



WHITE PAPER

LABOUR MIGRATION IN NEPAL



NON-RESIDENT NEPALI ASSOCIATION (NRNA)

MARCH 2026

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FOREWORD



Labour migration continues to play a significant role in Nepal’s socio-economic development. Millions of Nepali citizens pursue employment opportunities abroad each year, contributing not only to their families and communities but also to the broader national economy. While migration presents opportunities, it also brings complex challenges that require coordinated efforts and sustained support.

As a global organization representing the Nepali diaspora across 92 countries, the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) has remained committed to supporting Nepali migrant workers in countries of destination. Through the dedication of our volunteers and close collaboration with diplomatic missions, development partners, and stakeholders, NRNA has been actively engaged in addressing the needs of migrant workers, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

Our partnership with the International Labour Organization during the COVID-19 pandemic through RRR (Relief, Repatriation and Rehabilitation) project marked a significant milestone in our efforts to provide relief and repatriation support to affected Nepali migrant workers worldwide. Building on the lessons and achievements of that collaboration, the Migrants’ Rights and Decent Work (MiRiDeW) Phase II Project was initiated to further strengthen migration-related services and institutional capacity within NRNA.

This White Paper represents an important contribution to ongoing discussions on labour migration governance and the protection of migrant workers’ rights. It provides valuable insights, evidence, and policy recommendations aimed at improving support mechanisms for Nepali migrant workers in countries of destination.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to International Labour Organization (ILO) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and for their continued partnership and support in implementing this initiative. I also extend my gratitude to all stakeholders, experts, and NRNA members who contributed to the preparation of this White Paper.

I am confident that this publication will serve as an important reference for policymakers, development partners, and institutions working to promote safe, orderly, and rights-based migration for Nepali workers across the globe.

Dr. Badri K.C.

President

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA)



FOREWORD

Migration has become an integral part of Nepal's development landscape. Nepali migrant workers continue to make remarkable contributions both internationally and within Nepal through their skills, dedication, and economic participation. Ensuring their safety, dignity, and access to support services remains a shared responsibility among governments, institutions, and migrant communities.



The Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) has long recognized the importance of strengthening support systems for Nepali migrant workers in countries of destination. Through collaboration, advocacy, and community engagement, NRNA has worked to promote safe migration practices and respond to emerging challenges faced by migrant workers.

The development of this White Paper under the Migrants' Rights and Decent Work (MiRiDeW) Phase II Project reflects our continued commitment to evidence-based dialogue and policy engagement on labour migration. Implemented in partnership with the International Labour Organization and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, this initiative highlights key findings, experiences, and recommendations aimed at strengthening migration governance and improving service delivery for migrant workers.

This publication brings together knowledge and perspectives from various stakeholders and serves as a valuable resource for shaping future policies and programs related to labour migration.

I would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of all partners, experts, and NRNA members involved in this important work. Moving forward, we remain committed to working collaboratively to ensure that migration is safe, inclusive, and beneficial for Nepali workers and their families.

Mr. Mahesh Kumar Shrestha

President

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This White Paper serves as the second, updated strategic document of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA), outlining a comprehensive framework to advocate for the rights and welfare of Nepali migrant workers and the broader Nepali diaspora. It responds to the evolving landscape of labour migration, analyzing current trends, persistent challenges and emerging issues to guide the NRNA's future interventions towards making migration safe, orderly, regular and productive. This edition aims to address emerging issues in the sector and will serve as a guiding framework for the NRNA's future initiatives.

The Department of Foreign Employment of NRNAs extends its sincere gratitude to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Department of Consular Services, Foreign Employment Board, Nepali diplomatic missions in the UAE, Portugal and Saudi Arabia, Social Security Fund, ILO Country Office for Nepal, IOM Nepal, National Network for Safe Migration, NRNA ICC Presidents Dr. Badri K. C. and Mr. Mahesh Kumar Shrestha, ICC and NCC executives, representatives from civil society organizations, the private sectors, migrant workers and labour migration experts for their invaluable inputs. We sincerely thank the NRNA secretariat team, including Rajendra Kumar Raut-CEO, Indra Laxmi Ghimire - Senior Foreign Employment and Communication Officer, Kunal Mishra- Senior Officer; Mahesh Shrestha- Assistant Director IT; Kamala Amatya-Project Officer, MiRiDeW Phase II, Pramila Lama -Project Assistant, MiRiDeW Phase II, and the entire NRNA Secretariat team, for their indispensable support producing this second edition. This document would not have been possible without their dedication and feedback.

The Department of Foreign Employment of NRNAs also expresses its sincere appreciation to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Office for Nepal under the MiRiDeW Project, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), for its technical guidance, continued support, and valuable feedback throughout the development of this White Paper. In particular, we acknowledge Ms. Roni Pradhan Dhaubhadel, National Project Coordinator of MiRiDeW Project for her dedicated support and constructive inputs. The department is thankful to all who contributed both directly and indirectly. Finally, our profound gratitude goes to consultant Chiranjivi Baral for his diligent efforts in developing this White Paper.

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA)
Department of Foreign Employment



ABBREVIATIONS

BLA	Bilateral Labour Agreement
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DoFE	Department of Foreign Employment
EU	European Union
FEB	Foreign Employment Board
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FNCCI	Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICC	International Coordination Council
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IDI	In-depth Interview
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDW	Migrant Domestic Worker
MiRiDeW	Migrant Rights and Decent Work Project
MoLESS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAVt	National Academy for Vocational Training
NCC	National Coordination Council
NIDS	Nepal Institute of Development Studies
NRN	Non-Resident Nepali
NRNA	Non-Resident Nepali Association
PNCC	Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSF	Social Security Fund
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Labour migration remains an important aspect of Nepal's economy and society. Absence of employment and decent work conditions in the country and comparatively high wage abroad has led to out-migration of many youths from Nepal, primarily to Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Malaysia. There is a growing demand of care migrant workers in the global labour market. Remittances, constituting over 25 per cent of Nepal's GDP, are vital for poverty reduction and household investment.

Despite its economic benefits, migration is fraught with systemic risks and exploitation. Restrictive policies, including pre-conditions imposed on domestic work in certain destination countries, have often pushed women into irregular migration channels, increasing their exposure to abuse, trafficking and decent work deficits. Many workers have become undocumented due to contract substitution, unfair dismissal or employers' failure to renew permits, leading to detention, deportation and a lack of legal remedy. Nearly 15,000 migrant worker deaths have been recorded since 2008/09, with causes often linked to harsh working conditions, including high temperatures because of climate change. A growing mental health crisis is driven by exploitation, debt, isolation, heat stress and the stark gap between expectation and reality. The use of irregular pathways bypasses official channels and leaves workers without legal protection, prone to wage theft and exploitation. Returnee migrants lack adequate support for socio-economic reintegration. While the government's contribution-based Social Security Fund is a milestone, low awareness has hindered regular contributions, leaving workers without a safety net. The NRNA has consistently served as a critical friend in need for migrant workers. Its global network positions it uniquely to offer on-ground welfare support, from legal aid to repatriation of deceased workers. The NRNA aims to strengthen its partnership with the Government of Nepal, diplomatic missions, international agencies, civil society organizations and private sectors for the interest to transform Nepal's labour migration system. To address the afore-mentioned challenges, this White Paper proposes a strategic roadmap for NRNA across four pillars:

Advocacy: It encompasses lobbying the Government of Nepal for migrant-friendly and gender-responsive policy reforms, including lifting discriminatory pre-conditions on women migrants as domestic workers for GCC, Malaysia and Lebanon, simplifying regular migration processes, regularizing undocumented workers, strengthening gender-



responsive support mechanisms and migration services through diplomatic missions to support migrants in distress, enhancing access to information and justice, social protection of workers, strengthening human and financial resources at Nepali diplomatic missions in the countries of destination, securing voting rights for Nepalis abroad, recognizing NCCs as legal entities, assigning specific responsibilities to NRNAs in the destinations where the presence of diplomatic missions is inadequate and ensuring stronger bilateral agreements in line with international labour standards.

Action: It includes expanding the activities beyond welfare to rights protection. This also incorporates gender-responsive awareness campaigns on safe migration, social security, skills, mental health support, climate adaptation, entrepreneurship development and activating the NRNA foreign welfare fund for support to migrant workers, including vulnerable groups and women migrants. NRNA can support the government of Nepal to explore attractive labour destinations, including for care migrant workers.

Institutional Capacity: It includes strengthening the knowledge and skills of NRNA volunteers and staff on migration issues, designating dedicated focal points for advocacy and embassy coordination and improving institutional memory and project ownership along with support to migration diplomacy.

Research: It encompasses commissioning country-specific small-scale studies to document the status and needs of migrant workers, including women and undocumented workers, and skill mapping.



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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Overseas migration for employment has become an integral part for livelihood of more than half of Nepal's entire households for over two decades. Owing to insufficient employment opportunities, almost half of the workforce that enters the Nepal's labour market leaves for foreign employment every year. Remittances have lifted households out of poverty and enabled them to invest in productive assets, including education and health care. Nepal's formal labor migration is believed to have begun in 1814-1816, after the Nepal-British India war. A total of 4,650 Nepalis youngsters were recruited to the British armed forces as a British-Gurkha regiment after the conclusion of the war and signing of the Treaty of Sugauli in 1816.¹ It is believed that some 100,000 Nepali youth served the British force in the World War-I. After the advent of democracy in Nepal in 1950 and independence in India in 1947, hordes of Nepalis made drove to India through Nepal-India open border. During the mid-1980s, and with the economic globalization in 1990s as well as shift in Nepal's policy, migration to the Gulf States and Malaysia took shape and it was further spurred by the oil boom and infrastructure development campaign in the Gulf region. The Gulf States were experiencing rapid economic growth, while Nepal's agricultural production and economic opportunities were declining.²

At present, Nepalis migrate to Gulf countries, Malaysia and other destinations to avert the economic woes and earn a decent life for the families back home. The number of Nepali workers going abroad has declined drastically due to COVID-19. The pandemic had an unprecedented impact on economies, businesses, and workers, and in Asia as well as some other regions, migrant workers were among the most affected.³ Their income was reduced; rescue was postponed. Many of the migrants' health conditions deteriorated in the countries of destination.

1 Laxman Singh Kunwar, *Emigration of Nepalese People and Its Impact*, Economic Journal of Development Issues Vol. 19 & 20 No. 1-2 (2015).

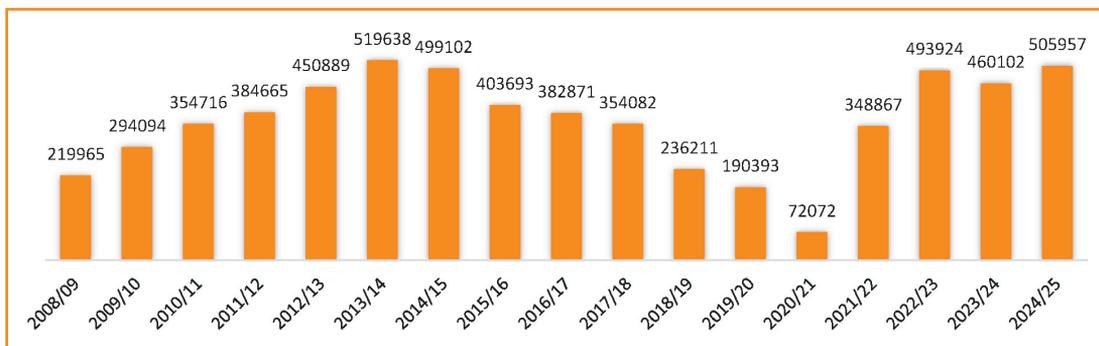
2 IOM (2019). *Migration in Nepal: A Country Profile*, IOM, 2019.

3 *Labor Migration in Asia Impacts of the Covid-19 Crisis and the Post-Pandemic Future*.

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/690751/adb-book-labor-migration-asia-impacts-covid-19-crisis-post-pandemic-future.pdf>



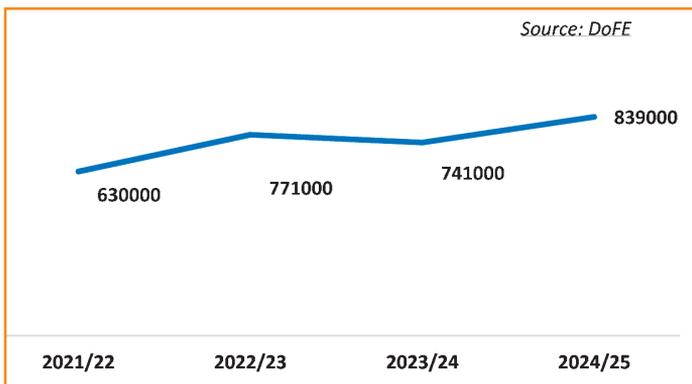
Figure 1: No. of labour approvals issued by DoFE (2008/09-2024/25)



Source: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS), *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2020*; Nepal Labour Migration Report, 2022; Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), *Annual Progress Report, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25*.

After the pandemic, the labour migration rate continued to rise. The Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) has issued nearly 3,000,000 labour permits until 2024/25 since 2021/22, the year when NRNA published its first White Paper.⁴ The DoFE issued 839,266 labour permits, including 94,455 women, in FY 2024/25 alone.⁵ The Government of Nepal has

Figure 2: No. of labour permits (both new entry and renewed) issued by DoFE in 2021/22-2024/25)



opened institutional labour permits for the foreign employment in 111 destination countries.⁶ A total of 140 orientation centers, 1,071 recruiting agencies, 19 insurance agencies and 223 medical centers are actively engaged in the foreign employment related business.⁷

4 Author's calculation of the past four years' data from the Department of Foreign Employment.

5 See at: <https://dofe.gov.np/yearly.aspx>

6 See at: <https://dofe.gov.np/recognized.aspx>

7 See at: <https://dofe.gov.np/Orientation-Center.aspx>; <https://dofe.gov.np/Recruiting-Agences.aspx>; <https://dofe.gov.np/Insurance-Company.aspx>; <https://dofe.gov.np/Medical-Center.aspx> (Accessed 17 October, 2025).



The number of migrant workers currently at work in foreign countries ranges from 2.4 to 3 million.⁸ Remittance inflows increased 19.2 percent to NPR 1723.27 billion during 2024/25 compared to an increase of 16.5 percent in the previous year.⁹ The remittance received from the migrant workers is equal to 25.3 per cent and 25.9 per cent of the GDP of Nepal in the FY 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively.¹⁰ The DoFE data from 2021/22 to 2024/25 reveals that the proportion of women migration is near 12 per cent. Studies estimate that 90 per cent of undocumented workers are women. Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, the UAE and Kuwait are the top five popular destinations for male migrant workers during the past decade, while the UAE, Qatar, Cyprus, Jordan and Kuwait are the top five popular destinations for women migrant workers.¹¹ A significant number of female migrants use irregular channels of migration, i.e., travelling via Indian airports or beyond or on tourist visas, hence, are not captured in the labour permit data of the government.¹² Most male Nepali migrant workers are employed in low-skilled sectors, such as construction and manufacturing, whereas the majority of female migrants work in the informal sector, either as caregivers or housemaids.¹³ Data show that over 76 per cent of Nepali men in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, and Qatar work in low-skilled jobs (compared to 43 per cent in Kuwait), while over 95 per cent of Nepali women in GCC countries—including 59 per cent in Bahrain and 70 per cent in Kuwait—are employed in low-skilled domestic work.¹⁴

1.2 Policy Context

The Constitution of Nepal is the key legal document that primarily recognises the domain of migration in Nepal and includes several provisions relevant to migration. Provisions on citizenship, citizens' right to freely move, the right not to be trafficked, make foreign employment free from exploitation and to guarantee the rights of migrant workers and mobilisation of the capital and skills of returning migrants are included in the Constitution.

- 8 Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (2020). *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2020*. Kathmandu: MoLESS.
- 9 Nepal Rastra Bank (2025). *Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation of Nepal (Based on Annual Data of 2024/25)*. See at: <https://www.nrb.org.np/contents/uploads/2025/08/Current-Macroeconomic-and-Financial-Situation-English-Based-on-Annual-data-of-2024.25.pdf>
- 10 Nepal Rastra Bank (2025). *Nepal Rastra Bank's Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation-Tables (Based on Annual Data of 2024/25)*. See at: <https://www.nrb.org.np/category/current-macroeconomic-situation/?department=red&fy=2081-82&subcategory=annual>
- 11 Bhattarai, S., Upadhyaya, B. & Sharma. S. (2023). *State of Migration in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility. https://ceslam.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/State_of_Migration_In_Nepal_2023.pdf
- 12 Bhattarai, S., Upadhyaya, B. & Sharma. S. (2023). *State of Migration in Nepal*.
- 13 Nandita Baruah & Shareen Tuladhar. "The Challenge for Nepal's Migrant Workers". Published in *The Diplomat* in 2013.
- 14 MoLESS (2022). *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022*. See <https://moless.gov.np/content/11280/11280-nepal-labour-migration-report/>



The Constitution of Nepal in its Directive Principles, Policies and Obligations of the State mentions to regulate and manage the sector in order to make foreign employment free from exploitation, safe and systematic and to guarantee employment and rights of the labours, and to encourage to mobilize the capital, skills, technology and experience gained from foreign employment in productive sectors in the country.¹⁵ Article 51, obliges the State to pursue policies that ensure decent employment and protect the rights of workers, including those working overseas, and utilize the knowledge, skills and experiences gained abroad for the development in Nepal. The 16th Periodic Plan (2024/25–2028/29) prioritizes safe, organized and dignified foreign employment, improved governance of migration, and economic and social reintegration of returnee migrants.

Recognizing the role of NRNA in supporting Nepali migrant workers, the new National Labour Migration Policy 2025¹⁶ has mandated the Nepali diplomatic missions abroad to make arrangements to obtain cooperation of non-resident Nepali associations in making labor-oriented services more effective and resolving workers' problems. The policy has ensured to further strengthen the relationship with non-resident Nepalis in relation to providing services to Nepali workers in labor destination countries. The policy has acknowledged the NRNA as one of the main responsible agencies to collaborate with in terms of providing services to Nepali migrant workers in labour destinations. The policy action plan seeks support from the NRNA to explore labour destinations with decent and attractive employment opportunities, identify the areas of specific impacts, demands and competitiveness of Nepali workers in the international labour market, and develop, operate and utilize the digital system to explore international employment opportunities.

The Foreign Employment Act 2007 has provisions for mandatory pre-departure orientation, medical test, insurance, Welfare Fund contributions and other to be eligible to obtain labour approvals. It provisions to register complaints through the Chief District Officer (CDO), and CDO are authorized to conduct primary investigation and reconciliation between the parties to a dispute related to foreign employment.¹⁷ The act has authorized Nepali diplomatic missions abroad to renew labour approvals.

Similarly, the Local Government Operation Act 2017 has stated that the local governments can provide financial literacy and skill training for the labour force going abroad and provide counselling to make foreign employment safe and productive. In 2022, the Government of Nepal released the Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for

15 Government of Nepal. *The Constitution of Nepal*, 2015. Nepal Law Commission.

16 MoLESS, *National Labour Migration Policy 2082* [2025]. See at <https://moless.gov.np/content/13310/national-labor-migration-policy--2082/>

17 Government of Nepal (2007). *Foreign Employment Act 2007*. Kathmandu: Nepal Law Commission.



Returnee Migrant Workers, 2079,¹⁸ introducing three kinds of reintegration programmes for returnees: socialization of returnees, employment and entrepreneurial development.¹⁹ Similarly, the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) (2022-2027) has aimed at guaranteeing minimum employment, making foreign employment safe, orderly, dignified, accessible and productive, while ensuring the safety and dignity of women migrant workers and identifying the financial and social reintegration of returnees. The Directives on the Management of Sending Domestic Workers for Foreign Employment 2015 provides guidelines in regard to the recruitment, employment and migration of Nepali migrant domestic workers, and reiterates that bilateral labour agreements (BLA) and memorandums of understanding (MoU) are the major tools to make their migration safe. The Government of Nepal has, for protecting the rights of Nepali migrant workers, signed Bilateral Labour Agreements (BLAs) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with 13 countries (UK, Israel, UAE, Mauritius, Japan, Malaysia, Jordan, Bahrain, Korea, Qatar, Romania, Germany and Saudi Arabia²⁰), and it has aimed at signing such agreements with many other countries where the number of Nepali migrant workers is on the rise. The Immigration Act 1992 and the Immigration Rules 1994, the Immigration Procedures 2008, the Foreign Employment Rules 2008, and the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007 and its Rules 2008 have promised to make foreign employment safe and productive, recognizing returnees as development partners.

Additionally, Nepal's commitments under key international conventions and treaties reinforce the urgency of this intervention. As a state party to ILO conventions, including those on forced labour, human rights instruments such as the ICCPR and the CEDAW and Global Compact for Migration (GCM), Nepal is obligated to ensure the rights, dignity and safety of its migrant workers.

The major labour destinations of Nepali migrant workers, GCC countries, have a widespread Kafala system, where employers take retaliation against workers who file complaints or attempt to change jobs.²¹ They can cancel residency permits without any

18 Foreign Employment Board (2022). *Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers 2022*. Foreign Employment Board, Kathmandu. https://www.feb.gov.np/extra_upload/62f8d26354d68_Reintegration%20Directives_unofficial%20translation.pdf

19 Bhattarai, S., Baniya, J., Shrestha, S., Thapa, P., Neupane, R., Tumsa, D., Nepali, S. & Mademba, S. (2023). *Return, Weak Reintegration, and Remigration: A Study of Nepali Migrant Workers*. PNCC/CESLAM. <https://ceslam.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Return-Weak-Reintegration-and-Remigration.pdf>

20 The government signed a labour agreement with Saudi Arabia on 25 January, 2026. It is a crucial achievement as it has paved the way for making labour migration safe thereby ensuring access to justice.

21 Amnesty International, 'I would fear going to work': Labour exploitation at Carrefour sites in Saudi Arabia, (Index Number: MDE 23/8586/2024), 21 October 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde23/8586/2024/en/>



valid reason, without which migrant workers at the immediate risk of arrest, detention and deportation. Also, chances are high that workers become irregular because their employers do not renew their residence permit. Legal redress is very difficult due to prolonged, expensive court processes, limited legal assistance and the absence of interpreters. Some employers level false allegations of theft against migrant workers in retaliation for leaving or file false absconding reports with law enforcement agencies to avoid paying wages owed.^{22,23} The potential ultimate consequence is the deportation of migrant workers despite lack of strong evidence to support the accusations. Many of our Nepali migrant brothers and sisters in the GCC countries are unaware of the Kafala system. Therefore, they behave against the system, pushing themselves to the risk of falling prey to punishment. In many countries of labour destination, strict rules have been imposed to discourage entry of irregular migrants. In Bahrain, Flexi permit system, which allows self-sponsorship by migrants in irregular status, ended in 2022, but it is still in practice.²⁴ Saudi Arabia has made improvements in its laws to allow migrant workers to change their employers only after contract expiry.^{25,26} In Saudi Arabia, migrant workers still need their employer to sponsor their visa and issue and renew their residence permit to enter and work in the country although it has made limited reforms introduced through Labour Reform Initiative since 2021.²⁷

The NRNA had developed a White Paper in 2021, reflecting the Association's vision on responding to the challenges faced by Nepali labour migrants in major destination countries, particularly focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the issuance of the first edition of the White Paper, the labour migration sector has witnessed many changes with new challenges, and the NRNA is required to be prepared for responding to those challenges. This updated White Paper reflects stakeholder voices and provides evidence-based insights and gender-responsive ways forward. It contributes to NRNA's capacity to influence gender-responsive migration discourse and enhance collaboration with the Government of Nepal, diplomatic missions and international partners.

22 Walk Free (2023). *The Global Slavery Index 2023*. Minderoo Foundation. See at: <https://cdn.walkfree.org/content/uploads/2023/05/17114737/Global-Slavery-Index-2023.pdf>

23 Amnesty International (2025). *Nobody Wants to Work in these Situations: A Decade of Exploitation on the Riyadh Metro Project*.

24 NRNA Baharain NCC representative in an interview.

25 MoLESS (2022). *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

26 The Riyadh-based Nepali diplomatic mission has published an awareness handbook on safe foreign employment. <https://sa.nepalembassy.gov.np/content/10/realization-hand-booklet/>

27 Amnesty International (2025). *Nobody Wants to Work in these Situations: A Decade of Exploitation on the Riyadh Metro Project*. London: Amnesty International.



1.3 Objectives

The primary objective of this White Paper is to provide clear guidance to the NRNA to take strategic actions to make labour migration safe, orderly, dignified and productive for Nepali migrant workers based on the realities and challenges of labour migration in Nepal and beyond. The specific objectives are:

- To review and integrate new data, policy developments and stakeholder inputs into the existing White Paper of NRNA.
- To incorporate emerging issues in the labour migration sector in Nepal, and reflect major protection gaps, especially for vulnerable migrant workers, including women, NRNA institutional capacity.
- To outline an actionable roadmap that can serve as a strategic advocacy tool for NRNA.

1.4 Methodology

Both primary and secondary sources were used to collect information. Primary information was gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KII), In-depth Interviews (IDI), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), a preliminary consultation and a validation workshop. The KIIs were implemented with representatives from agencies related to labour migration. The FGDs were carried out with NRNA NCCs and the management team of Phase I NRNA/ILO joint project on relief and repatriation. A preliminary consultation was held with stakeholders engaged in the labour migration sector to identify priority issues. Additionally, a validation workshop was organized to collect final inputs from the stakeholders. The IDIs were administered with current labour migrants abroad and returnee labour migrants. **Annex 1** shows the list of primary sources of information while updating of the existing NRNA White Paper.

Secondary sources included policy and legal frameworks, research/study reports, administrative data, journal articles public notices and others. Different checklists were developed to collect the required information from the desk review, KIIs, IDIs, FGD and stakeholder consultations. The checklists broadly focused on a range of topics, including new policies of the Government of Nepal and abroad on labour migration, rights and welfare of migrants, mental health, NRNA institutional capacity, social security, skills, women migration, undocumented status, migration governance, repatriation of dead bodies, cooperation and collaboration. Considering the ethical issues, personal identification of the informants were kept confidential to adhere to the Statistics Act, 2022 of the Government of Nepal.



CHAPTER II: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

The labour migration sector has innumerable issues, including migration costs, skills, unethical recruitment, false information dissemination, remittance cost, safety and security of women migrants and use of irregular channels. Migrant workers have failed to secure acceptable labor standards and basic labor rights such as formal contracts that specify minimum wage, timely payments, acceptable labor conditions, and health benefits. Nepali migrant workers have faced widespread exploitation, including deceptive recruitment, contract substitution, wage theft, long working hours, unsafe housing and limited access to justice.^{28,29,30} Loss of lives and injuries are serious concerns, as nearly 15,000 Nepali migrant workers, all of them youths, have lost their lives abroad in less than two decades.³¹ Women migrant workers have experienced disproportionately higher risks of abuse, particularly in the domestic sector where labour protections are minimal.³² Undocumented migrants are more prone to exploitation. Pre-conditions imposed on migrant domestic workers to the major traditional labour destinations has forced women migrant workers to choose irregular migration routes. Nepali migrants working outdoor, particularly in GCC countries, are experiencing climate change-fueled health risks. Mental health issues among migrants have added challenge to the wellbeing of migrants. Some priority issues that NRNA needs to take serious heed of are discussed in the subsequent headings.

2.1 Women and Domestic Migrant Workers

The number of women migrant workers is increasing in recent years and the countries of destination. Labour migration from Nepal is a predominantly male phenomenon with the share of female migrant workers accounting for a little above 5 per cent in the last decade.³³ Women migrant are over-represented in the domestic work which is a sector

28 Amnesty International (2017). Turning People into Profit. See at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa31/6206/2017/en/>

29 equidem (2022). If we complain, we are fired: Discrimination and exploitation of migrant construction workers on FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 stadium sites. See at: https://equidem.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Equidem_Qatar_World_Cup_Stadiums_Report_Final-1.pdf

30 Vital Signs (2022). The deaths of migrants in the Gulf. See at: <https://www.vitalsigns.org/>

31 Bhattarai, S., Upadhyaya, B. & Sharma, S. (2023). *State of Migration in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility; MoLESS, Nepal Labour Migration Report, 2024; data for 2024/25 are taken from Foreign Employment Board.

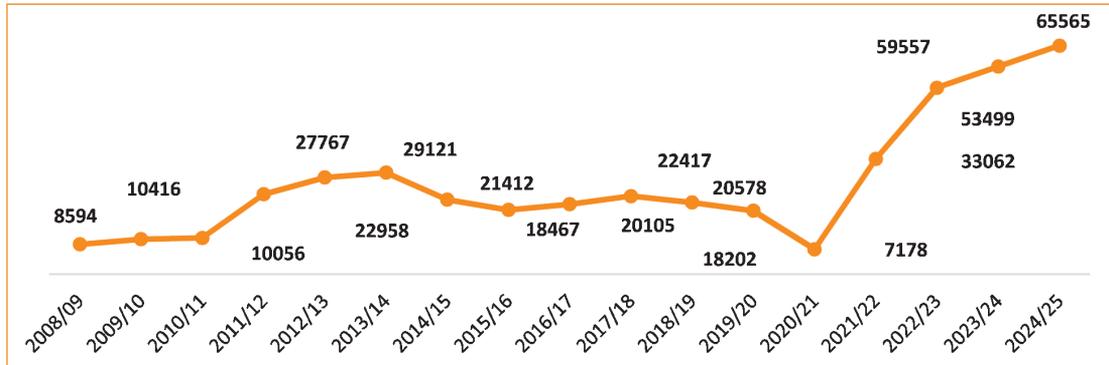
32 See the report "Institute for Human Rights and Business-Respecting the Human Rights of Women Migrant Workers During Recruitment- A Short Report for Business" at: https://ihrb-org.files.svdcn.com/production/assets/uploads/reports/ShortReport_Respecting_the_Rights_of_Women_Migrant_Workers_During_Recruitment.pdf?dm=1726490077

33 MoLESS, *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2020*.



rife with decent work deficit. The 2015 Directive on the Management of Sending Domestic Workers for Foreign Employment has banned MDWs under 24 years of age from working in Gulf countries, Lebanon and Malaysia. However, it does not align with democratic commitments to equal access to employment, gender equality, occupational equality, freedom of mobility and non-discrimination outlined in the Constitution of Nepal and in other national and international legal instruments.³⁴ Because domestic work takes place in the private sphere, many households do not make use of formal arrangements, whether due to cost concerns, lack of information, or a belief that domestic labour is not real work. It also assesses the ways in which informal work leads to substandard working conditions and creates a hindrance to development. Informal domestic work creates adverse conditions especially for women.

Figure 3: No. of labour approvals issued by DoFE to women migrant workers



Source: Mark McCarthy, *A comprehensive analysis of policies and frameworks governing foreign employment for Nepali women migrant workers and migrant domestic workers, 2021*, ILO Country Office for Nepal, Kathmandu; Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS), Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022; MoLESS, Nepal Labour Migration Report, 2024; Department of Foreign Employment, Annual Progress Report 2024/25.

The foreign employment registration process in Nepal is often gender-blind and does not account for the intensive stigma surrounding women labour migration. Consequently, those women who are legally able to access the labour permit application process still risk criticism or reproach from families, communities and administrative officials.³⁵ Similarly,

34 McCarthy, M. (2021). *A Comprehensive Analysis of Policies and Frameworks Governing Foreign Employment for Nepali Women Migrant Workers and Migrant Domestic Workers*. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40asia/%40ro-bangkok/%40ilo-kathmandu/documents/publication/wcms_792239.pdf

35 Mark McCarthy (2021). *A comprehensive analysis of policies and frameworks governing foreign employment for Nepali women migrant workers and migrant domestic workers*.



it is restrictive governance in regard to women migrant workers that compels them to opt for irregular channels. Domestic workers are given permission to work in countries where Nepal has signed bilateral labour agreement. Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights mentions that: “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state, and everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country”. Moreover, Article 23 of the Declaration specifies that “everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment”. Although the Parliamentary Committee on Industry, Commerce, Labour and Consumer Welfare on 29 September 2020 issued a decree to the government to ease the ban³⁶, implementation is seen nowhere in the horizon. The restriction is against the letter and spirit of the Article 18 (3) of the Constitution of Nepal that states, “The State shall not discriminate citizens on grounds of origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, economic condition, language, region, ideology or on similar other grounds.”³⁷ Likewise, Foreign Employment Act, 2007 mentions, “While sending worker for foreign Employment, the worker shall not be discriminated on the basis of gender”.³⁸ Conditional restrictions on domestic work has forced women into irregular migration, resulting in the rise in their vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, human trafficking and smuggling.³⁹ It has deprived care migrant workers, mostly women, from benefiting from care work opportunities abroad.⁴⁰

Women domestic migrants face various work-related problems, which are often related to exploitation. Women experience multiple forms of harassment including physical, verbal, mental and sexual abuse. More than one-third of women face the work load problem, excessively long working hours for more than 18 hours per day.⁴¹ Likewise, women are even restricted contacting their family members. Women migrant domestic workers often live inside the homes of their employers. They clean, cook, take care of children and/or elderly family members. Because these workers lack legal protection, there are effectively no limits to the number of hours they may be asked to work per day without paid sick leave or annual leave, and no maternity leave. The women

36 Available at <https://radiokantipur.com/575/2020/09/29/1601387857>

37 GoN, *The Constitution of Nepal*, 2015.

38 GoN, *The Foreign Employment Act*, 2007.

39 Bhagat, Ayushman & WOREC (2025). *Invisible in Life and Death: Visibilising the Deaths of Female Nepali Migrant Domestic Workers and the Struggles of their Families*. Brunel University London. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17633/rd.brunel.29804651>

40 KII with the implementation manager of ‘Shaping Development-Oriented Migration (MEG) Programme’ of GIZ.

41 Simkhada, P., van Teijlingen, E., Bhujal, S., Gurung, M. and Regmi, P. (2018). Problems Faced by Nepalese Female Migrant Workers in the Gulf Countries: A Quantitative Survey. In *International Society of Travel Medicine*. http://www.istm.org/icmh_sciprogram

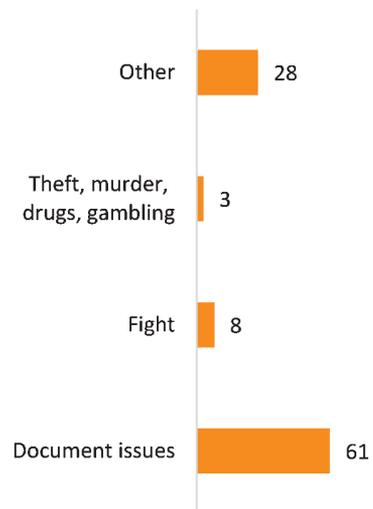


migrants working under such harsh condition have complained on denial of salary, sleep deprivation, passport confiscation and forced confinement. On a positive note, the new National Labour Migration Policy 2025 has reaffirmed the government’s commitments to non-discrimination in labour migration process in terms of gender and occupation, including women migrant domestic workers, and offered their capacity strengthening before leaving as an empowering tool.⁴²

2.2 Undocumented Status

Undocumentedness is one of the major problems that Nepali migrant workers are facing in the major countries of destination. By laws, the undocumented migrants in many of our major destinations end up with expulsion, detention, jail-term, repatriation, fine and ban on entry in future.⁴³ In Malaysia, between 2020 and 2023, 758 jail-related cases were registered at PNCC from Malaysia alone, in which high above half of them were imprisoned due to documentation (61%), followed by fights with colleagues or employers (8%) and criminal activities such as murder, theft, illegal drug trafficking, gambling, the sale of counterfeit alcohol and kidnapping (3%).⁴⁴ The same study revealed that 80 per cent of the migrant workers arrested for document related issues lacked valid documents because they absconded from the employer or switched employers, 9 per cent did not have valid visa or work permit, 3 per cent were deceived by agents or recruitment agencies in Nepal and 1 per cent did not have a passport or identification with them.⁴⁵ Usually, Nepali migrant workers change employers only to become undocumented as they find their salary, working conditions and benefits lower than promised, wage theft and difficult nature of job or over work. On the other hand, employers’

Figure 4: % of jail cases, Malaysia



Source: Bhattarai, et al. (2024).

42 National Labour Migration Policy, 2025.

43 International Organization for Migration [IOM] (2023), *Assessment of Causes and Contributing Factors to Migrant Workers Becoming Undocumented in Malaysia*. IOM: Geneva.

44 Bhattarai, S., Baniya, J., Karki, S. & Limbu, C. (2024). *Deception, Arrest and Detention of Nepali Migrant Workers in Malaysia*. Kathmandu: PNCC/CESLAM. The authors analyzed 758 cases from the administrative data of PNCC, and the cases were only from Malaysia.

45 Bhattarai, S., Baniya, J., Karki, S. & Limbu, C. (2024). *Deception, Arrest and Detention of Nepali Migrant Workers in Malaysia*.



inability to renew documents, including residential permits, health clearance cards, visas, contract papers, ATM and other identity documents in time has pushed migrant workers to undocumented status, but the migrant workers are, despite the fact that they not guilty, the ones who face the consequences, including arrest, detention, fine and deportation.⁴⁶ The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security had decided to issue undocumented workers labour permits with September 2024 as the cut-off date and the Nepali diplomatic missions have started regularizing the workers.

2.3 Inclusion in and Portability of Social Protection

In the current volatile world, the migrant workers' vulnerability has furthered deepened, indicating that the migrant workers need more social protection and welfare schemes.⁴⁷ Likewise, the undocumented migrants and the migrants with low skills need more social protection for their decent life. With the implementation of the contribution-based social security scheme by the government of Nepal in 2023, Nepali migrant workers employed abroad and Nepalis running businesses outside the country can participate in the social security scheme.⁴⁸ It is a milestone achievement for millions of Nepalis abroad. The Social Security Fund (SSF) has run three schemes for Nepalis working abroad: accident and disability security scheme, dependent family security scheme and old age security scheme. A total of 1,991,562 individuals have registered in the foreign sector scheme as contributors until 23, November, 2025.⁴⁹ The scheme covers hospital expenses up to NPR 100,000 in case of accident, 60% of the basic salary in case of disability, 40% of the basic salary as pension for the spouse and 40% of the basic salary as educational expenses for children below 21 years of age.⁵⁰ To access these facilities, contributions must be made for at least nine months. Migrant workers mandatorily deposit Rs. 2,596 in the SSF as a pre-requisite for receiving labour permit. Migrant workers are always a vulnerable group given the context that their job is affected by multiple factors. In many cases, Nepalis have suffered badly for lack of money to get treatment and other health care services and their families are left in a very miserable condition.

46 Nepal, R., Ghimire Bhandari, S., Kuinkel, R. P., Thapaliya, D. & Baral, N. (2022). *Chunautiko Chapeta* [In the Clutches of Challenges]. Kathmandu: PNCC/equidem.

47 Notice on regularization in Saudi Arabia, issued by the Nepali Embassy in Saudi Arabia. <https://sa.nepalembassy.gov.np/content/12/notice/>

48 *The Foreign Sector Social Security Scheme Operation Procedures 2022 (2079)* is launched by the government and managed under the Social Security Fund. https://ssf.gov.np/list/act_regulation/foreign-sector-social-security-scheme-operation-procedure-with-first-amendment-2079

49 The data is available from the daily report published by the Social Security Fund at: https://ssf.gov.np/images/summary_report/17638924766944_Mangsir%2007.png, accessed 25 November, 2025.

50 Available at: <https://ssf.gov.np/services/arrangements-related-to-discounts-and-concessions-received-by-workers-in-foreign-employment>



Nepal lacks a comprehensive and enforceable social security agreements with major destination countries. Without these agreements, Nepali migrants have not been included in social protection schemes of major destination countries. Moreover, they cannot transfer their social security contributions and benefits to Nepal either. On the other hand, Nepali migrant workers are not aware about the importance of contributing to the social security fund and the benefits from it. Information about its benefits, enrollment process, continuation process and claim procedures is not effectively disseminated in a language and through channels that migrant workers can easily access and understand. Many migrant workers are in low-wage, precarious jobs. For them, regular contributions from their already limited income is a burden. They often prioritize immediate cash-in-hand over long-term benefits. They fear that their money will not return. Many migrant workers are on short-term contracts of 2-3 years. They see little value in a long-term savings scheme. If migrants do not fully benefit from social security contributions because the associated benefits are not accessible or not portable, they might prefer to avoid contributions and work informally or underreport earnings.⁵¹

2.4 Skilling and Reintegration

Most male Nepali migrant workers are employed in low-skilled sectors such as construction and manufacturing, whereas majority of female migrants are engaged in domestic work, a sector characterized by a severe deficit of decent work. Among Nepali migrants, 1.5 per cent are skilled, 24 per cent are semi-skilled, and 74.5 per cent are unskilled.⁵² This presents a bleak picture of Nepal's foreign labour migration, as vulnerability and skills are inversely proportional. Although Nepali migrants possess moderate levels of skills, they demonstrate a high level of loyalty to work. In such circumstances, migrants equipped with higher skills have the potential to earn better incomes. This is because there is a direct relationship between skills and remuneration in destination countries.

The Foreign Employment Act 2007 mandates that workers seeking foreign employment in skilled occupations must obtain skill-based training from institutions recognized by the Government of Nepal. Similarly, Nepal's National Labour Migration Policy 2025 envisions the development of competitive, skilled human resources to maximize the benefits of foreign employment.⁵³ To maximize the benefits of foreign employment, the policy emphasizes conducting studies and analyses of international labour market trends to enhance the capacity of potential migrants by providing demand-driven skills and knowledge. In 2023,

51 Avato J., Koettl J., and R. Sabates-Wheeler. (2009). *Definitions, Good Practices, and Global Estimates on the Status of Social Protection for International Migrants*, World Bank, Washington DC.

52 Ministry of Finance (2020). *Economic Survey 2019/2020*. Ministry of Finance, Kathmandu.

53 *National Labour Migration Policy, 2025*.



the Government of Nepal established the National Academy for Vocational Training (NAVt) to conduct six-month labour-intensive, skill-based training programmes and skill testing. However, the NAVt does not have a strong presence at the sub-national level.

On the other hand, returnees need socio-political, economic and cultural reintegration into society. The services related to social and economic reintegration of migrant workers are either limited or inaccessible. Nearly 70 per cent of returnees are unaware of what kind of support the country provides for them, which has left a majority of returnees in a state of confusion and economic uncertainty, resulting in the 80 per cent of returnee migrant workers wanting to engage in self-employment in the informal sector (IOM/NIDS, 2020).⁵⁴ The government of Nepal has envisioned the strategy for the reintegration of returnee migrant workers. It aims to utilize the earnings from foreign employment in the development of the country while introducing the welfare scheme for the family of migrant workers. In addition to the financial capital, migrant workers bring back the social, cultural, and human capitals. If they are utilized adequately, the capitals brought by the migrants can contribute in sustainable development of the country. And, the returnees need effective social and economic reintegration package as well as the returnees should be utilized as trainers for orientations and skill trainings. The returnees upon their arrival need psycho-social counseling as a part of their reintegration. As a party state to the Global Compact for the Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Nepal has committed to facilitate the migrant workers in dignified return, repatriation and reintegration in Objective 21. But the government and nongovernment actors have failed to address their own commitment as anticipated.⁵⁵

2.5 External Voting

The Constitution of Nepal has guaranteed voting rights of all Nepali citizens who have completed 18 years of age. Article 84(5) of the Constitution states ‘Each citizen of Nepal Who has completed the age of 18 years shall have the right to vote in any one election constituency as provided for in the Federal law’.⁵⁶ The Supreme Court had issued a directive order on 21 March, 2018, asking the government and the Election Commission to provide voting rights to Nepalis abroad.⁵⁷ The Third Five-Year Strategic Plan (2076/77-2080/81)⁵⁸

54 https://nepal.iom.int/sites/nepal/files/publication/Rapid_Phone_Survey_Report.pdf

55 *UNDP SDG brochure*. Available at: <https://www.np.undp.org/content/nepal/en/home/library/sustainable-development-goals-national-report---nepal/sdgs-brochure-html>

56 The Constitution of Nepal 2015. https://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/2017-07/Constitution-of-Nepal-English-with-1st-Amendment_2_0.pdf

57 See at: [https://supremecourt.gov.np/web/assets/downloads/judgements/आदेश_०७५_०५_१७_\(०७३-wo-११४९\).pdf](https://supremecourt.gov.np/web/assets/downloads/judgements/आदेश_०७५_०५_१७_(०७३-wo-११४९).pdf)

58 The Election Commission, *Tesro Panchabarsiya Rananitik Yojana (2076/77-2080/81)* [Third Five-Year



of the Election Commission mentioned that the commission would take initiatives to create legal environment conducive for the Nepalis to engage in voting from abroad.⁵⁹ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 guaranteed every individual's right to receive equal treatment. Its Article 21(3) states, "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures." Similarly, Article 19 of the Declaration states, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression."

The Constitution of Nepal and the international human rights laws to which Nepal is a party have ensured the right to vote for all eligible Nepali citizens. However, no system has been established to enable Nepali citizens living abroad to participate in periodic elections. As a result, they are being deprived of their constitutional and internationally guaranteed rights to choose their representatives. Depriving a significant number of eligible citizens of their right to vote has raised questions about the legitimacy of the elections.⁶⁰ Nepali diaspora communities expect the government provides them with access to voting from consulate or embassy polling stations, by post or through electronic means, highlighting the importance of political engagement for the diaspora and their desire for convenient and accessible means to participate in the democratic process. In Nepal, almost all political parties, the government and the Election Commission as well as the stakeholders are expressing commitments to ensure voting rights of Nepali migrant workers from abroad.⁶¹ Despite the commitments, Nepali migrants are deprived of enjoying their rights to vote.

2.6 Occupational Safety and Health

Most Nepali migrants are engaged in semi-skilled and unskilled work with low occupational safety and health standards. They are primarily employed in agriculture, construction, transport and heavy industries which are higher risk occupation groups. Women are even at a greater risk as they work mainly in informal home settings. The poor working condition is leading to various health risks, and sometimes to death. A high incidence of

Strategic Plan (2019/20-2023-24)] of the Election Commission Nepal. See at: https://election.gov.np/uploads/Pages/1594191104_np.p

59 The Election Commission, *Tesro Panchabarsiya Ranaitik Yojana (2076/77-2080/81)*.

60 The 2018 Supreme Court Directive Order against the plaintiff Law and Policy Forum for Social Justice mentioned mentions that an election that excludes a large portion of the population from the opportunity to vote cannot be considered fully legitimate.

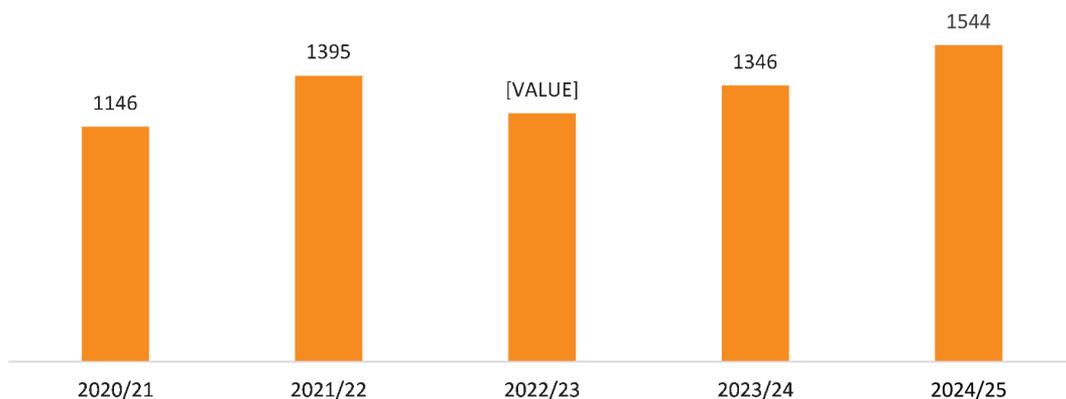
61 Nepal, R., Badal, N., Rana, S. & Thapaliya, D. (2080 [2023]). *Matadhikarbata Bimukh Nagarik* [Citizens Deprived of Voting Rights]. Anamnagar, Kathmandu: National Network for Safe Migration (NNSM). <https://nnsmnepal.org/मताधिकार-सम्बन्धी-प्रतिव/>



deaths of Nepali migrant workers in countries of labour destination is a grave concern. Nearly 15,000 Nepali migrant workers have lost their lives abroad since 2008/09.⁶² This data depends on the applications submitted to the Foreign Employment Board (FEB) seeking welfare support.

Nepali migrant workers are dying due to various causes. A large number of deaths have been attributed to natural cause, heart attack, cardiac arrest and suicide without further explanation. In 2024/25, 224 workers died of cardiac arrest, 212 of natural cause, 191 of suicide, 176 of road accident and 54 of workplace accident.⁶³ Most of the deaths of Nepali migrant workers is due to living and working conditions which include squalid and congested accommodation, long working hours, lack of rest, heat stress, stress, dehydration, workplace accidents and lack of personal protective measures.⁶⁴

Figure 5: Deaths of Nepali migrant workers abroad in the past 5 years



Source: MoLESS (2022); MoLESS (2024); FEB (2025).⁶⁵

They are unaware of safety measures and their employers do not provide regular medical check-up facilities.⁶⁶ In addition, the rise in temperatures caused by the climate change is adding salt to the wound of Nepali migrant workers, who are already experiencing

62 MoLESS, *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022* and the author's calculation from the past three years data of the FEB. It is based on the date of decision made by the FEB on the application for assistance.

63 Annual Progress Report 2024/25 of the Foreign Employment Board Secretariat.

64 Vital Signs (2022). *The Death of Migrants in the Gulf*. Vital Signs.

65 The data of 2020/21 and 2021/22 were taken from the MoLESS' *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022*, and that of 2022/23 and 2023/24 were taken from MoLESS' *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2024*, and 2024/25 were taken from the Annual Progress Report of Foreign Employment Board.

66 Interview with current and returned migrant workers.



heat in the labour destinations. The migrants, particularly working outdoors such as in the construction sector and agriculture in GCC countries, are suffering from heat stress. Climate change-induced heat-related illness, including fainting, vomiting, feeling of suffocation, headaches and fever, nosebleeds and nausea, are their common symptoms. Continuously sweating makes their body weak. The workers are unaware about how to adapt to the changing climate to overcome the heat stress caused by the ever-increasing temperatures: they do not go to shades and do not drink cold water to hydrate and cool off. The suffocating heat has lowered their productivity and caused them long-term illness such as kidney failures and even deaths.

2.7 Mental Health

Mental health is a significant and complex challenge for Nepali migrant workers, both during their time abroad and after their return.^{67,68,69} Migrants frequently report psychosocial issues, including feelings of guilt, sadness, sleep disturbances, excessive worry, intrusive thoughts, restlessness, tension, apprehension, hopelessness, irritation, vengeful desires and the harmful use of alcohol. Anxiety and depressive disorders, often accompanied by suicidal ideation and attempts, appear to be the most prevalent psychological conditions within this group.⁷⁰ Tragically in FY 2024/25, the FEB received reports of 191 suicides and five murders among Nepali migrant workers seeking welfare support.⁷¹ This data underscores a rising trend in severe mental health crises. Many Nepali migrants are psychologically unprepared for the demanding labour they will face in the countries of destination. Consequently, the stark contrast between their expectations and the reality abroad makes them vulnerable to profound psychological distress.⁷² Research showed that Migrants returning from the GCC countries and Malaysia have experienced anxiety - normal (95.2%), moderate (4.4%) and severe (0.4%) - and depression - normal (85.7%), mild mood disturbance (8.0%), borderline (2.6%), moderate (3.2%) and severe

67 Koirala, P., Gautam, K., Regmi, U., Sharma, N. & Koirala, S. (2017) *Labour Migration: Psychological and Socio-Cultural Impacts*, Kathmandu, Nepal : Transcultural Psychosocial Organization.

68 The mental health concern was prioritized in the coordination meeting with stakeholders held at the NRNA conference hall on 6 November, 2025, which consisted of the participation of government agencies, civil society actors, private sectors, media and academia.

69 The growing mental health problem among migrant workers was also raised in the NCC coordination meeting held virtually on 31 October, 2025 to discuss the issues of and potential solutions to the problems faced by Nepali migrant workers in Gulf countries and Malaysia, which witnessed the participation of NRNA ICC members, NCC chairs, regional chair and others from GCC countries and Malaysia.

70 Interview with NCC members in the major labour destination countries.

71 Annual Progress Report 2024/25 of the Foreign Employment Board Secretariat. https://www.feb.gov.np/extra_upload/691039847a091_annual%20report_feb.pdf

72 Koirala, P., Gautam, K., Regmi, U., Sharma, N. & Koirala, S. (2017) *Labour Migration: Psychological and Socio-Cultural Impacts*, Kathmandu, Nepal : Transcultural Psychosocial Organization.



(0.6%).⁷³ Another study of permanent returnees from six Gulf countries showed that more than half (56%) suffered from anxiety, 23 per cent had depression, 6% had experienced suicidal ideation and attempts, and a further 11% had serious mental illness.⁷⁴ Workers are experiencing heat stress, weakening their concentration on work thereby lowering confidence,⁷⁵ lack of communication with family back home, experience of robbery and physical violence, the disparity between pre-departure expectations and the reality of their situation, humiliation, exploitation, abuse, pressure from family to earn more and the inability to meet those expectations or repay loans, false accusations, extreme temperatures and poor employer behavior are major triggering factors for mental health challenges among migrant workers.⁷⁶ Additional contributing factors include long working hours, unfair treatment, a lack of sick leave, financial hardship, linguistic and cultural barriers, social isolation, loneliness, challenging living conditions and pre-existing medical conditions.⁷⁷ The pain of separation from family members is a constant burden, with many workers worrying that their children are being poorly raised or lacking guidance in their absence and some others harboring suspicion about their spouses' fidelity.⁷⁸ Depression, frustration, sleeplessness, anxiety, irritation, anger and ultimately suicidal thoughts and attempts are the consequences of these unaddressed mental health issues.⁷⁹

2.8 Irregular Pathways for Employment

A large number of Nepali migrant workers are using irregular routes to go abroad for employment. Use of visit visa for employment is one among them. They go abroad as a tourist with the intention of working employment opportunities in labour destinations, avoiding the regular migration path. This trend is high with the migrants opting for going to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). For instance, in 2023, a majority of Nepalis travelling on visit visas went to a few key countries. Out of 204,518 travelers, 67,367 (50.72%) went to GCC countries and Malaysia. Most of these—83% or 55,618 people—chose the UAE,

73 Sharma et al. (2023). Psychological morbidities among Nepalese migrant workers to Gulf and Malaysia. *PLoS ONE* 18(11). e0267784. See at: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0267784>

74 Mahat P, Thorley K, Kunwar K, Ghirime S. Mental health problems in Nepalese Migrant workers and their families. *medRxiv* 2020.08.04.20168104; <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.08.04.20168104>

75 KII with the principal investigator of the SUCCESS project, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

76 Koirala, P., Gautam, K., Regmi, U., Sharma, N. & Koirala, S. (2017). *Labour Migration: Psychological and Socio-Cultural Impacts*.

77 Mahato, P., Bhusal, S, Regmi, P. & van Teijlingen, E. (2024). Health and wellbeing among Nepali migrants: A scoping review. *Journal of Health Promotion*, 12, pp. 79-92.

78 Koirala, P., Gautam, K., Regmi, U., Sharma, N. & Koirala, S. (2017). *Labour Migration: Psychological and Socio-Cultural Impacts*.

79 Koirala, P., Gautam, K., Regmi, U., Sharma, N. & Koirala, S. (2017). *Labour Migration: Psychological and Socio-Cultural Impacts*.



while other popular destinations were Malaysia (4,473), Oman (2,496), Qatar (1,974), Saudi Arabia (1,814), Kuwait (549), and Bahrain (443).⁸⁰ With meagre exceptions, most of these people travelled for employment.⁸¹ Nepali brothers and sisters are, knowingly or unknowingly, going abroad as tourists to bypass bans and restrictions that the Government of Nepal has imposed in the domestic sector⁸² and also to circumvent the cumbersome and stricter labour migration process.⁸³ They also want to avoid to pay exorbitant recruitment fees and seek what they believe to be cheaper and faster.⁸⁴ Some believe that the countries offering visit visas are good in terms of wages and working conditions. Many other Nepalis have fallen prey to unscrupulous recruitment agents and sub-agents who intentionally choose this channel for sending workers because they do not have to be accountable to their work.⁸⁵ They facilitate the innocent migrants to prepare fake documents.

These kinds of migrants who go abroad for employment through visit visas have faced dire consequences. Usually, the visit visa expires in 30-90 days. Once the visa expires, they become undocumented. The undocumented workers are at the risk of detention, deportation and bans on future entry. Since they do not have a valid work permit and valid visa, they have no legal rights to complain about their situation. Most of them experience wage theft, exploitation and low-wages. They are forced to engage in excessively long working hours, without overtime pay and days off. Nor do they receive extra perks and benefits. They are also subject to human trafficking, physical and sexual abuse. For fear of legal action, these migrants have not been able to seek support openly from the Nepali embassies. Many workers who travel on visit visas are stranded, get no, or under-paid, employment, face exploitation, forced labor, discrimination and even trafficking. They can't change employers. They can be arrested, fined or deported at any time. If they die abroad, their families can't receive insurance or any other financial support. Of late, the government of Nepal, scrapping the much stringent visa requirement previously, has

80 Data from the Department of Immigration. <https://www.immigration.gov.np/post/country-wise-departure-data-of-nepali-citizens-in-2023-for-tourism-visit-purpose>

81 Rameshwar Nepal (2025). Workers taken abroad on visit visas in a vortex of exploitation and challenges, published in *Online Khabar* on 19 August, 2025, and posted the English version here on 11 September, 2025. <https://equidem.org/workers-taken-abroad-on-visit-visas-in-a-vortex-of-exploitation-and-challenges-online-khabar/>

82 Human Rights Watch (2022). *I sold my soul: Nepali migrant domestic workers in Lebanon*. Human Rights Watch.

83 The coordinator of the high-level probe committee on visit visa scam, Former Chief Secretary Shankar Das Bairagi, shared his views with *Ratopati* about how to minimize the Nepali people's trend of going for foreign employment by using visit visa. <https://www.ratopati.com/story/525241/foreign-employment-process-should-be-simplified-to-prevent-misuse-of-visit-visas-former-chief-secretary-bairagi>

84 The Asia Foundation (2020). *Labour Migration and the Remittance Economy in Nepal*. The Asia Foundation.

85 Amnesty International (2019). *Turning People into Profits: Abusive Recruitment, Trafficking and Forced Labour of Nepali Migrant Workers*. Amnesty International.

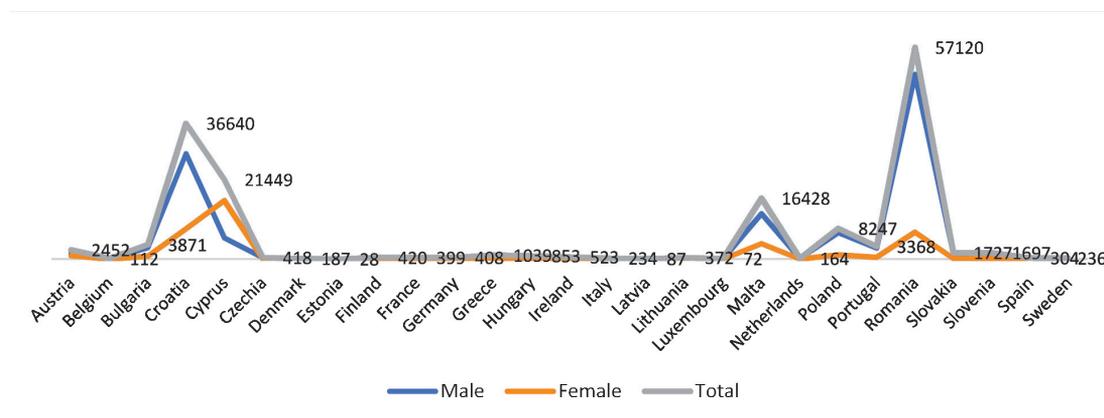


issued more flexible requirements⁸⁶ since 30 October, 2025 as follows: 1) A passport with at least six months of remaining validity, 2) If the destination country is one that requires a visa, the traveler must have obtained it. No entry permit is required for countries that give on-arrival visa to Nepali citizens, 3) A confirmed air ticket to the destination country, and 4) A self-declaration form from the passenger stating the purpose of their visit, that they are carrying necessary documents for it and that they themselves are responsible for any consequences arising from this.

2.9 Diversification of Labour Market

New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Japan, Israel and some other European countries such as Poland, Romania, Portugal, Malta, Greece, Hungary, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Slovakia, Slovenia and others have emerged as the new destinations for Nepalis.

Figure 6: Labour approvals for EU countries by sex for the past three years



Source: The author's calculation of three years' data from the Department of Foreign Employment.

The three-year data reveals that a total of 154,984 Nepali nationals received official labour permits to go to the European Union member countries in the past three years. The number of Nepali migrants opting for European countries is constantly increasing as 40,809 labour permits were issued in 2022/23, 49,070 in 2023/24 and 65,105 in 2024/25. It also indicates that 25.2% women took the permits to go to the 27 countries of the Union, with Cyprus as their major destination, where the number of women (15,767 or 73.5%) surpassed the number of men (5,682 or 26.5%). Between 2019 and 2024, many

86 The notice from the Department of Immigration. See at: <https://www.immigration.gov.np/post/pa-ra-sa-va-ja-niapa-ta-83>



European countries reported the number of their Nepalese workers more than doubled, with Romania leading the pack with an increase of 640%.⁸⁷

The European nations have attracted more Nepali migrants as they can apply for residency and work legally in many of these countries. Other factors include the belief among Nepali migrants that Europe is a safer place and has better earning opportunities, with better working conditions, more freedom and less risk of labor exploitation.⁸⁸ In addition, Nepali society sees migration to Europe as a matter of prestige, while peer pressure also plays a crucial role in choosing Europe as a labour destination.⁸⁹ For over a decade, South Korea has become an important labour destination for Nepali migrant workers seeking economic opportunities, better wages and diverse cultural experiences.⁹⁰ Over 128,000 Nepalis have migrated to South Korea for employment between 2008 to 2024/25.⁹¹ Despite financially lucrative and low recruitment cost in comparison to its return, the employment in South Korea has also a number of challenges, including high unseen cost, distress and anxiety caused by failure to migrate after high expense is incurred for preparation.⁹² Many youths have gone to Australia and Japan in student visas. However, their main purpose is to seek employment.

The number of Nepalis in Africa region is not that big in size but Nepalis are residing and working in almost 40 African countries. In Africa, the issue of documentation of Nepalis is an alarming issue. More issues are of Nepali women working in Kenya and Tanzania and most of them are residing and working in tourist visa. As they travel via Indian routes, their mobility is also limited once they land in the African destination countries. For them, getting formal approval for work is unlikely and also the absence of Nepal's diplomatic mission there has pushed them to further difficulties.

The Government of Nepal has stopped issuing institutional labour permits for Europe since early 2023. However, many Nepali citizens have entered Europe on individual labour permits facilitated by recruitment agencies, education consultancies and private

87 Raut, Swachhya (2024). Why are Nepalese shunning Gulf and Asia to work in the EU? Published in *DW*, accessed 21 November, 2025.n

88 Interview with Nepali workers and a counsellor in Europe.

89 Raut, Swachhya (2024), cited above.

90 Jeevan Baniya, Sadikshya Bhattarai, Arjun Kharel, Nilima Rai and Dogendra Tumsa (2023). *Only a Few Can Afford to Go to Korea: The Cost of Nepali Migration to South Korea*. Kathmandu: CESLAM. <https://ceslam.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/eps-south-korea-research-paper-xiv.pdf>

91 MoLESS, *Nepal Labour Migration Report, 2022; DoFE, Annual Progress Reports 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25*.

92 Jeevan Baniya, Sadikshya Bhattarai, Arjun Kharel, Nilima Rai and Dogendra Tumsa (2023). *Only a Few Can Afford to Go to Korea: The Cost of Nepali Migration to South Korea*. Kathmandu: CESLAM. <https://ceslam.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/eps-south-korea-research-paper-xiv.pdf>



intermediaries.⁹³ A large number of Nepali people have left for Europe either via India or other countries, resulting in the massive rise in the number of Nepalis. About 3,400 Nepali citizens took labour permits for Portugal in the past three years, but estimated 40-45 thousand Nepalis are residing in Portugal at present.⁹⁴ Nepali migrant workers in European countries are experiencing inadequacy of salary for their day-to-day living.⁹⁵ Most of the Nepali migrant workers in Europe are unsettled individuals as they tend to shift from one country to another for better opportunities only to end up with zero earning.⁹⁶ They have already spent a large sum of money for entering Europe. It has pushed them into debt burden, and when they find reality far different from their expectations, they suffer from mental health problems.⁹⁷ Majority of complaints filed at DoFE are related to migration to Europe,⁹⁸ while most of the complaints registered in Nepali missions in Europe are related to deception and exploitation.⁹⁹

The number of Nepalis in Africa region is not that big in size but Nepalis are residing and working in almost 40 African countries. In Africa, the issue of documentation of Nepalis is an alarming issue. More issues are of Nepali women working in Kenya and Tanzania and most of them are residing and working in tourist visa. As they travel via Indian routes, their mobility is also limited once they land in the African destination countries. For them, getting formal approval for work is unlikely and also the absence of Nepal's diplomatic mission there has pushed them to further difficulties.

As the number of Nepali labor migrants in emerging destinations, particularly within Europe, continues to rise, a significant portion of this population is under undocumented status. Consequently, members of the NRNA NCC are facing an overwhelming volume of requests for assistance. In several countries, these councils are forced to solicit private donations to facilitate the repatriation of as many as four deceased individuals per month. This financial burden arises because undocumented migrants are ineligible for support from the Government of Nepal's Foreign Employment Welfare Fund. Furthermore, the existing capacity and expertise of NCC members are increasingly strained, as their current knowledge and skills are insufficient to address the challenges of these emerging labor markets.

93 KII with Nepali embassies in destinations, consular services and workers.

94 KII with an embassy official in Lisbon, Portugal.

95 The minimum salary in Europe is 870 Euro, which is not enough for a person to sustain life.

96 KII with grassroot CSOs.

97 KII with a mental health expert.

98 Hom Karki, <https://ekantipur.com/business/2025/12/04/nepali-workers-risk-going-to-europe-51-12.html>

99 KII with an embassy official in Lisbon, Portugal.



CHAPTER III: FOR NEPALI, BY NEPALI

3.1 Institutional Strength

As a global diaspora organization, the NRNA has its organizational presence in 92 countries in the world,¹⁰⁰ with a larger social, political and economic connection, and it can supplement to ensure access to service delivery. In order to address the challenges of Nepali migrant workers mentioned above, the NRNA has already an institutional set up and been working with migrant workers: it has a dedicated Foreign Employment Department at the international level to make policy decisions. Furthermore, NRNA Constitution has recognized Nepali migrants who are engaged in employment abroad as its members, calling them as Non-Resident Nepalis.¹⁰¹ In addition, it developed its White Paper in 2021 to guide its activities on making labour migration safe and productive. It keeps updating the White Paper as and when necessary. In many destination countries, NRNA can negotiate with different other agencies and institutions to back the demands of Nepali migrants. Similarly, it has a wide network spread in almost all the countries where Nepalis are working and residing. Recognizing the role of NRNA, the National Labour Migration Policy 2025 has provisioned to mobilize NRNs to protect workers' basic human rights, while taking their support for legal remedies and rescue of Nepali workers, including in the countries where Nepali diplomatic missions are absent. The Association has the data of most of the Nepali migrants, including those in undocumented status, and the government of Nepal has taken NRNA data to inform its plans and programmes.¹⁰² The NRNA has a capacity to assist the embassies of Nepal in the receiving countries to support undocumented workers.

3.2 Policy Engagement and Collaboration

The NRNA has evolved as an influential stakeholder in national and international migration governance. Policy engagement, partnerships, humanitarian support and advocacy have enabled it to gain trust of millions of Nepali diaspora community. NRNA has a vision of collaborating with the Government of Nepal, private sectors and development partners for socio-economic development of Nepal, promote interest of diaspora and protect Nepalis living across the world. It has carried out multi-dimensional activities in the areas of

100 NRNA officials shared it at the coordination meeting with stakeholders on 6 November, 2025.

101 The NRNA Constitution (with amendment in 2022). See: <https://nrna.org/resources-detail/NRNA-Constitution-2003-%28With-Amendment-2022%29>

102 FGD with the NRNA-ILO First Phase Project management team, on 16 November, 2025.



foreign employment, labour protection and policy contribution. Working in collaboration with national and international institutions, the Association has demonstrated significant engagement in strategic dialogue, training, interactions and rescue operations to safeguard the rights and interests of Nepali migrant workers. Through strategic engagement at national, regional and international levels, the Association has advanced the rights, welfare and representation of Nepali migrant workers while contributing meaningfully to policy formulation and implementation.

The Association has become a member of the Advisory Committee of the ILO MiRiDeW Project Phase II, which has been implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. It participated in a meeting with the National Labour Migration Policy 2025 taskforce and provided evidence-based inputs to ensure that migrant workers' concerns are reflected in the policy. Consequently, the new national policy has acknowledged NRNA as an important stakeholder to collaborate with in terms of providing services to Nepali migrant workers. NRNA has been conducting a number of high-level dialogues with government institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Foreign Employment, the Department of Immigration and the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, focusing on policy implementation, labour approval processes, visa management, rescue, repatriation and reintegration of migrant workers from any of the destination countries. In the dialogues, the Association raised the issues of the conditions of Nepali workers in various countries such as Russia, the Czech Republic, Kurdistan, Kuwait, Hong Kong and Malaysia. It also discussed the issues related to labour permits, visa management, rescue and repatriation.

The continuous advocacy from NRNA has born fruits as the government of Nepal has recently decided to issue labour permits to Nepalis who are already holding Iraqi residence cards, opening a legal pathway for travel for nearly 30,000 Nepali workers in Iraq. Labour permits had been banned for Nepalis to go to Iraq since the killing of 12 Nepalis in 2004.

In terms of diplomatic engagement and migration diplomacy, NRNA has held dialogues with ambassadors and diplomatic officials to address country-specific migrant issues, including women migrants. As an example, it organized a workshop on the role of diplomacy in promoting safe, orderly and regular migration in Europe, where government officials, experts, diplomatic representatives, international organizations, employers, workers and NRNA leaders were the participants. At the international level, NRNA has continued to represent the Nepali diaspora in major global and regional forums, including the celebration of International Migrants Day, the International Social Security Day, the Global Compact for Migration Regional Review and the NRNA Global Conclave, and articulated



its strong positions on safe, orderly and regular migration, labour rights protection and inclusive social security systems.

3.3 Engagement with Migrant Workers

Since its inception, NRNA is in the forefront to extend its support to the needy migrants in countries of destination.¹⁰³ NRNA's role in workers' welfare, reintegration, humanitarian support and crisis response has remained impactful. NRNA has provided welfare supports to Nepali migrant workers, including women and undocumented ones facing difficulties in the destination countries. It helps Nepali migrant workers with important paperwork in the field such as renewing their passports and obtaining necessary labour permits. Particularly, the Association has been providing welfare support to stranded migrant workers, including food, shelter, flight tickets, repatriation of the dead bodies of undocumented workers.¹⁰⁴ It offers counselling services to support the mental and emotional well-being of workers abroad. The NCC members organize and participate in blood donation drives to help fellow Nepalis in need. They also provide relief, rescue and repatriation services for migrant workers who are stranded or find themselves in difficult situations.^{105,106} In an unfortunate event of a death, NRNA volunteers assist with the complex and sensitive process of repatriating the deceased worker's body to Nepal. They raise funds to provide financial support and assistance to migrant workers during emergencies. They conduct awareness programmes to educate workers about the local laws and regulations of the countries they are working in.

In collaboration with ILO, IOM, Helvetas, Returnee Federation, UNICEF and Alternative Foundation, NRNA has promoted entrepreneurship, skills utilization and sustainable livelihoods for returnees. Additionally, NRNA has coordinated with authorities to collect information and support in rescue and repatriation of Nepali workers in crisis-affected regions, including Israel, Iran, Kuwait and Russia. The Association supported the rescue and repatriation of distressed migrant workers, including the successful return of Nepali workers stranded in Ukraine. It has also provided emergency financial assistance to families of Nepali citizens who passed away abroad, offering emotional support during times of crisis. Furthermore, NRNA has been organizing interactions on mental health issues, providing practical tips on stress management, involving experts,

103 NRNA, *COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers: Relief and Repatriation Program*, 2022. <https://nrna.org/uploads/nrna/files/1/000/Oxygen/final-print-final-nrna-ilo-joint-project-report-march15-1-2.pdf>

104 Nepal, R., Ghimire Bhandari, S., Kuinkel, R. P., Thapaliya, D. & Baral, N. (2022). *Chunautiko Chapeta* [In the Clutches of Challenges]. Kathmandu: PNCC/equidem.

105 NRNA, *Synopsis of NRNA's Global Efforts on Relief, Repatriation and Rehabilitation to COVID-19 Pandemic*. <https://nrna.org/uploads/nrna/files/1/000/Oxygen/covid-19-report-3.pdf>

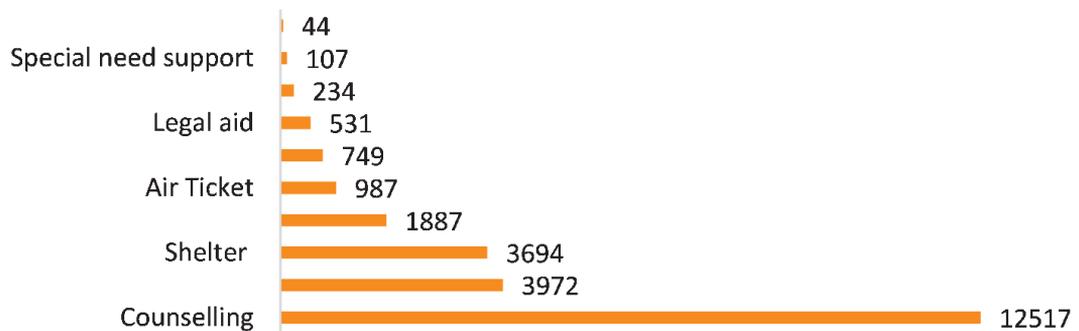
106 <https://rojgarmanch.com/nrn/2021/12/34627/>



NRNA leaderships and NCC representatives. The Association also conducted webinars, workshops and interactive events for the education, skill development and knowledge transfer of Nepalis living abroad, targeting migrant workers and students in countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and the United Arab Emirates.

The NRNA is the only hopes of many migrant workers abandoned or laid off to communicate their problems at difficult times in destination countries.¹⁰⁷ It forged partnership with the ILO to help Nepali workers stranded in different parts of the globe due to COVID-19. Figure 7 shows the detailed support the NRNA had provided to migrant workers.

Figure 7: Major supports NRNA provided to migrants during COVID-19



Source: NRNA (2022)¹⁰⁸

During COVID-19, NRNA reached out to 28,557 Nepali migrant workers in GCC countries, Malaysia, Cambodia and Russia,¹⁰⁹ of which 27,926 were supported with food and shelter, counselling, air tickets, outreach camps, PCR tests, legal support, among others.¹¹⁰ Most importantly, the NRNA rescued Nepali migrants, including trafficking survivors, injured, jobless and stateless children. NRNA initiatives are highly focused on welfare activities.^{111,112}

The Hajare Abhiyan (A Thousand Campaign) was a foundational proposal for establishing

107 National Human Rights Commission (2022). *Report on the Human Rights Situation of Migrant Workers*. National Human Rights Commission of Nepal: Lalitpur.

108 NRNA, *COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers: Relief and Repatriation Program, 2022*.

109 NRNA, *COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers: Relief and Repatriation Program, 2022*.

110 K.C., Shrestha, P., Sharma, S., Raut, R.K. & Baral, C. (2022). *COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers' Relief and Repatriation Program*. Kathmandu: NRNA.

111 National Human Rights Commission (2022). *Report on the Human Rights Situation of Migrant Workers*. National Human Rights Commission of Nepal: Lalitpur.

112 Key Informant Interview with an UN agency representative.



a comprehensive social security fund for Nepali migrant workers. The core objective of the campaign was to create a dedicated fund, the “Foreign Employment Social Security Fund”. In addition, NRNA has signed an MoU with SSF for supporting migrant workers’ regular contribution to the fund.

3.4 The Flip Side

Despite commendable contributions to making labour migration safe and productive, the existing knowledge and skills of NRNA are inadequate when it comes to delivering services to Nepali migrant workers and supporting the Nepali embassies.^{113,114} There is a lack of uniformity in understanding when it comes to implementing institutional projects, resulting in the weak ownership and varied responses from among the NRNA family members.^{115,116} In addition, the NRNA family members have realized the need of capacity enhancement opportunities, particularly on organizational development, leadership, governance, strategic planning and coordination, programme management, communication, fund raising, resource mobilization, team work, stress management, strategies to handle sensitive cases and effective service delivery for migrant workers. Furthermore, The NRNA lacks a clear action plan, resulting in ad-hoc services for migrant workers driven by the as and when necessary modality. Many NRNs are unaware of the NRNA Code of Conduct, hence some are found to have engaged in activities that fall outside the NRNA ethics.¹¹⁷ Despite a storehouse of the data of migrant workers, including undocumented migrants, NRNA has not been able to carry out research on Nepali migrant workers, including their status, issues and solutions. Additionally, NRNA’s advocacy strength is felt weak, as compared to its institutional strengths. The supports it has been providing are case-based, scattered and mired by the weak coordination among NRNs across the globe. The NRNA volunteers have inadequate knowledge and skills on adaptation to changing climate, particularly on how to become safe from heat stress. Similarly, NRNA’s existing support to diplomatic missions and Nepali migrant workers for passport renewal services as well as the regular sensitization and awareness in the country of destination are inadequate.

113 FGD with NCC members from the Middle-East on 21 November, 2025.

114 FGD with NRNA-ILO First Phase Project management team.

115 FGD with the NRNA-ILO First Phase Project management team,

116 FGD with NCC members from the Middle-East.

117 The concern was expressed by some participants at the validation workshop.



CHAPTER IV: FUTURE ROADMAP

4.1 Efficient Advocacy

The NRNA shall strengthen advocacy with following agenda:

- Protect Nepali migrant workers, including women and undocumented workers, in difficult situations such as disasters, pandemic and others. In crisis times, provide all Nepali migrants in the destination equal treatment on humanitarian ground, regardless of their legal status. In addition, the government should set up an emergency fund at embassies funded by the Ministry of Finance to support distressed migrant workers, including undocumented workers.
- Strengthen the Nepal Government-NRNA collaboration for the gender equality and social inclusion and disaggregated data of Nepali migrant workers who are in hospitals, jails and detentions and that of rescue and repatriation in the destinations thereby providing them with proper medication, treatment, relief and rescue and ensuring graceful homecoming.
- Provide migrant workers with access to free legal remedies against unfair treatment (reduced or non-payment of wages, denial of other entitlements and workplace discrimination).
- Execute the Nepal's Supreme Court decision to ensure that Nepali workers employed abroad get to exercise their right to vote in periodic elections. Many countries have given this right to their citizens abroad, and Nepal must learn from their practices and implement it in Nepal's periodic elections.
- Make the social security contribution easy and accessible, and organize massive orientation campaigns to ensure that all migrant workers, regardless of gender and legal status, make regular contribution to the Social Security Fund.
- Uplift the existing pre-conditions on domestic workers for foreign employment. Instead, empower women with information, skills and language before departure; ratify ILO C189; ensure effective pre-departure language training, particularly Arabic, English and/or Malay; empower the diplomatic missions and depute women labour attachés where the number of women migrant workers is high.
- Given the increasing demand of care workers in the global labour market, explore attractive destinations for Nepali care migrant workers and empower them with skills and information.
- Make skilling a mandatory provision for aspirant migrants, ensuring skill development opportunities easy, accessible and affordable by establishing skill training centres



at local levels and expanding the National Academy for Vocational Training to the provincial level. The academy should coordinate for the establishment and operation of the skill centres to carry out all skill-related training activities.

- Remove complexities in the regular labor migration process to promote regular pathways, discouraging Nepalis to use irregular channels, student visas and visit visas for work abroad; and, reform labour migration governance making it paperless, faceless and cashless.
- Give legal status to undocumented Nepali migrant workers, including domestic workers, in destination countries by issuing new labour permits or renewing their permits. The government has already started legalizing the undocumented workers in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which should be expanded to other countries.
- Review the existing BLAs/MoUs with labour destinations, and ink BLAs/MoUs with major and emerging destination countries where concentration of Nepali migrants is high, ensuring fixed periodic review of the BLAs and MoUs by joint-technical committees. Given that BLAs and MoUs are major tools for the protection of migrant rights, they should incorporate key ILO labour rights standards, including post-arrival orientation, affiliation and portability of social security, 24-hour insurance and right to mobility, non-discrimination and right to return. Both new and renewed BLAs/MoUs should be gender-responsive and domestic worker-friendly.
- Enter into cooperation agreements in the destination countries, particularly with the European nations where Nepal's diplomatic mission is not present, strengthen diplomatic ties with neighbouring countries, establish mobile and satellite missions and mobilize Nepali diaspora by giving recognition and authority to the NRNA NCCs in the respective countries.
- Establish a 24-hour SMS hotline service at diplomatic missions to ensure smooth and effective communication between victims, their families and rescuing authorities.
- Equip Nepali embassies and consulates in major destination countries with adequate human and financial resources to ensure timely, efficient and migrant-friendly service delivery, enabling them to listen to and resolve the challenges of Nepali migrant workers.
- Given that the Government of Nepal has recognized NRNA as a major stakeholder in development, assign it specific responsibilities.
- Protect Nepali migrant workers from the heat stress through awareness campaigns and by including climate adaptation measures in the BLAs/MoUs and manage shades and cold water in work places.



- Ensure detailed postmortem of dead bodies of migrant workers, both in the host country and Nepal.
- Establish a dedicated NRNA desk in the Nepali embassies and consulates in major destination countries to facilitate coordinated case management, timely service delivery and improved communication between migrant workers, diplomatic missions and NRNA.
- Organize case-wise mental health services at the destination countries, mobilizing mental health experts.
- Establish shelters in major destination countries, where NRNA will offer volunteer support such as food, financial resources, medicines, counselling and legal assistance.
- Give proper recognition to the NRNA NCCs and initiate high-level communication with the governments of destination countries to recognize the NCCs in the respective countries.
- Give proper recognition to the diaspora experts who provide volunteer services, including legal, language, medical and technological services, to diplomatic missions for the welfare of Nepali migrant workers in difficult situations.
- Develop the Employment Service Centre as a one-stop service centre from where returnee migrant workers can learn about the services and facilities provided to returnees by the government. This centre should also work towards retaining the returnees by facilitating them to engage in income generation.

4.2 Extended Action

The NRNA will:

- Continue, strengthen and expand its welfare services, including blood donation, rescue, repatriation, air ticketing, counselling, camp management, food, shelter, legal support and documentation, to all migrant workers stranded in destination, including women and undocumented workers.
- Work as a bridge between migrant workers and Nepali diplomatic missions. In partnership with the diplomatic missions, it will conduct philanthropic activities.
- Work pro-actively for the rights of migrant workers, going beyond the welfare activities. For instance, it will advocate for implementation of the employer pay principle, ratification of ILO C189 and upliftment of the restriction on domestic migrant workers.
- Cooperate the government of Nepal to establish training institutes to enhance the skills of migrant workers, including care migrant workers, to meet the



country-specific demand. It will also support the government to impart language training to potential migrant workers at local levels.

- Organize orientations about the importance and benefits of Social Security Fund for migrant workers and the procedure to contribute to the Fund regularly to enhance social protection of migrant workers.
- Maintain strong communication with migrants, help disseminate accurate information about the plans, policies and announcements unveiled by the government of Nepal and destination countries. Further, the NRNA will intensify awareness campaigns in different countries, addressing country-specific challenges. Social media, including TikTok, Facebook and Instagram, will be extensively used to disseminate the messages, while experts will approve the contents.
- Cooperate with the government of Nepal to establish effective mechanism to disseminate foreign employment-related information to potential migrant workers at the community level, including safe migration process, opportunities, challenges and its alternatives, thereby promoting self-decision through informed choices.
- Hold wider consultations at all stages of project initiatives, right from the project design through monitoring and feedback, to promote uniformity in understanding among NRNA members, office bearers and employees to achieve strong ownership and responses.
- Increase the frequency and scope of tele-health support, including mental health, to Nepali migrant workers. The Association will connect as many migrant workers to the government-run telemedicine services. It will raise awareness of Nepali migrant workers, particularly in GCC countries, about how to become safe from heat stress.
- Make an institutional response, by organizing virtual psychosocial support events coupled with stress-relief exercises (deep breathing, relaxation techniques), tele-mental health counseling in the Nepali language to overcome barriers of stigma, language and distance, a strengthened pre-departure orientation with incorporation of mental health awareness, coping skills and information on available resources are additional measures. Comprehensive research on mental health of Nepali migrants, including those with undocumented status, to explore their access to healthcare in destination countries and actionable solutions will lay a base for robust initiatives.
- Set up a mechanism to support migrant workers through referral services so that the migrant workers' problems that cannot be addressed by the NRNA itself can be resolved through the referrals.



- Activate the NRNA Foreign Welfare Fund to support Nepali migrant workers in difficult situations in any part of the globe. The guidelines will be updated to mobilize the fund with transparency. A small Welfare Fund Committee led by the head of NRNA Foreign Employment Department, which can take decisions itself in the case of support that need little amount of money, while the NRNA ICC will take decisions in the case high amount of money.
- Extend support to the government of Nepal by initiating record keeping of Nepali migrant workers, including undocumented workers. Moreover, the NRNA will assist Nepali diplomatic missions to bring undocumented Nepali migrant workers to regular channels. This will help bring the Nepali workers in the government's official data, collect revenue, maintain good governance and reduce the costs of migrant workers.
- Organize awareness campaigns in any amnesty programmes announced by the concerned countries of destination.
- Conduct regular sensitization and awareness programmes in coordination with diplomatic missions and the NRNA NCCs to inform migrant workers about passport renewal procedures, legal documentation requirements and the risks associated with undocumented status.
- Promote Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives among Nepali business communities abroad and mobilize the CSR fund for migrant workers' welfare.
- Given that NRNA has experience of using online voting, it will provide technical support to the government of Nepal for external voting if the latter is committed to implementing voting rights to its citizens abroad.
- Develop and update the pool of experts, including legal and language experts, and mobilize their expertise for the benefit of Nepali migrant workers through Nepali diplomatic missions. In return, the volunteers will be recognized by the Association in any possible means, including appreciation letters. They will also be mobilized to support the Nepali diplomatic missions, with the expectation of recognition in return.
- Partner with multi-lateral/bilateral organizations for enhanced migration services in both countries of destination and Nepal.
- Promote investment for skill enhancement of aspirant migrants, including care migrant workers, and re-skilling/up-skilling of returnee migrants. Additionally, Nepal Development Fund can make investment in the skilling/re-skilling/up-skilling of aspirant migrants and returnees.
- Support the government of Nepal in exploring attractive destinations for Nepali migrant workers, including women and care migrant workers.



- Identify and implement the special investment schemes targeting migrant workers, including women, for the optimum use of remittances in the productive sector.
- Run special programmes for entrepreneurship development of returnee migrants, including women and undocumented workers, through utilization of their skills. Likewise, it will run financial literacy for returnee migrants and their families.
- Conduct programmes for reintegration and entrepreneurship development along with psychosocial counseling to returnee women migrants to ensure their rights to dignified life.
- Collaborate with FNCCI to develop startup business modalities, utilizing the technical expertise of Nepali migrant workers, and a concept of labour bank to help returnees get jobs in Nepal, while assisting the employers to find employees in a hassle-free manner.

4.3 Enhanced Institutional Capacity

The NRNA will:

- Provide capacity enhancement opportunities to NRNA volunteers, particularly on organizational development, leadership, governance, strategic planning and coordination, programme management, communication, documentation, partnership and collaboration, fund raising, resource mobilization, team work, stress management, strategies to handle sensitive cases and effective service delivery for migrant workers.
- Enhance knowledge, skills and capacity of NRNA volunteers, enabling them to support Nepali migrant workers in difficult situations, including mental health problems, heat stress, undocumented status.
- Conduct regular online/physical sessions for capacity enhancement on various themes such as mental health, climate adaptation, regular contribution to social security fund, voting rights and care work opportunities, mobilizing the experts from the pool of NRNA volunteers or hiring external professionals.
- Designate a dedicated focal person to carry out advocacy with the government of Nepal. In destination countries, it will designate a focal person to coordinate with diplomatic missions. The Association will take a lead and coordinate with all Nepali groups in each destination.
- Appoint, wherever possible, a dedicated staff for each NCC to maintain institutional memory.



- Strengthen collaboration with international organizations, workers' unions, national civil society networks, including National Network for Safe Migration, and existing organizations in destination countries for advocacy and sharing.
- Empower the NRNA Foreign Employment Department to play a pro-active role in addressing migrant workers' issues.
- Update the NRNA Code of Conduct and organize periodic orientation and refresher sessions for its members. It will be a response to reports that some NRNA members are, taking advantage of the NRNA membership, engaged in activities that fall outside the NRNA ethics.
- Set up a digital mechanism to link the data of ICC and NCC activities to the NRNA Secretariat so that the Secretariat can be updated with the activities across the globe.
- Develop a clear action plan as a guiding document that can be adapted to different country contexts when it comes to rendering services to migrant workers. It will prevent NRNA volunteer services from being case-based, scattered and mired by the weak coordination among NRNs.

4.4 Extensive Research

The NRNA will:

- Commission country-wise small-scale research on the status, needs, gender dynamics, challenges, aspirations, their potential contributions to and expectations from the NRNA and the government of Nepal as well as the institutional capacity strengthening measures, with country-specific actionable recommendations, leveraging its wider connection with Nepali migrant workers across the globe.
- Take pro-active initiatives to conduct skill mapping of Nepali migrant workers, for the best utilization of their skills, contributing to the reintegration of men and women migrants in the long run.



Annex 1: The primary sources of information in developing the 2nd edition of the NRNA White Paper

Participants	KII	IDI	FGD	Workshop
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1			
Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security	1			
Department of Consular Services	1			
Department of Foreign Employment	1			
Foreign Employment Board	1			
Diplomatic Mission abroad	2			
Social Security Fund	1			
National Network for Safe Migration	1			
CSOs working on relief and repatriation of stranded migrant workers	2			
National Association of Foreign Employment Agencies	1			
Nepal Foreign Employment Orientation Centre/National Academy of Vocational Training	1			
International Organization for Migration	1			
International Labour Organization	1			
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)	1			
German International Development Cooperation (GIZ)	1			
NRNA ICC		7		
NRNA NCC	2		2	
NRNA Foreign Employment Department	1			
Management team of NRNA/ILO Joint Project Phase I	1	1	1	
Current labour migrant abroad (with gender balance)		4		
Recent returned labour migrant (with gender balance)		4		
Labour expert	1			
Journalist	1			
Mental health expert	1			
Nepal Development Fund	1			
Multi-stakeholder pre-consultation				1
Validation workshop				1
Total	25	16	3	2



List of KII participants

Participants	KII	Workshop	Name
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1		Baburam Sigdyal, Under Secretary
Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security	1		Gurudutta Subedi, Under Secretary
Department of Consular Services	1		Bhogendra Lingden, Director
Department of Foreign Employment	1		Tikaram Dhakal
Foreign Employment Board	1		Basanta Bohara, Director
Diplomatic Mission abroad	2		Shatrudhwan Prasad Sharma Pokharel, DCM, Embassy of Nepal- Lisbon, Portugal; Krishna Chapagain, Vice-consulate General, Consulate General of Nepal, Dubai.
Social Security Fund	1		Kabiraj Adhikari, Executive Director
National Network for Safe Migration	1		Nilambar Badal, Chief of Program and External Affairs
CSOs working on relief and repatriation of stranded migrant workers	2		Manju Gurung, POURAKHI Nepal; Nirmal Uprety, Forum for Nation Building Nepal
National Association of Foreign Employment Agencies	1		Rajendra Bhandari, Immediate Past President
Nepal Foreign Employment Orientation Centre/National Academy of Vocational Training	1		Vishnu Gopal Gadtaula, Board member, NAVT
International Organization for Migration	1		Prajwal Sharma, Head of Migration and Development Department
International Labour Organization	1		Basanta Kumar Karki, Senior Programme Officer



International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)	1		Dr. Amina Maharjan, principal investigator, SUCCESS project, ICIMOD
German International Development Cooperation (GIZ)	1		Pasma Dahal Jha, Implementation Manager, Shaping Development-Oriented Migration (MEG) Programme
NRNA NCC	2		1. Shukra Moktan, General Secretary, NCC, Saudi Arabia 2. Robot Limbu, NCC, Portugal
NRNA Foreign Employment Department	1		Raj Regmi, NRNA Foreign Employment Department Head
Management team of NRNA/ ILO Joint Project on Relief and Repatriation Phase I	1		Sujata Sharma
Labour expert	1		Yuvaraj Basnet
Journalist	1		Hom Karki, Kantipur
Mental health expert	1		Suraj Koirala, TPO Nepal
Nepal Development Fund	1		Anal Bhattarai, CEO
Multi-stakeholder pre-consultation		1	25 participants
Validation workshop		1	44 participants
Total	25	2	



List of FGD participants

FGD Participants	FGD	Name
NRNA NCC	2	1. Santosh Shrestha, NCC Chair, Spain; Shanti Aryal Adhikari, ICC member, Portugal; Bam Bahadur G.C, NCC President, Portugal; Robot Limbu, NCC Chair, Portugal (Europe Region) 2. Suresh Khadka, NCC Chair, Oman; Shuka Moktan, NCC General Secretary, Saudi Arabia; Umesh Bhattarai, NCC President, Saudi Arabia; Raju Shrestha, NCC Bahrain (Middle East Region)
Team of NRNA/ILO Joint Project on Relief and Repatriation Phase I	1	Rajendra Kumar Raut, Kunal Mishra, Sujata Sharma (Additional: Indra Laxmi Ghimire, Kamala Amatya Mahesh Shrestha)
Total	3	

List of IDI participants

IDI Participants	No.	Name
NRNA ICC	7	1. Dr. Badri KC, NRNA ICC President 2. Binod Kunwar, Past President 3. Rojina Pradhan Rai, Vice-President 4. Yasmin Begam Sayed, Former Women Vice-President 5. DB Chhetri, Former Vice-President 6. Raj Regmi, Foreign Employment Department Head 7. Rashmi Thapa, Women Department Coordinator
Team of NRNA/ILO Joint Project on Relief and Repatriation Phase I	1	Rajendra Kumar Raut, CEO, NRNA Secretariat
Current labour migrant abroad	4	Tilak Chhetri (Saudi Arabia); Kunta Kunwar (Kuwait); Bishnu Adhikari (UAE); Gupta Shekhar Paudel (UAE)
Returnee labour migrants	4	Jeevan Bhujel (Saudi Arabia); Niru Dhimal (Qatar); Sarita Ghimire (New Zealand); Kala BK (Qatar)
Total	16	



Participants at the validation workshop



Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA)

Migrants Right and Decent Work (MiRiDeW) Project, Phase II

Enhancing Migration Services to Nepali Migrant Workers in countries of Destination through strengthening institutional capacity of Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA)

Date:- 6th November 2025

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization	Signature
1	Dr. Badri K.C	ICC president	NRNA	
2	Krishna Prasad Neupane	HAISM Chairperson	NKSM	
3	Kul Prasad Karki	Past chair person	NKSM	
4	Babu Ram Sigdel	Under Secretary	MoFA	
5	Dr. Uddhav Sigdel	Associate Professor	COPS, P.U.	
6	Sunaj Koirala	Technical Advisor	TPC Nepal	
7	Tanka Aryal	Team Leader	SAMI	
8	Yaub Raj Bhandari	Expert labour	-	
9	Ravi Pradhan	NPC	ILO	
10	Bhakti Devi	Staff Coordinator	SAMI	

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization	Signature
11	Safina Kumari Gurung	Chairperson	Paurakhi Nepal	
12	Bijaya Rai Shrestha	E.D.	Arrests Nepal	
13	Chiranjivi Bhandari	Researcher	Freelance	
14	Deepika Thapaliya	Researcher	Equidem	
15	Uani Bhandari	Researcher	Equidem	
16	K. N. Adhikari	Senior Research Fellow	Int. Reseach. Org.	
17	Dr. Mohan Shari	Senior Reseach officer	PRTI	
18	Daxa KC	Program Coordinator	Shakti Samuha	
19	Jitendra Bhandari	V.D	KFN	
20	Rajina Pradhan	VP	NRNIA	
21	Rameshwar Nepal	Head of Research	Equidem	
22	Dr. Bishu Bhatta Mahara	E.D	CMC Nepal	
23	Hari Paudel	Asst. Director	FNCS	
24	Kabi Raj Adhikari	ED	SSF	



S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization	Signature
25	Lophan Kaju	Director	SSF	[Signature]
26	Rohit Regmi	1.	1.	[Signature]
27	Subas Chandra Dahal	P.O	IOM	[Signature]
28	Santosh Banskota	Chief Editor	SEPPPTI	[Signature]
29	Kanchha Dorje Dinbang		NAFEA	[Signature]
30	Jinba Tsang		1.	[Signature]
31	KRISHNA THAKURAN			[Signature]
32	Gyamu Bhaal	Secretary	RPM	[Signature]
33	Atul Koirala	Adv.	NRNA	[Signature]
34	Ranjit Shrestha	N.D.	Red Circle	[Signature]
35	Shalendra Shrestha	Analyst	Red Circle	[Signature]
36	Bikash Khadgi	Coordinator	Red Circle	[Signature]
37	Rajendra Kumar Pant	CEO	NRNA	[Signature]

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization	Signature
38	Rabina Mahargya	Asst. Director Finance	NRNA	[Signature]
39	Mahesh Shrestha	Asst. Director	NRNA	[Signature]
40	Kunal Mishra	sr. officer	11	[Signature]
41	Shama Lami Chhinix	sr. officer	99	[Signature]
42	Raj Mahargya	Junior officer	NRNA	[Signature]
43	Kamala Amatya	Project officer	NRNA	[Signature]
44	Pranita Lama	Project Asst. Accountant	NRNA	[Signature]



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