), and Japan (2009). Furthermore, the Nepal government has signed a Bilateral Agreement (BLA) with the major destination countries to promote Nepali migrant workers' rights, safety, dignity, and prosperity. Despite a provision requiring the policy to be reviewed every five years, the FEP received no amendments in the 2017 constitution.
- Nepal has adopted SDGs wherein Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth, and Goal 10 on reduced inequalities highlight the rights of the migrant workers. The implementation of SDG 8 is essential to increase employment opportunities and formalize jobs, create a safe and secure environment for women, and reduce the gender gap in employment opportunities. It further highlights the diversification of technology, development of new skills, decent job creation, and entrepreneurship.
- Nepal is also a signatory of GCM (Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration) which centers around the well-being of migrants and communities globally, emphasizing a people-centered approach. It calls for international cooperation due to the transnational nature of migration, recognizing that no single state can address it independently. While affirming states' sovereignty over migration policies, the Compact underscores the importance of the rule of law, due process, and adherence to human rights principles. Grounded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Compact seeks to harness migration for positive development outcomes. It adopts a gender-responsive and child-sensitive approach, acknowledging specific needs throughout the migration cycle. Additionally, the Compact advocates for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, promoting comprehensive, coordinated efforts involving diverse stakeholders to address the complex dimensions of migration."
- Nepal is also a member of several international organizations/treaties that protect migrant workers, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 1966, the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants 2016, the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, and the Colombo Process.



Recommendations

- **Financial Empowerment:** Provide migrant workers who are returning with sustainable loan access, financial literacy, and debt management programmes.
- **Skill Development:** Step up training prior to departure, making sure it complies with standards in the destination nation, and set up procedures for efficiently putting newly acquired skills to use while returning home.
- **Government as Main Source of Information:** Enhance employability chances by strengthening communication methods regarding government programmes and offering certificates for gained skills. This will increase awareness of and access to support services.
- **Psychological Well-Being:** Provide more specialized psychological support services, paying specific attention to migrant workers and women who are particularly at-risk populations.
- **Facilitate Employment:** Establish specialized employment offices to connect immigrants with appropriate job openings.
- **Decentralizing Labor Migration Services:** Establish local centers, reducing the need for migrants to travel far for remedies and skill development. This will enhance accessibility, efficiency, and responsiveness at the community level.
- **Recruitment Agency Responsibilities:** Require recruitment agencies to follow moral standards by giving them access to complete information about migrants, such as their demographics, reasons for migrating, and job particulars, and to guarantee that the jobs at destination are accurately listed. Better support planning will be made possible by this accountability, which will also safeguard the rights of migrant workers and provide ongoing assistance for the duration of their job overseas.
- **Government Collaboration and Information Dissemination:** Work closely with hiring companies to guarantee that accurate and thorough information regarding government initiatives, skill development programmes, and psychosocial assistance for migrants is shared. Stress the importance of the government serving as the primary information source for migrant workers before they leave and when they return, as this will guarantee that they have access to services and assistance they need throughout the duration of their journey.
- **Entrepreneurial Support:** Provide financing and training programmes for resettling immigrants who want to start their own businesses.
- **Legal Aid Services:** Help undocumented migrants navigate the difficult legal system by offering legal assistance.
- **Community Reintegration Programmes:** Create campaigns aimed at fostering community support and social inclusion.

References

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