



# **COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers Relief and Repatriation Program**

**Joint Project of Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) &  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
(August 2020 - February 2022)**



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## ABBREVIATIONS

B/C	:	Brahmin/Chhetri
CCMC	:	COVID-19 Crisis Management Center
CoD	:	Country of Destination
CoO	:	Country of Origin
ENT	:	Ear, Nose, Throat
FEB	:	Foreign Employment Board
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
IEC	:	Information and Education and Communication
ILO	:	International Labor Organization
IOM	:	International Organization for Migration
KSA	:	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MoFA	:	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOLESS	:	Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security
NCC	:	National Coordination Committee
NGO	:	Non-Government Organization
NRNA	:	Non-Resident Nepali Association
PCR	:	Polymerase Chain Reaction
RT-PCR	:	Reverse Transcription- Polymerase Chain Reaction
TIA	:	Tribhuvan International Airport
UAE	:	United Arab Emirates

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Millions of Nepali youths have chosen foreign employment as a major livelihood option. Over four million youths have already taken labor permits to go abroad for employment. Migrant workers with undocumented status, domestic workers, pregnant women and the ones who are sick and with underlying health conditions are in a more vulnerable situation. COVID-19 has deepened the severity of the vulnerability, for it has affected all aspects of human life, including the world of work and health. With the spread of the global pandemic, many Nepali migrant workers experienced job losses, layoffs and unpaid leaves, wage theft and reduction in work hours. Many others were stranded in the countries of destination without accommodation and food. Non-Resident Nepali Association and International Labor Organization joined hands to implement the COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers' Relief and Repatriation Program to minimize the impact of the global pandemic. The 19-month long program, which ran from June 2020 to February 2022, was implemented in the UAE, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Malaysia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, the major labor destinations for Nepali youths. The key objectives of the program were to support Nepali missions in the labor destinations for effective consular services to Nepali migrant workers impacted by COVID-19, provide legal/paralegal assistance and short-term shelter support for the pandemic-hit Nepali youths in the labor destinations and to support the Government of Nepal in providing safe and secured services to Nepali migrants after their return to Nepal.

The major support sectors under the project included immediate shelter and food, medical and legal counselling and re-employment, documentation, detention fees, outreach camps, passport renewal, psychosocial counselling, medical assistance, air tickets and RT-PCR tests in the countries of destination. Similarly, medical and logistic items such as mosquito nets, phenyls, hand washing liquid, PPE sets, Dettol, plastic boots, gloves, sanitizers, masks and oximeters were provided to provincial/local governments for quarantines and hospitals for returnee migrants in Nepal. In addition, the project paid their fees for hotel quarantines and PCR tests after return, and provided them with the local transportation and other support to reach home from Kathmandu. The project was implemented in coordination with Nepali diplomatic missions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, Foreign Employment Board and like-minded organizations.

The project reached out to 28,127 vulnerable Nepali migrant workers (26,351 males and 2,206 females) and supported 27,526 workers (25,756 males and 2,200 females). Under the project, shelter support was provided to 3,694 vulnerable Nepali migrant workers, legal support to 531, counselling to 12,517, outreach support to 3,972, help desk service to 4,268, RT-PCR tests of 749, air tickets to 987, detention fees to 234, suicide prevention training to 44, outreach health camp support to 1,887, local transportation fare to 1,277, special support to 107 and skill mapping of 13,487 workers. The project supported 14 health facilities of Province 1, Madhesh Province and Karnali Province with logistic and health safety items.

Addressing a huge demand for hotel quarantine fees by returnee migrants in Kathmandu, meeting the demands of sick, differently-abled, undocumented and the most vulnerable migrant workers

in the countries of destination where temporary shelters of embassies or the NRNA did not exist were major challenges. Implementing the project with support from International Labor Organization created fear among the project volunteers and staff as the UN agency's presence was not 'welcoming' for both authorities and communities in the project countries. The mobility restrictions caused by COVID-19 imposed a big challenge in implementing the project. In many instances, the companies did not respond to the volunteers due to likelihood of coronavirus contamination. The vulnerable migrant workers were reluctant to meet the project volunteers for fear that their employers would act against them if they went outside the companies and receive food and support from others. The project was the first of its kind for the NRNA NCC members and volunteers in the countries of labor destination. They had doubts as to if they could implement the project effectively. However, the implemented learning by doing method in its completion. Likewise, the project suffered a setback for some time due to difference in understanding among the NRNA members and volunteers. The project reached out and supported to thousands of needy migrant workers, but a large number of the migrant workers who were most in need remained excluded for resource limitation reasons. In addition, as the national coordination committees have not been registered in the countries of destination, the volunteers suffered a lot and received questions against the authenticity of the project.

The wider network and a large number of its volunteers are a major strength of Non-Resident Nepali Association to implement any project in the countries of destination. The successful completion of the project would have been next to impossible without mobilization of the members and volunteers, particularly during global crisis. Learning by doing approach, strong collaboration with diplomatic missions, Foreign Employment Board, local organizations, Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee, and local governments in Nepal was an impetus to smooth functioning of the project. However, there are minor weaknesses that could have been minimized if proper monitoring was in place. It is learnt that some non-victims of COVID-19 also received support, albeit negligible in number. The project should have published some worker-friendly briefing/IEC materials. Similarly, due to the lack of proper office to store documents and their safety, the staff and volunteers faced difficulty in implementing the project. Many Nepali migrant workers in the most vulnerable situation have still not been reached out. Their vulnerabilities can be minimized with need-based support in the future.



## **1. NRNA VISION, MISSION AND VALUES**

### **1.1 Vision**

Our vision is to collaborate with the Government of Nepal, private sectors and development partners for socio-economic development of Nepal, promote interest of diaspora, and protect Nepali living across the world.

### **1.2 Mission**

Our mission saves lives of the Nepali people and by mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on public health, economic, and social fabric by planning a consultation and timely implementation mechanism for emergency preparedness, as well as to chart out a long-term vision of developing entrepreneurship and job skills for the dignity of Nepali people, particularly by leveraging those who return to Nepal from abroad.

### **1.3 Value**

Our values are Gender Equality, Transparency Integrity, Respect, Unity Honesty, and Accountability.

## **2. SCOPE OF WORK**

ILO, with financial support from the Swiss Government, intended to respond to the situation resulted from COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on Nepali migrant workers by engaging at two levels: intervention in destination countries and support during repatriation to Nepal.

NRNA proposed to act as an implementing partner for execution of these two-level tasks.

Country focus: Malaysia, KSA, Qatar and UAE (Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman were added later)

Project sponsors: ILO and NRNA

Agreement signed between NRNA and ILO: June, 2020

Project executer: NRNA

Project start date: August, 2020

Project end date: February, 2022

Project effective period: 19 months



### 3. BACKGROUND

Foreign employment has become the most sought-for employment option for hundreds of thousands of Nepali youths. The Government of Nepal has opened 110 countries for institutional labor permits for foreign employment. Over 4 million labor permits have been issued by the Department of Foreign Employment in between 2008/09 and 2018/19.<sup>1</sup> During COVID-19, 3, 68,344 and 166,698 Nepali youths received labor permits in 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively.<sup>2</sup> The preliminary result of the 2021 census has indicated that 2,169,478 Nepalis are living in foreign countries, with 81.28 per cent males and 18.72 per cent females.<sup>3</sup> The major countries of destination for Nepali migrant workers included Qatar (31.8%), United Arab Emirates (26.5%), Saudi Arabia (19.5%), and Kuwait (6.8%).<sup>4</sup> Nepali labor migrants have sent home a total of NPR 7,114.97 billion as a remittance between 2008/09 and 2020/21.<sup>5</sup> The country received NPR 879 billion in FY 2018/19, NPR 875 billion in 2019/20 and NPR 961 billion in 2020/21 as remittances.<sup>6</sup> The contribution of remittance in the national economy is around one-fourth of the GDP as the remittance ratio in 2020 was 24 per cent of the country's GDP.<sup>7</sup> Remittance receiving households account for 55.8 per cent of the total households in Nepal.<sup>8</sup>

Despite a source of income for millions of Nepali youths, foreign employment has innumerable issues. Many Nepali migrant workers are pushed to vulnerable situation, and COVID-19 has deepened the severity of the vulnerability, for it has affected all aspects of human life, including the world of work and health. There are 995,888 active COVID-19 positive cases with 11,632 deaths in Nepal due to the global pandemic until 20 January, 2020.<sup>9</sup> According to the COVID-19 Crisis Management Center, a total of 572,571 people were rescued to Nepal until 16 September 2021. The pandemic-led mobility restrictions is already affecting almost 2.2 billion workers, representing approximately 68 per cent of the world's

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (2020), *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2020*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

<sup>2</sup> Database of Department of Foreign Employment. Accessed 20 January, 2022. This data is the total of new and re-entry categories.

<sup>3</sup> CBS (2022). *Rastriya Janaganana 2078: Prarambhiik Natija* [National Census 2021: Preliminary Results]. Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (2020). *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2020*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

<sup>5</sup> Nepal Rastra Bank.

<sup>6</sup> Nepal Rastra Bank's Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation-Tables (Based on Annual Data of 2020/21). Available: <https://www.nrb.org.np/category/current-macroeconomic-situation/?department=red&fy=2077-78&subcategory=annual>

<sup>7</sup> World Bank (2021). Resilience: COVID-19 Crisis through a Migration Lens. Migration and Development Brief 34. World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (2020), *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2020*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.

<sup>9</sup> [https://covid19.mohp.gov.np/covid/englishSituationReport/61e94a165f7c8\\_SitRep711\\_COVID-19\\_20-01-2022\\_EN.pdf](https://covid19.mohp.gov.np/covid/englishSituationReport/61e94a165f7c8_SitRep711_COVID-19_20-01-2022_EN.pdf)



workforce.<sup>10</sup> Migrant workers are particularly at risk due to the impact of COVID-19, limiting their access to work in the destination countries as well as return to Nepal.<sup>11</sup>

The migrant workers who fall into the special vulnerable group have been seriously impacted by the current crisis.<sup>12</sup> At a time when undocumented and domestic workers, pregnant, sick and with underlying health conditions are more vulnerable, the governments in the countries of destination have not been providing proper health service and treatment facility to the workers working in their countries, and not provided effective protection of employment and remuneration.<sup>13</sup> With the spread of COVID-19, many migrant workers experienced job losses, layoffs and unpaid leaves, reduction in work hours.<sup>14</sup> National Association of Foreign Employment Agencies estimated that the pandemic caused major job losses for Nepali workers in major countries such as in the United Arab of Emirates (30%), Malaysia (30%), Qatar (20%), Saudi Arabia (20%), Kuwait (15%), Bahrain (12%) and Oman (10%).<sup>15</sup> This had an adverse impact on workers who were left stranded without access to basic amenities. Many employers failed to provide workers with accommodation and food. The pandemic created serious problems for undocumented migrant workers, domestic workers, workers whose contractual period finished, and those who were already in an exploitative situation during the migration process.<sup>16</sup> For example, undocumented workers in Malaysia were targeted, raided and arrested during the pandemic.<sup>17</sup>

Based on the consultation with Nepali migrant workers and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Nepali embassies in the destination countries, it was necessary to provide support to the Nepali migrant workers on relief, response and repatriation. To promote and uphold the rights of Nepali migrant workers and to enable the Government of Nepal to fulfill its obligations of protecting the rights and welfare of its citizens, ILO intended to engage with the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) for implementing the COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers' Relief and Repatriation Program.<sup>18</sup> The UAE, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Malaysia were the project destination countries. Later, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman were added to the list. The major support sectors under this project were: immediate shelter and food distribution, medical and legal counselling and re-employment support, documentation support for the needy migrant workers to link with diplomatic missions and other concerned authorities at destinations,

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<sup>10</sup> ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Third Edition.

<sup>11</sup> ILO (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on Nepali Migrant Workers: Protecting Nepali Migrant Workers during the Health and Economic Crisis. ILO Kathmandu Office, Kathmandu.

<sup>12</sup> "COVID-19 Does Not Discriminate; Nor Should Our Response," United Nations Network on Migration, March 20, 2020, <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/statements/covid-19-does-notdiscriminate-nor-should-our-response>

<sup>13</sup> NHRC (2020). Rights of Migrant Workers in the Clutches of COVID-19 Pandemic Study Report. Patan: NHRC.

<sup>14</sup> IOM (2020). Situation Analysis of Nepali Migrant Workers with Reference to COVID-19. IOM Nepal Office, Kathmandu.

<sup>15</sup> "At least 500,000 migrant workers want to return home at the earliest, says report." <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/05/21/at-least-500-000-migrant-workers-want-to-return-home-at-the-earliest-says-report>

<sup>16</sup> National Human Rights Commission (2020). *COVID-19 Mahamarima Nepali Aprabasi Shramikharuko Adhikari Adhyayan Pratibedan 2077*. Kathmandu: National Human Rights Commission.

<sup>17</sup> Joshi, S., Subba Chhetri, N., Neupane, K., & Dhakal, K. R. (2020). *Rapid assessment of Nepali migrant workers' situation in major destination countries during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Nepal Policy Institute and Migration Lab.

<sup>18</sup> NRNA's White Paper on Nepali Migrant Workers in Foreign Employment. Available: <https://nrna.org/resource/white-paper-on-nepali-migrants-in-foreign-employment/>



support for small detention fines, organizing outreach camps and supporting workers for passport renewal and counselling as per the need, tele-medicine/small medical assistance, air tickets and PCR test support.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the program also supported some medical logistic items to the provincial/local level quarantines and hospitals such as mosquito nets, phenyls, hand washing liquid, PPE sets, Dettol, plastic boots, gloves, sanitizers, masks and oximeters.

Payment for hotel quarantines, PCR tests and local transportation were the support provided to the needy migrant workers to reach home safely after arrival to Kathmandu from concerned destination countries. The project reached out to 28,127 vulnerable Nepali migrant workers and supported 27,526 workers with food and shelter, counselling, outreach camps, PCR tests, air tickets, documentation, hotel quarantines, local transportation and others.<sup>20</sup> The project was implemented in coordination and collaboration with Nepali diplomatic missions to ensure sustainability. The project coordinated its activities with relevant government stakeholders such as MoFA, MOLESS, FEB and like-minded NGOs that are working on migration.

This project completion report highlights the activities performed under the ILO-funded COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers' Relief and Repatriation Program implemented by the NRNA, documenting the gaps and challenges encountered during the projection implementation and lessons learnt and recommendations for future programs.

## **4. OBJECTIVES**

### **4.1 General Objective**

The general objective of the 'COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers– Relief and Repatriation of Nepali Migrant Workers Program' was to provide immediate relief and repatriation support to stranded and vulnerable Nepali migrant workers in the Middle-East countries and Malaysia in collaboration with the Nepali diplomatic missions and other relevant stakeholders both in the countries of destination and the country of origin.

### **4.2 Specific Objectives**

- To support Nepali missions in the Middle East countries and Malaysia to strengthen their capacity to provide effective consular services to Nepali migrant workers impacted by COVID-19;
- To provide legal/paralegal assistance and short term shelter support for Nepali migrant workers made most vulnerable by COVID-19; and
- To support the Government of Nepal in providing safe and secure transit services to Nepali migrant workers to return home in Nepal.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://nrna.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Database-Analysis-Report-as-of-August.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Information extracted from the project database on 20 February, 2022.



## 5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

### 5.1 Management Team and Execution

**Project Director:** Dr. Badri K.C., Vice-President, NRNA

**Steering Committee:**

Dr. Badri K.C., NRNA Vice-President (Russia)

Dr. Hem Raj Sharma, NRNA General Secretary (United Kingdom)

Dr. Puru Shrestha, NRNA High Level Committee on COVID-19 Mitigation Member (USA)

Ekanath Khatiwada, NRNA Foundation Committee Chair (Nepal)

Hari Bhattarai, NRNA President, Malaysia, 2019/21

Tej Bahadur Thapa, NRNA NCC President, Saudi Arabia, 2019/21

Mohamed Muklada Musalman, NRNA NCC President, Qatar, 2019/21 and 2021/23

Niranjana Silwal, NRNA NCC Acting President, the UAE 2019/21

Binod Bahadur Thapa, NRNA NCC President, Malaysia 21/23

Dammar Yadav, NRNA NCC President, Saudi Arabia 21/23

Rajendra Kumar Raut, Former Project Manager (Based in Kathmandu)

Sujata Sharma, Project Manager (Based in Kathmandu)

NRNA developed detailed project implementation and financial guidelines. There was a third-party auditing of the project and its budget. Project implementation guidelines, roles and responsibilities of the project director, project manager, field officers (volunteers), legal officers in the destination countries and holding center assistants and project accountant in Nepal were prepared separately.

- The project director was responsible for overall project management, communication with stakeholders and collaboration with international organization.
- The project manager reported directly to the project director. The manager developed a weekly program in consultation with the project director and the steering committee.
- The project manager managed programs and field officers in all four countries. There was one team leader among the field officers. Monitoring, documentation and reporting mechanism including strong financial documentation and reporting
- The steering committee formulated the strategic plan and guideline of the projects, and oversee the overall management, including management of human and financial resources of the project.
- There was a separate project accountant who would verify and monitor financial expenditures and ensure needful compliances in close coordination with concerned team members. The accountant would directly report to the project manager.
- A short online training for all hired persons was organized after recruiting field officers.

**Project Reporting:** An Internal reporting weekly, monthly reporting to ILO and other stakeholders.

### 5.2 Project Deliverables

- Complete implementation of Intervention plan in destination Countries and in Nepal qualitatively and quantitatively as indicated in the project.
- Prepare detail report for the support occurred to migrants in each country.
- Prepare detail report for the transit support occurred in Nepal.





## 6. MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The project was meant for responding to the vulnerable situation of Nepali migrant workers impacted to COVID-19, in collaboration with the diplomatic missions in the countries of destination (CoDs) and the government and other stakeholders in Nepal, for their immediate relief and repatriation. The project carried out different activities and made significant achievements. The project completion report has indicated some key areas of support where the demands were high. The unmet needs can be addressed if the project continues.

**Figure 1: Key Achievements**

- Shelter support: 3,694
- Legal support: 531
- Counselling: 12,517
- Camp participation: 3,972
- Help Desk service: 4,268
- RT-PCR test: 749
- Air ticket: 987
- Detention fines: 234
- Suicide prevention training: 44
- Health camp: 1,887
- Local transportation: 1,277
- Special need cases: 107
- Skills mapping: 13,487

### 6.1 Demographic Profile of the Project Beneficiaries

#### 6.1.1 Vulnerable Nepali Migrant Workers Receiving Support

A total of 28,557 migrant workers have been reached out by the project. Among them, 27,926 migrants were supported with food and shelters, counselling services, outreach camps, PCR tests, air tickets and others. Figure 2 shows the country-wise number of migrant workers reached out and supported by the project.

**Figure 2: Migrant Workers Receiving Support from the Project**

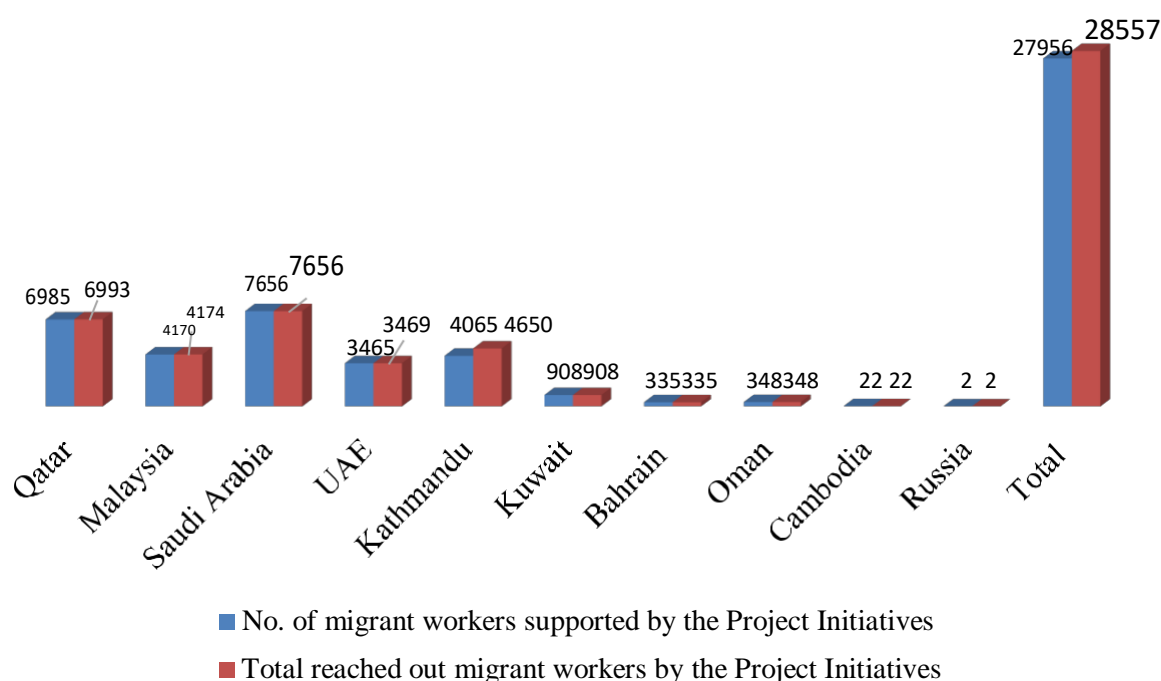




Figure 2 shows that Saudi Arabia had the highest number of beneficiaries (7,656) being reached out and receiving support in the CoDs, followed by Qatar (6,993 migrants reached out and 6,985 received support) and Malaysia (4,174 reached out and 4,170 received support). Only 2 migrants were reached out and supported in Russia. Similarly, a total of 4,650 returnee migrant workers were reached out and 4,065 received support such as hotel quarantine costs, PCR test costs and local transportation costs in Kathmandu. The minimal gap between the number of migrant workers who were reached out and supported indicates that most workers who were reached out were eligible to receive the support.

### 6.1.2 Gender of Beneficiaries

Out of 28,557 migrant workers reached out by the project, 26,351 were males and 2,206 were females. Similarly, out of 27,956 migrant workers receiving support by the project, 25,756 were males and 2,200 were females. Table 1 shows the gender-wise distribution of the migrant workers who were reached out and received support by country.

**Table 1: Gender of Project Beneficiaries**

Country	Gender distribution of Nepali migrant workers		reached out	Gender distribution of supported Nepali migrant workers		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Qatar	6414	579	6993	6406	579	6985
Malaysia	4009	165	4174	4005	165	4170
KSA	7555	101	7656	7555	101	7656
UAE	2802	667	3469	2801	664	3465
Kuwait	632	276	908	632	276	908
Bahrain	227	108	335	227	108	335
Oman	203	145	348	203	145	348
Cambodia	22	-	22	22	-	22
Russia	1	1	2	1	1	2
Kathmandu	4486	164	4650	3904	161	4065
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,351</b>	<b>2206</b>	<b>28,557</b>	<b>25,756</b>	<b>2200</b>	<b>27,956</b>

Table 1 shows that the highest number of females who needed support were in the UAE (664), followed by Qatar (579) and Kuwait (276). On the contrary, none were the females out of 22 migrant workers receiving support in Cambodia. Whereas, the highest number of males who were supported were in KSA (7,555), followed by Qatar (6,406) and Malaysia (4,005). In addition, a total of 3,904 males and 161 females received PCR test, hotel quarantine and local transportation support in Kathmandu.

### 6.1.3 Ethnicity

Out of 28,557 migrant workers who were reached out by the project, 9,016 were from the Madhesi community, followed by 8,251 from the Brahmin/Chhetri community, 8,225 from the Janajati community and 2,998 from the Dalit community. Similarly, out of 27,956 migrant workers who received support from the project included the highest number of beneficiaries from the Madhesi community (8,869), followed



by Brahmin/Chhetri (8,056), Janjati (8,024) and Dalit (2,940) communities. Table 2 shows the ethnicity-wise distribution of the project beneficiaries, and the ones who were reached out.

**Table 2: Ethnicity of Beneficiaries**

Country	Ethnicity of reached out workers					Ethnicity of supported workers				
	B/C	Janjati	Madhesi	Dalit	Total	B/C	Janjati	Madhesi	Dalit	Total
Qatar	1926	1513	2931	623	6993	1919	1512	2931	623	6985
Malaysia	1060	1477	1315	322	4174	1059	1474	1315	322	4170
KSA	2060	1935	2591	1039	7656	2060	1935	2591	1039	7656
UAE	1393	1246	476	354	3469	1393	1242	476	354	3465
Kuwait	315	377	99	104	908	315	377	99	104	908
Bahrain	123	140	26	35	335	123	140	26	35	335
Oman	117	123	42	54	348	117	123	42	54	348
Cambodia	12	9	1	-	22	12	9	1	-	22
Russia	-	2	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	2
Kathmandu	1245	1403	1535	467	4650	1058	1210	1388	409	4065
<b>Total</b>	<b>8251</b>	<b>8225</b>	<b>9016</b>	<b>2998</b>	<b>28,557</b>	<b>8056</b>	<b>8024</b>	<b>8869</b>	<b>2940</b>	<b>27,956</b>

Table 2 indicates that the highest number of Dalits receiving support were in KSA (1,039), followed by Qatar (623), Kathmandu (409) and the UAE (354); whereas, the highest number of Madhesi receiving the support were in Qatar (2,931), followed by KSA (2,591), Kathmandu (1,388) and Malaysia (1,315). The beneficiaries from Cambodia had no person from the Dalit community. Similarly, the highest number of support recipients from the Janajati community was in KSA (1,935), followed by Qatar (1,512) and Malaysia (1,474); whereas, the highest number of support recipients from the Brahmin/Chhetri community was in KSA (2,060), followed by Qatar (1,919) and the UAE (1,393).

## 6.2 Assisting Missions in Relief and Repatriation

### 6.2.1 Food and Shelter

Being stranded in the street as their respective companies without due payment, many Nepali migrant workers struggled to fulfill their basic needs like food and accommodation. They have neither cash for food nor for their rent. They were deprived of shelters. Moreover, they had to pay extra charge for overstay in the CoDs.

**Figure 3: Food and Shelter Support**

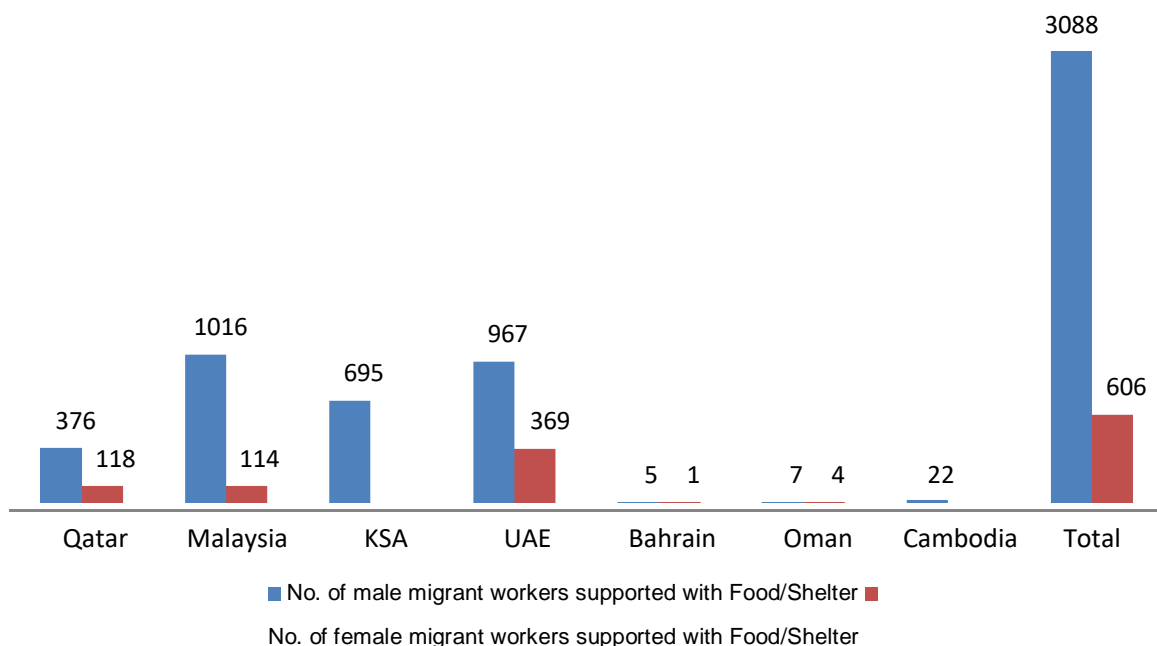


Figure 3 shows that a total of 3,694 migrant workers received food and shelter support, with 3,088 males and 606 females in their respective countries of destination. The highest number of females supported with food and shelter were in the UAE (369), followed by Qatar (118) and Malaysia (114); whereas, the highest number of male migrants supported with food and shelter were in Malaysia (1,016), followed by the UAE (967), KSA (695) and Qatar (376).

## 6.2.2 Legal and Counselling Services

Many migrant workers faced various legal issues in the CoDs that had hindered their return to Nepal. The volunteers actively counselled them to overcome their stress in person or through social media.

**Table 3: Beneficiaries Receiving Legal and Counselling Services**

S.N	Activities	Total workers benefitted		
		Male	Female	Total
1.	Counselling to Nepali migrant workers	11,690	827	12,517
2.	Documentation and connecting with embassies, companies	5051	199	5,250
3.	Re-employment support in the CoDs	237	18	255
4.	Legal support (e.g. court case, legal documents)	522	9	531
5.	Dues/salary payment	109	1	110
6.	Legal assistance through Legal Officer	95	4	99
<b>Total</b>		<b>17704</b>	<b>1058</b>	<b>18762</b>

Table 3 shows that 18, 762 migrant workers received legal and counselling services under the project, with 1,058 females and 17,704 males. A total of 5,250 workers were facilitated in filling forms, documentation in coordination with their companies and diplomatic missions leading to return to Nepal.



The Nepali migrant workers who had not been paid for months by their employers were supported with their payment after communicating with their respective companies or sponsors. Due to the pandemic, the companies were either shut down or they had breached the employment contract as they failed to pay the workers their salaries and other benefits. In some cases, the migrant workers were found to have been harassed by the companies/sponsors. They were left unemployed for several months. The volunteers were able to help 255 migrant workers, including 18 females and 237 males, for their re-employment.

### 6.2.3 Outreach and Help Desk Services

The purpose of the outreach camps was to reach out to a large number of vulnerable Nepali migrant workers who were residing far from the capitals. The camps were set up to provide immediate possible services, to listen to their grievances and coordinate between the stranded workers and their employers. The camps in the destination countries had also conducted awareness sessions and free medical check-ups. In some destination countries such as in Saudi Arabia, a passport renewal service was provided for migrant workers through camps.

Realizing the need of post-arrival orientation for newly arrived migrant workers in the CoDs, awareness camps were organized in KSA by the NRNA, NCC for the first time as a pilot activity, in coordination with the embassy of Nepal. The program was a huge success where newly reached 110 migrant workers participated and received information about the rules, laws, culture and other information. Learning from the camps implemented in KSA, camps were implemented in Qatar and Malaysia. The camps disseminated the information to migrant workers on how to prevent oneself from falling prey to the hands of fake agents who would persuade them to change the employers, promising them with higher salaries and benefits. It was one of the main reasons in the CoDs that migrant workers were changed from documented to undocumented workers, by changing the work or visa. A total of 3,972 migrants, including 271 females and 3,701 males, took benefits from the outreach camps, with the highest number in KSA (3,322).

**Table 4: Benefits Received by Migrant Workers**

Countries	No. of outreach camp beneficiaries			No. of help desk beneficiaries		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Qatar	373	234	607	3995	130	4125
Malaysia	43	-	43	128	15	143
KSA	3285	37	3322	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>3701</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>3972</b>	<b>4123</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>4268</b>

The NRNA help desk was meant for supporting the diplomatic mission officials in resolving the problems of Nepali migrant workers and managing the increasing flow of service seekers in the missions. Primarily, volunteers helped in documenting the grievances of the workers, supporting mission's staff in preparing necessary documents, submitting the workers or their documents to concerned government authorities, and following up with the workers, their families, employers and government authorities. In some countries like Qatar, the volunteers based in the Nepal Embassy of Qatar supported the Nepali migrants for their passport renewal. A total of 4,268 migrant workers benefitted from the help desk, including 145

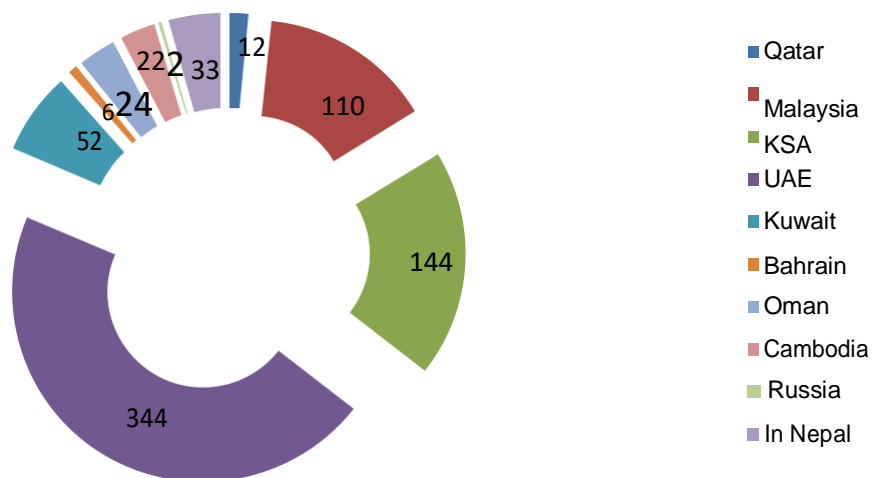


females and 4,123 males in Qatar and Malaysia.

#### 6.2.4 Support for RT-PCR Tests

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic impact, the international travels were restricted without valid RT-PCR test reports. Stranded Nepali migrant workers were unable to afford the fees for the test, hindering their repatriation process. Without valid RT-PCR report, they would be stuck in the CoDs for indefinite period of time and they would have nowhere to go. Figure 4 shows the number of stranded migrant workers whose RT-PCR test fees in the CoDs were paid by the project.

**Figure 4: Migrant Workers Benefitted from RT-PCR Tests**



A total of 749 migrant workers (639 males and 110 females) received support for RT-PCR tests leading to their successful repatriation to Nepal. The highest number of migrant workers receiving RT-PCR were from the UAE (344), followed by KSA (144) and Malaysia (110). An important point to note here is that not all the project beneficiaries received all types of support as it was given on the basis of needs. For instance, with regard to RT-PCR tests, only 749 migrant workers were supported with the test charge despite the fact that 27,956 migrants were the project beneficiaries because others were able to manage the cost of the test themselves.

#### 6.2.5 Air Tickets for Repatriation

Many companies in which the Nepali migrant workers had been working were shut down due to the pandemic. Hence, the workers were left with no secured jobs. Since many workers did not receive their salaries for months, they had no money to book return flights. Some companies had provided them with the return tickets, but they had lost the tickets and were in search of alternatives. NRNA volunteers coordinated with the embassies and companies and requested them to provide the workers with air tickets. A few of them got the tickets from the companies/embassies, but many remained excluded.

**Figure 5: Gender of Migrant Workers Receiving Air Tickets**

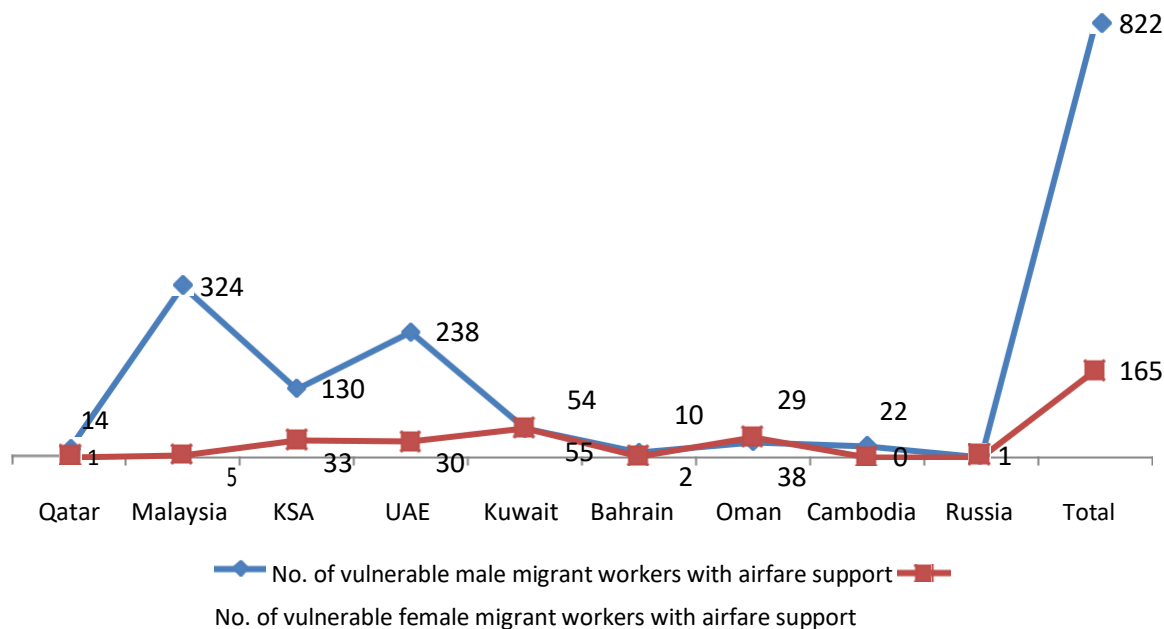


Figure 5 shows the gender-wise distribution of the migrant workers who received air tickets from the project to return to Nepal. A total of 987 vulnerable migrant workers (822 males and 165 females) were supported with air tickets. The highest number of females receiving the air tickets was from Kuwait (55), followed by Oman (29), KSA (33) and the UAE (30). Similarly, the highest number of male migrants receiving air ticket support was in Malaysia (324), followed by the UAE (238) and Kuwait (54).

### 6.2.6 Detention Fines

Many innocent Nepali migrant workers are put to detention centers on allegation of breaking the rules in the CoDs. In many cases, the visas/passports of the migrants are withheld by their employers during their migration. Some of them return the passports to the respective migrants while others do not. If any migrant worker who does not have legal permits falls under the police investigation, she/he is imprisoned in detention centers. It is an example, but there are many other reasons why innocent migrants are sent to detention centers. The project supported these vulnerable migrants with overstay fines and detention fines and facilitated them for their release and repatriation.

**Figure 6: Support for Detention/Overstay Fines**

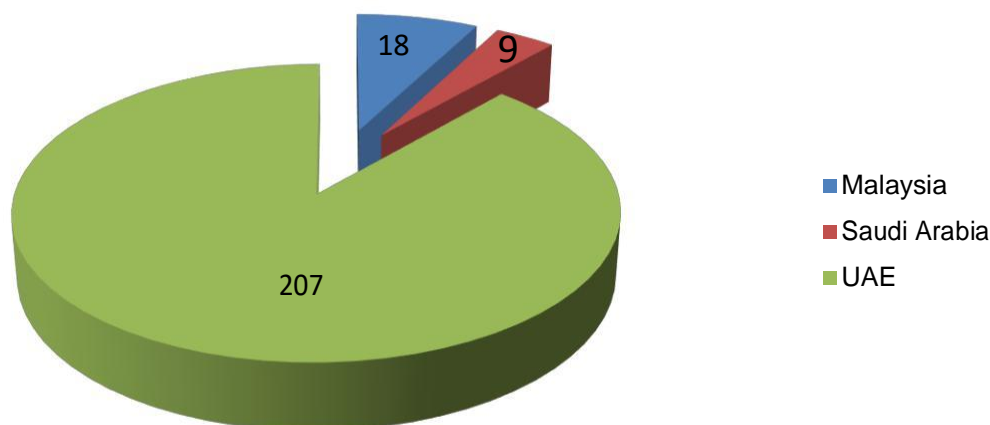


Figure 6 shows that a total of 234 migrant workers (203 males and 31 females) were supported with the detention fine for their successful repatriation, with the highest number of migrants receiving the support from the UAE (207), followed by Malaysia (18) and Saudi Arabia (9). Aside from the support for detention fees, various legal documents would require for safe repatriation. The NRNA volunteers coordinated with the Nepal embassies and other concerned bodies for preparing the documents and successfully repatriated the vulnerable migrants to Nepal.

### 6.2.7 Medical Assistance

The pandemic COVID-19 has significantly impacted the mental/psychosocial health across the globe. The pandemic-induced lockdowns, job loss, wage loss, social isolation-induced trauma and lack of moral support caused despair, anxiety, stress, depression, loneliness, alcoholism and use of drugs in many migrant workers. Nepali migrant workers globally faced these kinds of COVID-19 impacts, with some of them being pushed to take decision of suicide. The NRNA-ILO Joint Project stepped up efforts of tele-medicines and referrals to consultants. It also conducted an Interactive Suicide Prevention First Responder Training, recognizing the increasing number of possible suicides.

#### Tele Medicine Support

The tele-medicine service started from 15 February, 2021 formally and was shared via social media. A total of 38 Nepali migrant workers (29 males and 9 females) were identified from Danphe Care's Tele Triaging in different CoDs and they were referred to medical consultants. Most of the cases included mental health, orthopedic, general illness, neurology, and some minor problems as ENT and dermatological problems. Many of the cases were directly or indirectly related to occupational health



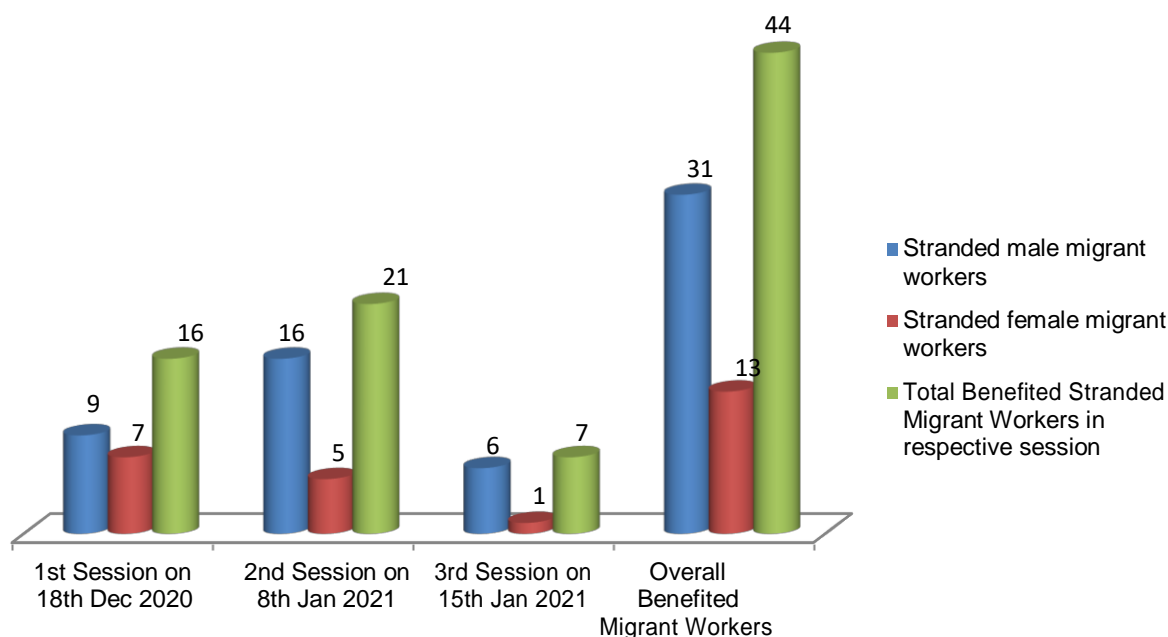


hazards. The feedback form filled in by the beneficiaries shows that the majority of them were quite satisfied with the overall services provided through the tele-medicine support.

### ***Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Training***

In total, three training sessions on suicide prevention were organized for the first responders (Volunteers) as part of capacity strengthening. The volunteers were provided with in-depth information and skills on identifying individuals at risk, communicating with them and helping them to come out of the suicidal thoughts. The training was facilitated by highly skilled facilitators (psychiatrists/psychosocial experts).

***Figure 7: Participants in Suicide Prevention Training***



The NRNA program volunteers, PNCC volunteers and other volunteers associated with NRNA attended the training and highly appreciated it. In total of 44 volunteers (31 males and 13 females) participated in the three different sessions of the training.

Furthermore, the NRNA organized a training in collaboration with Nepal Mountaineering Association for the individuals in the field of mountaineering tourism on 24 March, 2021. The mountaineers, also as seasonal migrants, were suffering from stress, anxiety during the pandemic impacting their psychosocial well-being. A total of 37 individuals/mountain climbers (23 males and 14 females) benefitted with the coping skills in preventing and maintaining their mental health.

### ***Health Camp***

Various health camps and awareness programs were conducted in Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia starting from October 2021. Some campaigns aimed for basic health check-ups to maintain the



health of Nepali migrant workers residing in those destinations; whereas some others aimed to raise awareness about the global pandemic.

**Figure 8: Participants in Health Camps**

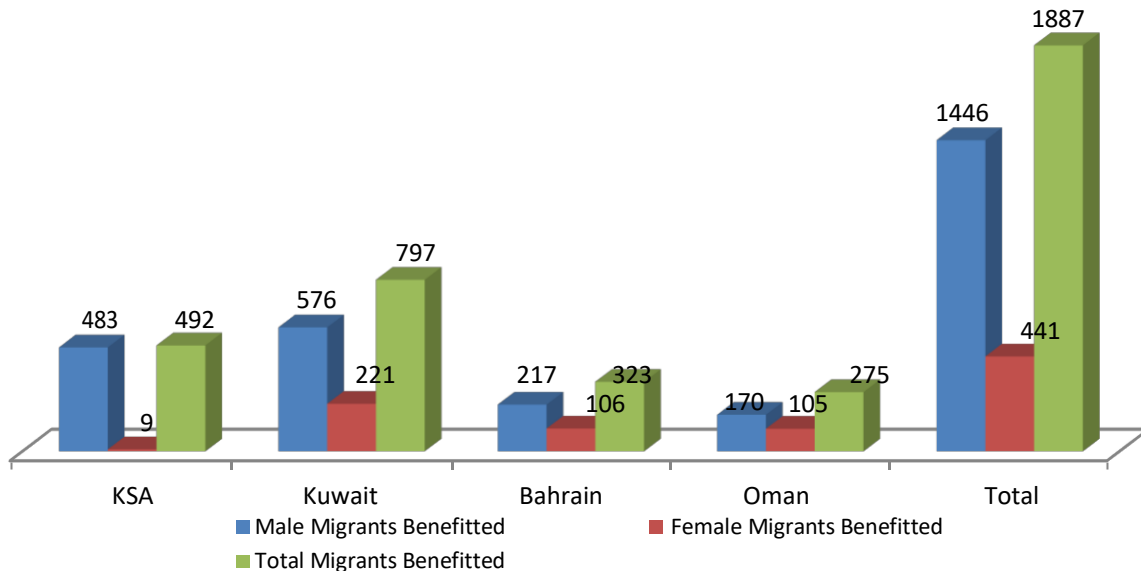


Figure 8 shows that a total of 1,887 Nepali migrant workers (441 females and 1,446 males) benefitted from the health campaigns run in different countries of destination. The highest number of Nepali migrants participated in the health camps in Kuwait (797), with 576 males and 221 females. It was followed by KSA (492) with 576 males and 221 females, and Bahrain (323) with 217 males and 106 females.

## 6.3 Support after Return to Nepal

### 6.3.1 Counselling

The Nepali migrant workers who successfully returned to Nepal were reached out by the NRNA volunteers based in Kathmandu. The volunteers built a rapport with the workers, telling them the purpose of meeting them. They discussed their status, listened to their stories, grievances, plans after the return and expectations from the government of Nepal.

Out of 4,650 returnee migrant workers who had been reached out, 4,065 received the project support in Kathmandu with counselling and transportation. From the gender-perspective, a total of 2,911 male workers and 103 female workers received counselling and motivation as to how to stay away from getting into panic and take wise decisions.

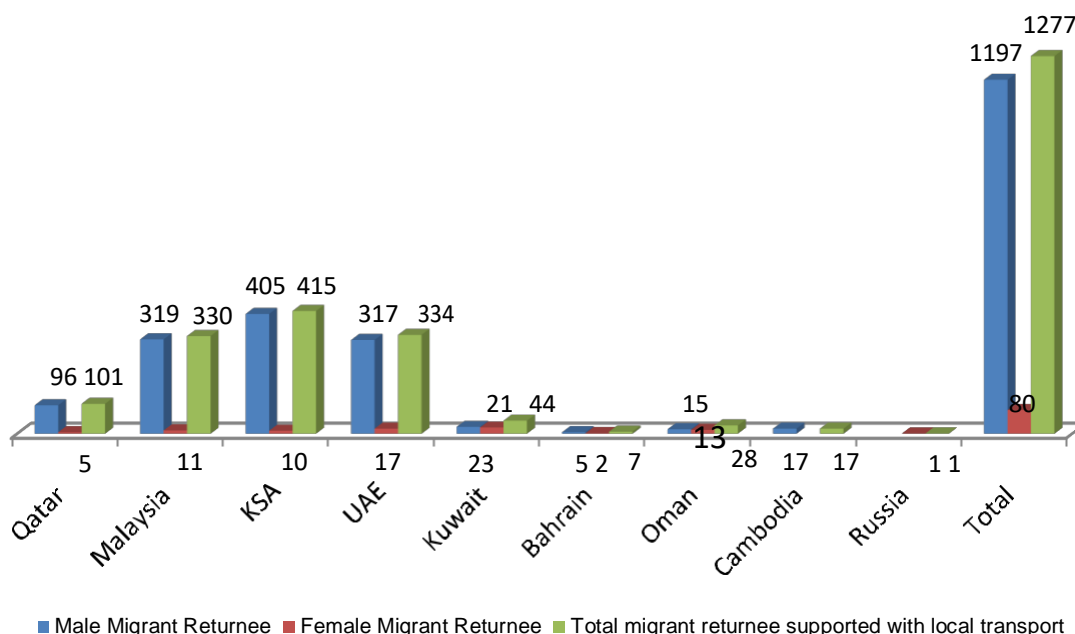
### 6.3.2 Local Transportation

After meeting the workers at the TIA, the NRNA volunteers took stock of the status of the vulnerable migrant workers such as female workers, special need workers, or the ones who were in need of local



transport support in Nepal. Many stranded workers were referred from the CoDs for local transport support.

**Figure 9: Local Transportation Support**



The volunteers based in Kathmandu reached out to the returnees at the TIA and hotel quarantines and provided them with money for local transportation cost. Figure 9 shows that a total of 1,277 Nepali migrant workers, including 80 females and 1,197 males, were supported with the local transportation cost in Nepal. Table 5 depicts the province-wise and country-wise distribution of the returnees who were supported with local transportation.

**Table 5: Local Transportation Support for Returnees**

Countries Province	Qatar	Malaysia	KSA	UAE	Kuwait	Bahrain	Oman	Cambodia	Russia	Total
Province 1	18	89	129	84	10	1	4	14	-	349
Madhesh	35	101	131	127	5	-	2	1	-	402
Bagmati	6	16	14	17	8	-	4	1	1	67
Gandaki	8	13	25	21	3	2	3	1	-	76
Lumbini	30	77	96	62	18	4	14	-	-	301
Karnali	2	13	9	6	-	-	1	-	-	31
Sudurpashchim	2	21	11	17	-	-	-	-	-	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1277</b>

### 6.3.3 Hotel Quarantine and RT-PCR Tests

In line with the CCMC rules as health safety measures following the spread of COVID-19, any returnee had to stay in hotel quarantines for 5-7 days before going home. Some vulnerable returnee's incapable of managing expenses for the quarantines were supported by the project. A total of 174 returnee migrant workers (141 males and 33 females) were supported with hotel quarantine expenses by the project. Similarly, RT-PCR test was mandatory before their release from the quarantines. A total of 33 returnees (22 males and 11 females) received the RT-PCR test support in Kathmandu.

### 6.4 Support to Special Need Cases

Every migrant worker who was supported by the project was special in one way or other. However, the project identified some migrant workers who needed greater assistance. They were called the workers with special needs/women for the purpose of the project.

**Figure 10: Gender of Special Need Cases**

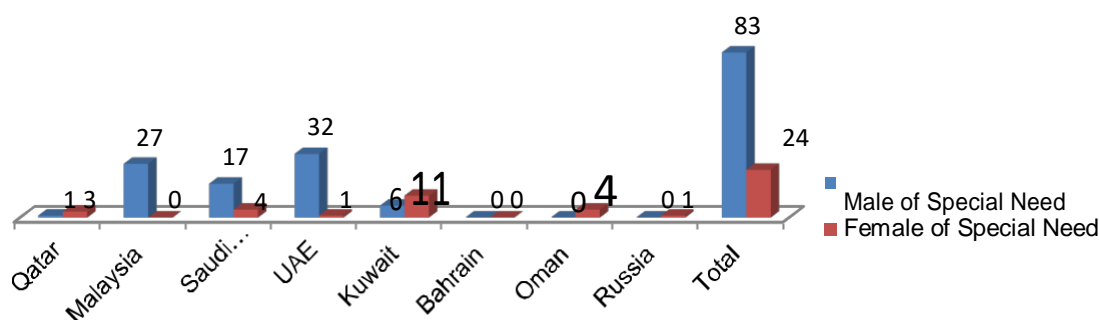


Figure 10 shows that the project supported 107 migrant workers as special cases (83 males and 24 females), with the highest number of female cases (11) in Kuwait and male cases (32) in the UAE. In Kuwait, Oman and Qatar and Russia, the number of females (11, 4, 3 and 1, respectively) surpassed the number of males (6, 0, 1 and 0, respectively) who were identified as special cases. It indicates that females are in the most vulnerable situation despite the fact that the total number of males in special need was higher as the number of males was higher in three countries out of seven, compared to the higher number of females in four countries. Stories of some special need cases are given in Annex 1.

## 6.5 Support to Provincial and Local Governments

As the returnee migrants had to stay in quarantines set up in self-paid hotels or in the district quarantine centers according to the government's repatriation rules, the project supported such centers for safe management. The more the number of returnees, the more logistic support was required in the quarantines. The project supported 14 health facilities of Province 1, Madhesh Province and Karnali Province. The acknowledgement and handover/takeover documents, received from province governments are listed in Annex 2.



## 6.6 Grievances

Many Nepali migrant workers have been living in a critical condition, and the recent global pandemic worsen the situation. Reaching out to the migrant workers through COVID-19 Relief and Repatriation Project, the project team received various grievances of the workers. The only purpose of collecting the grievances, maintaining confidentially, was to plan for the support and recommend the concerned stakeholders to act towards managing them. This would further assist the concerned stakeholders to advocate for their rights. The grievances, both serious and operational, are listed in Table 6.

**Table 6: Grievances of Nepali Migrant Workers**

Operational Complaints	Serious Complaints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The workers were promised a job but had different jobs;</li> <li>Companies did not pay the workers as promised;</li> <li>The workers were not provided with overtime pay, but s/he had to work for more hours than agreed;</li> <li>Fired without reasons;</li> <li>Workers resorted to run away from a company to another since they were not paid for long (months-years);</li> <li>Not allowed to return;</li> <li>Some workers asked money from home, relatives or friends for PCR tests and return tickets; and</li> <li>Companies provided no medical treatment despite health problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some workers were stranded in the street when the companies failed to provide them with food and accommodation;</li> <li>No air ticket and PCR test provided;</li> <li>Company closure without salary payment;</li> <li>Weaknesses of the companies led to overstay, and hefty sum of fines had to be paid;</li> <li>Legal identities not provided by the companies; and during inspection by the police, legal cases were charged to all, regardless of their mistakes;</li> <li>Physical and verbal harassment by employers to the point one had his/her hand fractured;</li> <li>Harassment by brokers when complaints against the situation of work;</li> <li>Physical violence with belts upon asking for salary;</li> <li>Threatened by companies to report to the police against complaints;</li> <li>Visa cancelled; no support in visa renewal.</li> <li>Case filed in in courts; embassy turned deaf ears;</li> <li>Physical and mental torture by the police in detention;</li> <li>Death threats to employees.</li> </ul>

## 6.7 Skill Mapping

The data of skills of Nepali migrant workers who were reached out by the NRNA under this project were collected as part of the project according to their jobs in the countries of destination. Their jobs were categorized as unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labors. However, some students were also reached out in the course of collecting the data, but they are categorized in a separate column.

**Figure 11: Skills of Nepali Migrant Workers**

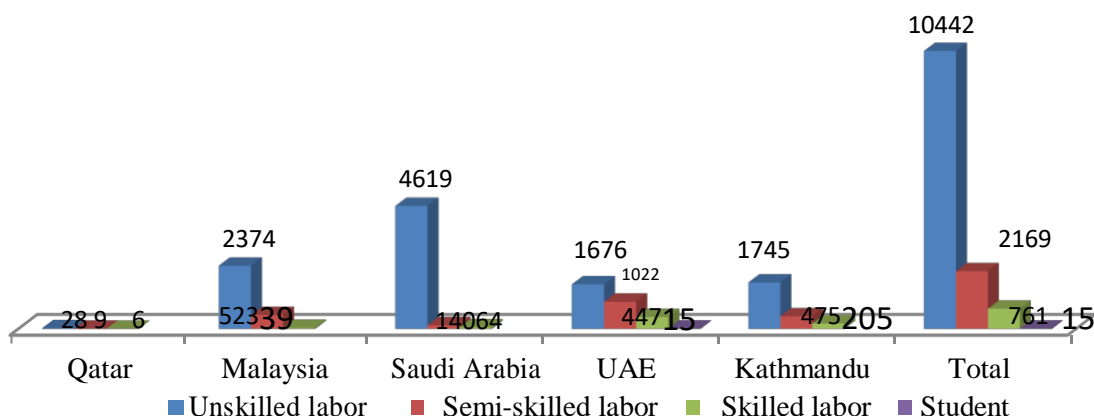


Figure 11 shows that the 13,487 data were collected from the migrant workers where 10,442 were doing unskilled jobs in the CoDs, followed by 2,169 semi-skilled jobs and 761 skilled jobs.<sup>21</sup> Out of the total number, 15 were students. The data were collected from five countries, with the highest amount of data of the unskilled labor collected from KSA (4,619), followed by Malaysia (2,374) and from Kathmandu (1,745). The data indicate that Nepali migrant workers are mostly engaged in unskilled labor, a major root of their vulnerability as they are mostly less educated and lack the collective bargaining power.

<sup>21</sup> For this project, unskilled labour refers the job of workers who possesses no particular skills and formal education such as maids, fast food workers, grocery clerks, janitors, cashier and general labor; semi-skilled labour requires more skills than unskilled workers though it does not need specialized skills such as drivers, salespersons, bartenders, waiters, flight attendants, food and beverage service providers and security guards; Skilled labor refers to the work that requires specialized training or skills. Skilled labourers are capable of exercising decisions and have knowledge of a particular trade or industry they are working. Law enforcement officers, financial technicians, nurses, electricians, masons, doctors, cooks, plumbers and electricians are few examples.



## 7. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT

### 7.1 Challenges

- The Government of Nepal made it mandatory for all the returnee migrant workers to stay in quarantines for at least seven days. However, the vulnerable migrant workers were forced to spend hefty amount of money as hotel quarantine fees. The project could not bear the expenses of the hotel quarantines for all the migrant workers. Addressing a huge demand of hotel quarantine fees by returnee migrants in Kathmandu was one of the biggest challenges.
- Free shelter facilities run by some of the organizations especially for male migrants were mostly occupied with a large number of migrant workers returning every day. The migrant workers were not allowed to fly back without booking the hotels in advance. Therefore, they were forced to book the hotels and spend a little money they would bring back with them.
- Managing migrant workers in the CoDs was a daunting task, particularly the ones who were sick, differently abled and vulnerable and in the places where temporary shelters of embassies or the NRNA did not exist. Many migrant workers in this situation were kept in hotels for several days using the NRNA NCC's internal fund, for it was not in the provision of the project.
- In the final stage of the project, the main challenge was to completely stop the activity in the CoDs, particularly in the situation when migrant workers in the shelters in Saudi Arabia and the UAE were unable to manage the shelter expenses themselves. Mostly undocumented migrant workers having no other options were left to be stranded. It has been realized that the issues and challenges of migrant workers are not always associated only with the COVID 19 pandemic.
- The project was launched with the funding support from ILO. However, as the project countries considered the ILO as an organization working for the rights of workers but not of employers, the ILO-funded project's presence raised serious doubts both in authorities and communities in the project destinations. In order to overcome the challenge, the NCC members and volunteers spread the message that the project belonged to the NRNA itself.
- The mobility restrictions and fear raised by COVID-19 put a big challenge in implementing the project as the project had started with the emergence of the disease in the project countries. The project volunteers had to struggle to transport the relief packages to the worker camps. The social distancing rules in the world as a measure to curb the transmission of the disease turned out to be a barrier to reach out to the most vulnerable migrant workers. The volunteers could not collect proper data of migrant workers. Similarly, contrary to the project plan to set up a desk at the holding center to identify the most vulnerable returnee migrants up on their return at the airport, the project team had to use personal connections with the Nepal Army, which was taking control of the management of the holding centers in Nepal, to collect information from the returnees for the screening purpose. In the same way, the project was not allowed to set up a desk in the airport to meet the returnees for screening. The project team sat outside the airport and met the returnees to identify potential beneficiaries for support.



- The blanket approach in relief and repatriation posed another major challenge in smooth and efficient implementation of the project. The project set a fixed amount of support to all needy ones, regardless of individual needs. It made it difficult for the NRNA volunteers to effectively address the problems of those needed more support. In order to overcome the challenges, the project amended the support limit. For instance, the volunteers in Malaysia had to go to the field to redistribute the relief packages second time as the package amounting to \$30 to each beneficiary identified was not enough for some migrant workers, while that amount was not necessary for some others.
- In many instances, the companies did not respond to the approach made by volunteers, may be for fear of perceived 'provoking' the workers or of coronavirus contamination. The volunteers had to make every effort to convince them that they were there only to support the vulnerable Nepali migrant workers.
- Implementing the project all with workers, particularly the most vulnerable migrant workers, who had limited knowledge and even limited time to meet the project volunteers. In addition, as they were in the foreign land, they had limited knowledge about the places outside. Many workers had fear that their employers would act against them if they went outside the companies and receive food and support from others. The project volunteers tried to make them believe that the support would not drag any animosity with their employers.
- The project was first of its kind for the NRNA NCC members and volunteers in the countries of labor destination. The NCC members and volunteers had uncertainty and doubts as to if they could implement the project effectively. Consequently, the start of the project implementation was delayed in some countries. The NCC members and volunteers were ignorant about project management, coordination, implementation, monitoring as well as beneficiary selection and others. The learning by doing approach was used while the project was implemented: thankfully, the NCC members and volunteers made gradual corrections with their learning.
- The NRNA NCC members themselves had different understandings about the project as a large section of them understood that it was an ILO project and they would not have to be responsible for its smooth run. On the contrary, a small section of others had misunderstood that the project was not of the NRNA, but of a group of people in the organization. Consequently, they had little interest in getting actively engaged in the project activities. The NRNA members and volunteers convinced others that it was the project of the whole NRNA as an organization.
- The returnee migrants were unwilling to respond to the project team upon their arrival at the airport. Consequently, the team had difficulty in collecting complete data of the returnees. Given the severity of the impact of the coronavirus disease, the returnees could be asked to wait outside the airport for long time.
- The NRNA project team received a large number of requests from the vulnerable Nepali migrant workers in the countries of destination. However, the project could not support all of them despite their need. Strict criteria set up to select the beneficiaries included some needy ones in the project, but a large number of the migrant workers who were most in need remained excluded for resource limitation reasons.





- As the NRNA NCCs are not registered in the project destination countries, they are not considered authentic entities for economic transactions. The project had to coordinate with some other organizations registered in the destination countries for economic transactions and documentations.
- It has been realized that the post arrival orientation is crucial to make the migrants safe and secured. Illegal agent are actively involved in transferring innocent migrant worker from one job to another luring them with more benefits and salaries. This results in making the innocent migrant workers more vulnerable and prone to exploitation.
- While in communication with returnee migrant workers, it is realized that they decide on foreign labor migration without having basic information about the country and work they are going for. Therefore, a comprehensive orientation and job related skills and information are crucial to make the labor migration safe and productive.

## 7.2 Lessons Learnt

### 7.2.1 What Worked

The project implementation heavily depended on mobilization of NRNA volunteers (a total of 50 volunteers were mobilized), who were ready to give the hundred per cent for the benefit of vulnerable Nepali migrant workers in the countries of destination. They showed their strong empathy to the migrant workers and acted with full commitment. It is learnt that if the volunteers had not been mobilized in such a strong trust on them, the project implementation in the coronavirus-induced difficult situation would not have been possible. As an organization with a large number of volunteers in more than 80 countries, the NRNA can place greater trust in them in the implementation of future projects.

The learning by doing approach worked satisfactorily well in the implementation of the project. The project was the first of its kind in the countries of destination for the NRNA. The NRNA NCC members and volunteers had not received any orientation/capacity building training, for the global pandemic-induced mobility restrictions had made all spheres of life immovable, including the world of work. However, the NCC members, volunteers and project staff learnt from their mistakes, peers and reflections. They made their own way. NRNA can leave every room for learning by doing and reflections in any of its activities, particularly in project implementation.

The strong collaboration with the Nepali diplomatic missions in the project countries led to smooth functioning of the project. The primary purpose of the project was to reduce the vulnerability of migrant workers, while supporting the diplomatic missions in their activities towards the benefit of migrant workers was another purpose. Coordination meetings with the like-minded organizations in Nepal and with the missions and relevant organizations in the destination countries had been organized with the initiation of the NRNA which provided the project team an opportunity to extend new networks. The outreach camps, relief to stranded migrants, visit to employers and detention centers would have been next to impossible without the diplomatic missions' support. Likewise, the coordination with Foreign Employment Board, local NGOs and Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee was a strong support to



identify the needy migrant workers. For further projects, the NRNA can forge a stronger collaboration with the stakeholders.

### **7.2.2 What did not Work**

There were some criteria for the selection of beneficiaries for different kinds of support from the project. However, it was reported, though orally, that some of the non-victims of COVID-19 also received support although negligible in number. A strong monitoring mechanism could have helped to control the distribution of the support to the individuals that were not eligible for the support.

The number of participants in the outreach camps shows that it was an effective method to disseminate information about safety, culture, norms and rules in the destination countries. However, some migrant workers reported in the follow-up meeting that they forgot the information they learned from the camps. It indicates that the project should have published some briefing/IEC materials, may be with more pictures than words, which the migrant workers could read in their rooms whenever needed.

The project staff and NRNA volunteers faced difficulty in implementing the project for want of an institutional office set-up of the NCCs. They used personal rooms of NCC members to store documents, conduct meetings and other work that hindered the efficiency of the volunteers. It is learnt from the experience that any project in the future should include an office set up in each project country for NCC volunteers.

The NRNA NCC members and volunteers were new to the project of this kind. Believing that volunteers would implement the activities of the project by learning from reflections, they had to stick at different points for lack of knowledge and skills, resulting in the failure to meeting periodic deadlines. Learning by doing and implementing the learning in the short-term project as such put an enormous pressure on the volunteers and staff. Some short-term training sessions should have been organized time to time for the staff and volunteers on need basis.

It has been realized that the issues of migrant workers are not always associated only with COVID-19 pandemic. New issues are coming up. For instance, the increasing trend of using visit visa to go to the UAE is an emerging issue and this cycle is likely to continue. Therefore, only awareness, not only in big cities but also at local levels, can better ensure safe migration.

With the completion of the first phase of the NRNA-ILO joint program, which has minimized the vulnerabilities of thousands of Nepali migrant workers through relief and repatriation support, many thousands of Nepali migrant workers in the most vulnerable situation have still not reached out and support. Their vulnerabilities can be minimized with need-based support in the future.



## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 Conclusions

- Millions of Nepali youths have chosen foreign employment as a major livelihood option. Over four million youths have already taken labor permits to go abroad for employment. Migrant workers with undocumented status, domestic workers, pregnant women and the ones who are sick and with underlying health conditions are in a more vulnerable situation.
- COVID-19 has affected all aspects of human life, including the world of work and health. With the spread of the global pandemic, many Nepali migrant workers experienced job losses, layoffs and unpaid leaves, wage theft and reduction in work hours. Many others were stranded in the countries of destination without accommodation and food.
- Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) and International Labor Organization (ILO) joined hands to implement the COVID-19 Response to Nepali Migrant Workers' Relief and Repatriation Program to minimize the impact of the global pandemic.
- An agreement was signed in June 2020 between NRNA and ILO with understanding ILO will provide financial support and NRNA will execute the project.
- The key objectives of the project were to provide and support stranded migrant workers with an immediate relief and logistic support at destinations countries and assist in repatriation to Nepal.
- A management team was created by hiring a paid Project Manager and an accountant. The management team was guided by a Steering Committee comprising NRNA ICC Elected official, NCC Presidents and external advisors.
- The 19-month long program, which ran from June 2020 to February 2022, was implemented in the UAE, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Malaysia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman, the major labor destinations for Nepali youths.
- The project was implemented in coordination with Nepali diplomatic missions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, Foreign Employment Board and like-minded organizations.
- The project reached out to 28,557 vulnerable Nepali migrant workers (26,351 males and 2,206 females) and supported 27,526 workers (25,756 males and 2,200 females).



- The project supported 14 health facilities of Province 1, Madhesh Province and Karnali Province with logistic and health safety items.
- The Project submits monthly progress report to NRNA ICC and ILO. ILO approved US\$ 922,679 and provided the budget on four installment 1st Installment US\$ 30,000, 2<sup>nd</sup> Installment US\$ 352,117, 3<sup>rd</sup> Installment US\$ 437,428 and 4<sup>th</sup> Installment US\$ 57,000 remaining budget was provided on the basis of expenses at the final stage.
- The project had completed about 75% of the agreed work in the project document. The project is professionally managed and very successfully executed given many obstacles during the peak of COVID-19.

## 8.2 Recommendations

The recommendations are in two folds as presented below

### 8.2.1 Policy Level

- **NRNA should work with GoN to review and improve current Foreign Employment Policy considering Health, Safety, Community, Social Security and Welfare of Migrant workers.**
- **The government of Nepal should take responsibilities of repatriating undocumented workers, respecting them as the citizens of Nepal and remittance-senders. Undocumented workers should also be provided with the government's welfare support. The government of Nepal can create a fund with cloud sources that can be used to support the undocumented migrant workers or during possible future crisis.**
- **The government of Nepal should deal with the countries of destination in the political level to support the Nepali migrant workers for their medical treatments, reintegration and social security.**
- **The Nepali diplomatic mission staff members should receive orientation on more migrant worker-friendly service delivery and timely response and engagement to materialize the workers' expectations that the diplomatic missions are the only guardians of the Nepali migrant workers in the land of others. The missions can organize discussions and awareness programs with Nepali migrant workers time to time as part of engagement with workers.**
- **The risk of death and vulnerability of migrant workers can be reduced with the increase in the days of pre-departure orientations. The country-wise pre-departure orientation can be more effective for the migrant workers to understand the situation.**
- **A post-arrival orientation in the country of destination is a strong recommendation for the safe migration experience of migrant workers. The government should include the post-arrival**



orientation in its bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding signed with the countries of destination.

## 8.2 Operational Level

- NRNA should create a Disaster and Risk Management Department in the Central Head Office in Kathmandu and branches in all NCCs.
- Briefing/awareness programs should be conducted in Nepal prior to relocation to the destination countries and time to time in the countries of destination for making Nepali migrant workers, particularly who are newly arrived, to increase their safety and rights.
- The NRNA should continue some of the current project activities such as outreach awareness camps, outreach passport renewal camps, outreach health camps, psychosocial counselling, legal services, shelter support with food and accommodation, NRNA Help Desk support to embassies, air tickets, PCR tests, detention fine and exit document preparation and local transportation with wider coverage and greater intensity.
- Taking into account its wider network with a large number of committed volunteers as its strength and learning from the current project, the NRNA should explore resources for additional activities that have high demands such as publication of IEC materials, capacity enhancement of NRNA NCC members and volunteers, database development of vulnerable migrant workers, one time meal and personal hygiene kits, and explore emerging issues such as increasing trend of migrant workers taking visit visas for work and work to address the issues.
- After working in relief and repatriation in the first phase of the NRNA-ILO joint initiative, the time has come for the NRNA to work towards skill/vocational training, enterprise set-up support and soft loan facilitation as part of sustainable reintegration of the migrant workers who have been repatriated by the joint program.
- The NRNA NCCs in the countries of destination should be legalized in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which makes it easier for NCC volunteers to work for the rights of Nepali migrant workers.
- Given that a large number of Nepali migrant workers are dying in the destination countries, the NRNA should carry out activities to support the Nepali diplomatic missions in the process of repatriating the dead bodies, particularly of undocumented workers.
- NRNA NCC members should receive orientations before launching any project by the NRNA in order to have common understanding among the members and volunteers about the projects.
- The NRNA NCC members and volunteers should receive capacity enhancement training on a variety of topics such as program management, resource mobilization, and financial management.



- In order to ensure the sustainability of the activities even if the project is phased out, the NRNA should create a fund (e.g., Migrant Worker Support Fund) and co-finance the project especially coordinating with International and Inter-Governmental Organizations.
- A mechanism or system should be created within SMART NRNA Management System to develop a database of the most vulnerable migrant workers, including the ones with undocumented status, in the countries of destination that can be a base for the government of Nepal and development actors for planning activities to reduce their vulnerabilities.



## ANNEX

## Annex 1: Special Need Cases

### Mother and her twins repatriated from Dubai

A person leaves one's own country to reside and work in another country, not because they want but because they must. This story is of a female migrant who flew to Dubai in February 2020 to work as a salesperson as she had no one to care her in Nepal. As soon as she reached there, she found herself pregnant. When her vulnerable condition was known to her company, she was fired from the job. Despite the challenges, she gave birth to healthy twins in August 2020. There was happiness but challenges came along. Her condition worsened when her saving was insufficient even for the hospital charges. Due to lack of legal documents of the twins, she was separated from her babies. The twins were kept in a hospital for three months while she lived in a rented room. However, she came across the NRNA Dubai chapter and found



*Photo 1: Returnee women with twins being received at TIA, Kathmandu.*

its shelter. She was residing in the shelter with her twins for more than eight months. The story of her tragedy did not end there. Her visa had expired and she was an undocumented migrant. She could not live in the shelter for long, nor was she able to return to Nepal because of the absence of legal documents required for the repatriation, especially of the twins. Preparing the exit documents was not that easy. It required frequent co-ordination with the concerned bodies in the country of destination.

Finally, on June 28, 2021, she was received by the NRNA volunteers at the TIA in Kathmandu and was handed to her sister. The NRNA facilitated her return to her home in Nepal. She expresses her gratitude towards the project.

### Prakash Gurung met his family after 7 years in KSA hospital

Mr. Gurung met an accident in 2013 in Saudi Arabia and was hospitalized. He spent 7 years in the hospital. Nepali Embassy in Saudi Arabia posted his condition in social media to know if he had any relatives. Soon, they were contacted by his brothers from Nepal. A flight to Nepal was arranged by the embassy. Volunteers in Nepal were informed about him. He was repatriated safely. He was received in the Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu and was supported with an air ticket and other logistics to help him reach his home.



*Photo 2: Gurung in a wheelchair at TIA, Kathmandu*





Nepal based volunteers are constantly getting in touch with his family members to know more about him and his condition. It is known that his condition is improving and he can even move on his legs.

### **NRNA Oman and Nepali Embassy collaborated to rescue Devi B.K. and other female stranded migrant workers**

What shall an individual (a female in this case) do when there is physical assault involved in work? Ms. Devi had been working as a maid in a house of Oman with no proper food and accommodation.

She was physically assaulted with belts and her saving was stolen by the house owner himself. Upon requesting her release, she was locked in a house.



***Photo 3: Devi and other woman migrant workers being received at TIA, Kathmandu.***

Her family from Nepal requested the agent (the one who facilitated to travel abroad) to help Devi get out of that house. The agent, the only one who could help get her out, had no interest in doing so. Ms. Devi had to escape. With no way out as she was in a closed room, she escaped from her floor (3<sup>rd</sup>) window with the help of a water pipe. Thankfully, she was not hurt. Then, she then sought help from Nepal Embassy. Since the embassy was known about the NRNA-ILO project, the NRNA Oman chapter received a proposal for her repatriation. And, with the help of the chapter, she was repatriated to Nepal with many other female migrants on 3 July, 2021. She was received by the Nepal based volunteers. She was assisted with the local transportation to her home from the TIA in Kathmandu.

### **Bholan Mahato and other migrant workers rescued from deportation centers in Malaysia by a joint effort of NRNA, ILO and IOM**

Under collaboration of the Non-Resident Association (NRNA), International Organization for Migrant (IOM) and International Labor Organization (ILO), Mr. Bholan Mahato, along with 16 stranded Nepali migrant workers, was rescued from deportation centers in Malaysia. Mr. Mahato flew to Malaysia 11 years ago. The company for which he worked forced him to work overtime with no extra pay. He requested for the overtime pay, but the employer seized his passport. He struggled for two months with the overtime duty and attempted to get his passport back. Since it turned futile, he left the company and started working in another company.

if a migrant with no passport falls under police investigation, he/she is imprisoned for God knows how long. The abuses, torture in the detention/deportation centers are another deal. Mr. Mahato was caught and imprisoned for 9 months. In that



***Photo 4: Bholan Mahato and other***



duration, Mahato along with other prisoners were tortured physically and mentally. Sewage water was poured onto their bodies and were forced to drink it.

The effect: his body had serious damages and the skin peeled off. The NRNA volunteers received him and other migrants at the TIA, and arranged a shelter for his immediate stay in Kathmandu. Finally, they provided a local transport support to help him go home.









### Annex 3: Case Stories

#### Finally Arjun B.K, a serious kidney patient, has returned to Nepal with the support of NRNA

Mr. Arjun Bishwokarma holding a passport number of 05901927, originally from Modi Rural Municipality-6 Parbat, had reached Riyadh, KSA, and worked in a juice company (RANOSH COMPANY LTD). He was sent by Jupiter Overseas Concern Pvt. Ltd. During work, he fell ill and visited a nearby hospital with his swelling legs. He had never imagined: his both kidneys failed. He was admitted in Saudi German Hospital, KSA for 7 days. Since his both kidneys no longer functioned naturally, he underwent dialysis. He had to visit the hospital twice a week for dialysis.



**Photo 5: Arjun BK in a KSA hospital.**

*“The company I have been working for had partially supported in the hospital expenses, but now, they have said that they won’t be able to continue the support. The treatment expense is out of my budget. I can neither pay for my treatment here nor purchase a ticket to return to Nepal,”* said Arjun.

NRNA Saudi received the information of his condition and in co-ordination with the Embassy he was able to get an exit pass. With his condition, he was to be repatriated soonest possible. The team in Kathmandu however managed an air ticket for him considering, then suspension of the International flights.

He returned Nepal on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021. With assistance of NRNA volunteers, he was migrated to PNCC shelter in Dhapasi for immediate shelter. The project supported for his partial local transportation to his home here in Nepal. He shared how fortunate he was to have supported by us and was grateful to be able to continue his treatment with assistance of his family.

#### Reunion of Gaumati Rana Magar with her family after 20 years of stay in Saudi Arab

The NRNA rescued a 57-year-old Gaumati Rana Magar, who went to Saudi Arab 20 years ago. She had been contactless with her family for 10 years as she was working in a house for 10 years. After that, she was shifted to the owner’s relative house. The new house owner put several restrictions on her. They immediately gave her no access to make calls to her family members. They did not give her salary of the whole 10 years.



**Photo 6: Gaumati received at TIA, Kathmandu.**

Upon finding the vulnerable status of Gaumati, volunteers from the NRNA both in Nepal and Saudi Arabia attempted to rescue her. They collaborated with the Nepal Embassy based in Saudi Arabia to arrange for legal documents for her return. The legal requirements were prepared for her return. NRNA immediately issued her the flight ticket and also arranged for the real-time PCR tests. The volunteers from NRNA received her at the Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu. She was immediately handed to her daughter and son-in-law at the airport. Gaumati’s daughter expressed her enormous gratitude to the NRNA for the invaluable services in her mother’s rescue.

### 35 stranded workers rescued from UAE

These 35 migrant workers went to the UAE in search of decent employment opportunities. Most of them had used the visit visa and expected to turn it into the labor visa. However, these workers could not get a job in the UAE and were left stranded at a park. These migrant workers were left with no money as they had paid a hefty amount to the brokers and were with no jobs either. This compelled them to stay at parks, under the bridge and roads. Mostly, they survived by begging at Mosques. Finding them in such a pathetic state, volunteers from



*Photo 7: Returnee migrants at a hotel quarantine in Kathmandu*

NRNA in the UAE arranged shelters and entire process of documentation, and arranged them air tickets and PCR tests to help them return to Nepal. They traveled via a transit in Delhi. Volunteers in Nepal received them at the TIA and safely took them to hotel quarantines. "Finding NRNA in supporting them was nothing but a great boon to us," they expressed gratitude.

### Trafficking victim rescued from Russia

NRNA rescued a female migrant who was a victim of human trafficking in Russia. NRNA supported her by all the means possible ever since she came in contact to the volunteers. Ms. Parbati (name changed) was taken to Russia 1 year ago by a human trafficker promising to marry her. She stayed in Moscow for 20 days. After which she was left stranded at Daagastan, a remote place in Russia where no Nepali was available. The human trafficker abused her physically, psychologically and emotionally. She became pregnant but he left in the lurch.

NRNA-NCC Russia arranged for the entire expenses of her including safe residence in Russia, safe delivery and her safe arrival to Nepal. Volunteers from NRNA received her at TIA upon her arrival. They contacted with her sister in Nepal and handed her over. She expressed her sincere gratitude to NRNA for their support and care to her.



*Photo 8: A victim of trafficking with her daughter, at TIA in Kathmandu.*



### **A coma patient repatriated from KSA**

Mr. Bed Bd. Bhujel from Morang reached KSA for work, only to find unsatisfactory jobs. However, he managed as a laborer in a company. He met a work place accident. He was admitted in a local hospital for 2 and half years, and was in coma for 3 months. With no job but the hospital bill of around 25 million Nepali rupees, he was incapable of paying it off. On top of that, the hospital charged him a case, which was a hindrance for him to return to Nepal. Thankfully, he came across Nepal Embassy and NRNA and was shifted to the Embassy shelter. He stayed there for 2 years. Within that duration, in assistance of Nepal Embassy, his legal case was withdrawn.

His repatriation to Nepal was a necessity. Nepal Embassy requested the NRNA Saudi Arabia team for his repatriation. A full-fledged air ticket was managed for him and Nepal-based volunteers received him at TIA. He was supported for his stay in Kathmandu. His wife came to receive him. Domestic air tickets were bought for him and his wife for their safe travel back home. In addition, local transport expenses from the airport to his village was also managed under the NRNA-ILO project.



***Photo 9: Mr. Bhujel with Project Volunteer and his wife in KTM Riyadh Saudi Arabia.***



***Photo 10: Mr. Bhujel with embassy officials in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.***





### **Chandra Kumari Chaudhary rescued from a deportation center in Kuwait**

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) successfully repatriated Chandra Kumari Chaudhary stranded at a deportation center in Kuwait on 14 September 2021, under the joint collaboration with the Nepal Embassy. She had been to the deportation center for her undocumented status. She had deliberately chosen the deportation center to fulfill the legal criterion of Kuwait to return to Nepal.

She had gone to Kuwait 18 months ago. She fell ill after a few months of stay. With her hands and legs swollen, she could not work properly. She had to work at home by crawling. The owner verbally abused her. They used to ask their children to beat and spit in her face. Unable to bear pain, she ran away from the home to go to the Nepali Embassy. She stayed at the deportation center for a month.



*Photo 11: Chandra Kumari at a quarantine in Kathmandu.*

The embassy completed a necessary legal procedure to release her out of the deportation center while the NRNA managed air tickets to support her to return to Nepal. Volunteers from the NRNA received her at Tribhuvan International Airport on 14 September 2021 and immediately led her to a hotel quarantine as mandated by the government. The NRNA volunteers conducted a counselling session for her at the quarantine, identified her family and handed her to her family members. The volunteers coordinated with the Quarantine Management and CCMC to get her out of the hotel as soon as possible as her deteriorating health required immediate treatment. She expressed indebtedness to the NRNA for supporting her to return to Nepal.

### **NRNA repatriated five stranded Nepali migrant workers from the UAE**

Five Nepali migrant workers had been facing challenging situations in the UAE: Four of them could not get the decent employment opportunity and the other one worked in an exploitative work environment. The





four had stayed in open spaces, begging for food for survival and the latter on had been taking refuge at a friend's room until the NRNA found and supported them with food and shelter till their repatriation to Nepal.

They had paid a hefty sum of money to a broker in Nepal for finding them decent employment opportunities. The brokers took the money, but did not make proper arrangements of employment.

Among the five was a female migrant worker, Yubina, had gone to the UAE nine months ago. The agent placed her at one of the local houses. The house owner was very cruel and used to beat her physically. Not just that, the owner used to throw water on her body. He mentally tortured her. After working for four months, they did not give her the salary of a month because of which she escaped from the house



***Photo 12: Stranded migrant workers repatriated from the UAE received by NRNA volunteers at TIA, Kathmandu***

and stayed at her friend's house for four months. The volunteers from the NRNA came to know about their situations and supported them for shelter, documentation, air tickets and PCR tests for their safe repatriation to Nepal. They went to the Dubai airport and bid farewell to them. The NRNA successfully repatriated the five migrant workers on 21 and 25 September, 2021. The NRNA volunteers based in Nepal received them from the Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu and facilitated for the safe journey to a hotel quarantine. They also had individual motivation and counselling sessions for them at the quarantine.

**NRNA, Nepal Embassy and FEB's jointly repatriated vulnerable women migrant workers and infant from KSA**

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA), Nepal Embassy based on Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Foreign Employment Board (FEB) worked in collaboration for the safe repatriation of six vulnerable female migrant workers, including an infant stranded in the street of the kingdom.



*Photo 13: Repatriated workers received at TIA, Kathmandu.*

Most of the migrant workers had gone to the KSA with the help of an agent. None of them had applied for the visa via manpower-companies. All of them had to face a very exploitative work environment. The company manager had compelled them to live a very harsh life, violating labor rights.

They landed at the Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu on 14 July, 2021. Volunteers from NRNA and representatives from the FEB received them from the airport and facilitated them for their safe transportation to a hotel quarantine. Nepal Embassy supported them for their shelter in the KSA and the documentation process for safe repatriation to Nepal. The embassy sought help from the NRNA for the arrangements of air tickets and FEB for hotel quarantine facilities. The NRNA immediately responded to the request and arranged the air tickets for their return to Nepal. They were supported with hotel quarantine and local transportation expenses to help them reach their respective homes. All of them expressed their sincere gratitude to the NRNA, Nepal Embassy and FEB for releasing and repatriating them from the hell-like situation in the foreign land.



### **NRNA repatriated Ashmita Lama from Qatar after 17 months**

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) repatriated Ashmita Lama from Qatar on 17 August 2021. Lama was in a financially vulnerable situation in Qatar for over 17 months, as she had received neither employment opportunities nor work visa. Lama, resident of Kirtipur-7, Kathmandu. She had gone to Qatar 19 months ago in search of decent employment opportunities via one of the manpower companies based in Kathmandu.



***Photo 14: Ashmita with volunteers in her quarantine in Kathmandu.***

They initially placed her for AI Diplomacy Hospitality as a server. She worked there for 2

months only. Since she could not get the work-visa for one year, she was out of the job after working for 2 months. She could not get any job elsewhere and had to stay unemployed for over 17 months with no financial income. Unable to earn a single penny in these 17 months was a very painful and challenging experience. She sought help from her friends for food and accommodation. She stayed for months in Qatar with the support of her friend.

Finally, she came in contact with the NRNA, which managed documents and an airway ticket for her return to Nepal. She had also reported to the Nepal Embassy about her situation. Volunteers from NRNA received her at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) on 17 August, 2021. They had an interaction session with her where she shared her gratitude to NRNA. Lama promises that she should have gone abroad only after knowing laws and regulations and through a good manpower company.



### **Sick and exploited, two Nepali workers repatriated from Oman**

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) rescued two vulnerable migrant workers (Surendra Mistri and Sabita Bhattarai) from Oman on August 12, 2021. They had been to Oman in seeking of decent employment opportunities, only to find harsh situations. One of them became severely ill immediately after going to Oman, whilst the other had to face an exploitative work environment. Finding them in such vulnerable situations, volunteers from NRNA immediately responded for their return to Nepal. Surendra had gone to Oman five months ago.

When he reached there, he felt chest pain and legs got swollen. He could not get proper treatment in Oman because it was too expensive for him to afford for his treatment.

He wished to return to Nepal. On the other hand, Sabitra had gone to Oman some three years ago. She had worked in UAE for 3 years, after which she had been shifted to Oman.

Unfortunately, she faced a very harsh work environment where she was abused verbally and mentally. She was not given her salary, proper shelter not food. The NRNA immediately arranged necessary documents and issued air tickets for the safe repatriation of Surendra and Sabitra to Nepal.

Volunteers from the NRNA received them at the TIA in Kathmandu on August 12, 2021 and helped them to reach the quarantines. The NRNA's support during the vulnerable situations was nothing but a great boon to them. They expressed their sincere gratitude to the NRNA volunteers for the support.



***Photo 15: Surendra and Sabitra with NRNA project volunteers at TIA in Kathmandu.***





## **NRNA, Nepali Embassy rescue 20 workers from deportation centers in Malaysia**

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) and Nepal Embassy jointly rescued 20 migrant workers living in lurch at Langkap, Perak and Seminiyah deportation centers in Malaysia. Some of them had been charged for violating the law of the country, while others had been charged with false allegations by the companies, resulting in living an unfortunate situation in the deportation centers.

The migrant workers were in a vulnerable state in the three different deportation centers of Malaysia until NRNA and Nepal Embassy joined hands for rescue. Some of them had faced physical punishment in the centers. Many of them had lost their hopes of returning to Nepal, whilst other were concerned about the severe damage to the body because of harsh punishment. The embassy arranged for necessary legal procedure to release them from the deportation centers, while the NRNA managed the air tickets to return to Nepal.

Volunteers from the NRNA received them at the TIA on 26 and 27 August, 2021 and immediately took them to hotel quarantines. The Foreign Employment Board and CCMC managed the quarantine service for these returnees. The rescued migrants expressed their sincere gratitude to the NRNA and Nepal Embassy in Malaysia for releasing them from the deportation centers.

The NRNA and Nepal Embassy were considered to have been God to these migrant workers. Volunteers from the NRNA motivated and counselled them at the quarantines. The volunteers supported them with bus tickets and food for their safe travel home from Kathmandu from the project fund.



***Photo 16: The returnees at the TIA in Kathmandu after repatriation.***

## **From roads in Bahrain to home in Nepal**

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) rescued three Nepalese migrant workers from Bahrain, who were in extremely vulnerable status because of the impact of COVID-19. Krishna Bahadur Pariyar, Raj Kumar B.K. and Dum Bahadur Sunar had gone to Bahrain via one of the local manpower companies in Nepal. Hussain Aloainati Saday Factory was the name of their company where they were placed. Unfortunately, the company was shut down because of the impact of COVID-19. They had worked there for four months. But, the company could not provide any remuneration and any benefits, but removed them from the job after physical abuse.



Having no financial support, they had empty wallets and begged for food in the streets. In the meantime, delegates from the NRNA came to know about their situation and immediately arranged for food, accommodation and shelter services. NRNA also completed the documentation process and air tickets to help them get to Nepal as they had no alternatives of financial income.

Volunteers from the NRNA received them at TIA, and arranged for a one-day stay in Kathmandu. They also managed the local transportation expenses for them to reach homes at different local destinations in Nepal. The expressed that finding the delegates of NRNA was a great benediction. They expressed their utmost gratitude to NRNA for rescuing them from the extremely vulnerable situations in Bahrain and bringing them home in Nepal.

### **Hospitalized female migrant worker repatriated in air-stretcher from Oman**

This 52 years old female had migrated to Oman as a housemaid some 15 years ago. Unfortunately, last year, she was infected with COVID-19.

She was then admitted to a local hospital, namely Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah. She had post-covid pneumonia for which she was admitted on 8 May, 2021. Due to poor care, she was further infected and semi-paralyzed. Food pipes and colostomy bags were managed in the hospital. As her labor permit validity date was expired, she could not get any support from the government of Nepal.

Her situation came to notice to the Nepal Embassy in Oman. The embassy communicated with the NRNA NCC for the support.



***Photo 17: A sick woman migrant worker repatriated from Oman by Air Stretcher and being sent to her home town in an ambulance from Kathmandu.***

The NRNA Oman found her condition

vulnerable and assisted in her repatriation in coordination with the NRNA project team in Kathmandu. Nepal Embassy communicated with her relatives in Nepal and everyone worked in collaboration to repatriate her to Nepal in an air-stretcher. However, she wasn't yet fit to get flown. It took a few months for condition to come to normalcy. She was finally able to fly back to Nepal on 22 December, 2021.

The NRNA project team in Nepal received her at the TIA along with her relatives (niece and son-in-law). An ambulance was managed in the airport and she was taken directly to Kathmandu Medical College. The doctor in the hospital gave them permission to take her to Chitwan on the very day, but only in a specialized ambulance with a nurse. She has been in a hospital in Chitwan for further treatment. This is a



representative case of many migrant workers who spend all their youthful days in the foreign land and come back empty handed with ill body. Migrant workers have to rely on family and other agencies for the repatriation though they have contributed to the country by through remittances.

### **32 migrant workers rescued from Malaysia detention center**

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) and Nepal Embassy jointly rescued 32 migrant workers stranded at several detention camps in Malaysia. Some of them had been to deportation centers and prison for violating the laws, including labor law. However, some others had been put in detention for false allegations by the companies or customers or the locals. They had been staying in a deplorable situation.



***Photo 18: Project volunteers after interaction with migrant workers from Malaysia.***

These 32 migrant workers were scattered in a vulnerable state in the

several deportation centers of Malaysia until NRNA and Nepal Embassy collaborated with each other to rescue them. Many of them had to even face the horrible physical punishment there at prisons and deportation centers. Nepal Embassy arranged for the needed legal procedures to release them out of the deportation centers while NRNA managed for the entire arrangement of air tickets to support these migrant workers to come to Nepal.

Pravasi Nepali Co-ordination Committee (PNCC) supported for the quarantine expenses. Volunteers from NRNA received these migrant workers from Tribhuvan International Airport on 12, 16, 18, 24 and 26 September, 2021 and immediately shifted them to quarantines for seven days. The migrant workers expressed heartfelt acknowledgement that they would not forget the support provided by NRNA and Nepal Embassy for their entire life.

Many had even lost their hopes of returning to Nepal, whilst other were concerned about the severe damage to the body because of harsh punishment. In such scenario, NRNA and Nepal Embassy were a boon to these migrant workers. Volunteers from NRNA carried out counselling sessions with each one of them at the quarantines. After seven days of quarantine, they were supported with PCR, local transportation and money for lunch during their travel.

### ***Paralyzed, Kumar Nepali repatriated from Malaysia after 8 years***

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) rescued Kumar Nepali, who had been stranded in Malaysia after serious injuries in the nervous system. He had flown to Malaysia in search of decent work opportunities eight years ago as means to manage financial arrangements for the family (father, wife and children). He finally reunited with his family members in Nepal after the painful situations for eight years. To his plight, he got serious injuries to his nervous system, because of the heavy load of physical work imposed by the company.



***Photo 19: Project volunteers and relatives receiving Kumar Nepali at TIA, Kathmandu.***

Attractive Venture SDN was the company where his manpower company placed him in Malaysia for the job. The company forced to do a lot of machine work and kept the work load worth many employees to single employee.

After four months of work, he received severe injuries. He became unable to move hands and legs properly and had to take the help of crutches to walk from one place to another. His incapability to do physical work coupled with weak financial status left him in the lurch, making him unable to manage food and accommodation. The NRNA-ILO Project volunteers found him in the heart-breaking condition in July 2021, and immediately arranged for necessary support, including accommodation and food.

They also carried out the process for necessary treatment, documentation and air ticket in collaboration with Nepali Embassy for his safe return to Nepal. However, after issuing the air ticket and before the flight, he was tested positive for COVID-19 twice. Finally, after the third issuance of the air ticket, he was tested negative and could travel to Nepal on 15 September, 2021. Volunteers from NRNA in Nepal received him at the TIA, handed him to his sister-in-law and managed a transport service to help them get to the relative's home in Manmaiju, Kathmandu. Kumar Nepali held tremendous gratitude to the NRNA for all the support he received from the organization. He shared, "I was in a bewildered state in Malaysia for eight years. My company had refused to send me back to Nepal. In such situation where I could not return to Nepal, what the NRNA has done to me is beyond words. I am indebted to it for lifetime for the support."



### ***Shamsher Bahadur Ghimire repatriated after seven months***

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) finally rescued and repatriated Shamsher Bahadur Ghimire after accommodating him in the NRNA's shelter for 6.5 months, making necessary treatment of his legs for seven months and supporting him for the exit procedure in collaboration with Nepal Embassy.

Ghimire had gone to the UAE three years ago in search of a decent employment opportunity via a manpower company. The manpower company had placed him at the First Security Group, where he worked for 14 months. After 14 months, the company owner did not give him the job, salary, food and accommodation. He did not have a labor visa either, which took him to the street, making him beg for food. In the work place, blood oozed out from his leg. He met volunteers and members of the NRNA UAE team, who immediately took him to hospital. He stayed in hospital for nearly one month.



***Photo 20: Ghimire undergoing treatment in hospital.***

The NRNA managed the hospital expenses from its internal source and NRNA-ILO COVID-19 Response: Relief and Repatriation project. After getting discharged from the hospital, the NRNA provided him with the shelter for 6.5 months. In the meantime, his documentation process was being carried forward to rescue him from the UAE, where he had been under the free zone visa, which added to the complexity in the documentation process as he had his free zone visa extended up to December, 2021.

It took nearly seven months for the volunteers to arrange the required documents for his repatriation. Nepal Embassy had a dedicated public relation officer to make the out pass clearance, understanding the complexity of the process. As per the medical report, his nerves were swollen because of which blood oozed out of his leg even in a slight pressure on the leg or a short walk. Ghimire was finally repatriated to Nepal on 8 September, 2021. He was accompanied by a Nepali migrant worker, Amit Lama, for whom the NRNA managed the shelter for seven months, out pass clearance and an air ticket for his support during Ghimire's travel. The Kathmandu-based volunteers received him at the TIA, and facilitated his transportation to a quarantine. The project covered the expenses of the quarantine and his local transportation.



Ghimire was speechless with gratitude when he was asked for his response towards the NRNA and its volunteers. He said, “NRNA has done everything to me abroad. Finally, I am back in Nepal. Without them, I don’t know in what situation I would have been in the foreign land.” It could not have been possible to repatriate both Ghimire and Lama without the support from Nepal Embassy in the documentation process.

### **Uma rescued after 2 years from Kuwait**

Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA) repatriated Uma Portel Khati, who had been stranded in a hospital in Kuwait for over two years after she met a deadly accident, back to Nepal. Uma had gone to Kuwait in 2018 to seek employment. She worked in one of the local company, named as Qualamit, as a cleaner. Her days were going smoothly. Unfortunately, she faced a road accident and lost consciousness.

When she gained her consciousness two days later, her lower part of the body stopped working. There was a serious spinal cord damage resulting in paralysis. It was a very painful moment for her. Her company agreed to pay the hospital bills for bed. However, she had to manage alternative sources for treatment and other expenses. She used her own savings to cover certain expenses whilst Nepali workers living in Kuwait donated to cover the remaining expenses.



***Photo 21: Uma Portel after her return at TIA in Kathmandu.***



The NRNA constantly supported her in all means while she was in Kuwait and upon her arrival in Nepal. It worked for documentation process, PCR tests and managed an air ticket for her safe return. Finally, she returned to Nepal on February 18, 2022. Volunteers from the NRNA received her at TIA in Kathmandu. They handed her to her son, who was present at the airport on the day and managed local transportation to get to a differently-abled friendly hotel. Uma, resident of Birtamod of Jhapa, shared her joy in returning to Nepal and being with the family members despite the unfortunate nightmare she had to bear with. She also expressed her enormous gratitude towards the NRNA for all the support she received both in Kuwait and Nepal during those extremely challenging times.







## Support for Safe Repatriation and Return of Nepali Migrant Workers Impacted by COVID-

### 19 Major Achievements in Figures

S.N	Country	Total Workers Benefitted in 2020			Total Workers Benefitted in 2021			Total Workers Benefitted in 2022			Total
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1	Malaysia	1699	94	1793	2252	70	2322	54	1	55	4170
2	Qatar	1693	408	2101	4618	169	4787	95	2	97	6985
3	KSA	1175	10	1185	5608	76	5684	772	15	787	7656
4	UAE	915	318	1233	1733	325	2058	153	21	174	3465
5	Kuwait	2	2	4	235	150	385	395	124	519	908
6	Bahrain	5	1	6	5	1	6	217	106	323	335
7	Oman	1	2	3	84	47	131	118	96	214	348
8	Other Countries	22		22	1	1	2	0	0	0	24
9	Nepal	1715	27	1742	2111	120	2231	78	14	92	4065
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7227</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>8089</b>	<b>16647</b>	<b>959</b>	<b>17606</b>	<b>1882</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>2261</b>	<b>27956</b>

### Annex 5: Media Coverage

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