Helpline: Counseling center for Safe Migration

Annual Report
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General Overview

Several factors in Nepal create a large population vulnerable for trafficking and unsafe migration. The hard-to-navigate terrain of Nepal poses geographical challenges, such as lack of access to transportation and difficult in making and maintaining communication once workers have left their villages. Furthermore, Socio-cultural factors such as the low socio-economic status of women and girls in society, gender discrimination, domestic violence, early marriage, religious practices, and gendered cultural norms push women to pursue jobs or lured easily to live and work outside of their communities. Similarly, economic causes such as poverty, lack of local job opportunities, lack of skills except for domestic and farm work also contribute to women, children, and men seeking for better employment, either legally or illegally, in countries around the world. Furthermore, family dysfunction and separation from parents - due partly to the armed conflict and partly to other reasons - make children highly vulnerable to exploitation.

According to a data provided by Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), the Nepali job aspirants heading for overseas jobs has increased by 19.86 percent in 2011/2012. The number of migrant workers has also increased by 39,827, totaling to 240,269 during the period this year while there were only 200,442 during the same period last year. Of the total number of migrant workers 5,922 are women. Most of the workers want to go to Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. However, the Nepali migrant workers heading to Libya, Bahrain, Iraq and Oman, among others has declined due to the political crisis in the region. As Malaysia has given priority to Nepali workers by scrapping the work permits for workers from Bangladesh, the number of Nepali workers in the south-east Asian economic powerhouse has increased to 80,370 during this period. Similarly, Qatar is hosting the show-piece World Cup Football Tournament in 2022; they have increased hiring for infrastructure construction. Thus, recruitment of Nepali workers has reached to up to 65,365 in this period.

According to the Ministry of Labor and Transport Management, approximately 1800 migrant workers leave for various labor-receiving countries daily from Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu, with an estimation of 2.27 million Nepali migrant workers already engaged in foreign employment services. This data does not include those who leave through Nepal/India open boarder. Vulnerability is increased if individuals seek migration without a company affiliation or via legal government processes – usually this happens via the Nepal/India border. 64% of the female workers leave by themselves without a legitimate company affiliation and through India. They do not have legal migration documents and generally pay large amounts of money to deceitful agents.

Similarly, Government data shows that 12, 88,218 men and 34,141 Nepali women have flown abroad on work visas in 26 countries during 2006 to 2011. It mentions that 77 percent of the workers were unaware of work provisions in the destination countries, while 67 percent of them had gone without proper trainings. Amongst them, 72 per cent were found to be unaware of their insurance policy. (Source: www.dofe.gov.np)

There are large number of cases : of fraud, deception, exploitation, sexual harassment, abuse, physical and mental torture, confiscation of identity cards, restriction of mobility, poor living and working conditions, longer working hours than agreed to, termination of contracts, non-provision of salaries and a lack of medical treatment that majority of labor migrants face. Many prospective migrate workers do not have understating on migration process as a result they become victims of trafficking, fraud and deception.

According to the recent survey conducted by the Foreign Ministry in coordination with the Foreign Employment Board, over 1,357 Nepali migrants workers have died in the past three-and-half years. While most of the deaths were related to road and work place accidents, suicides and murder; a significant number of the cases could have been avoided. 299 workers died of natural causes, 120 committed suicides, 185 died in road accidents, 102 died in work place accidents, 100 were murdered,
76 died of heart attack, 292 died of respiratory problems and 183 died of “other” causes. A majority of the workers were young ranging from 20 to 50 years of age. The report shows that 441 died in Malaysia, 350 in Saudi Arabia, 306 in Qatar, 125 in UAE, 21 in Kuwait, nine in South Korea and 64 in other countries. The number does not include bodies flown to Nepal by victims’ families. The report emphasized on lack of pre-departure orientation classes on workplace safety, road safety or rules, climatic conditions and precautions to be taken in the countries for the unprecedented number of deaths (The Kathmandu Post, pg. 1, 2012-01-12). People who opt for foreign employment are facing such dangers and problems because they are unaware, many problems and ambiguity related to foreign migration process could be solved by providing expert advice and information to foreign employment seekers and potential trafficking victims.

Updates:

The Government of Nepal is working on a reform plan that aims to promote safe migration for foreign job aspirants.

- The government has been working to increase the minimum wage for Nepalis, and, accordingly, in May 2012, increased the minimum wage for Nepali workers in Malaysia to about NPR 24,000 per month; workers in Saudi Arabia are expected to earn a monthly salary of NPR 25,000 and NPR 16,000 in the UAE.
- From August 31 the agencies must issue receipts to migrant workers (the department has temporarily stopped the process).
- Workers have to show 11 documents at labour desk and immigration counter at Tribhuvan International Airport before they can depart. The law has a mandatory provision for outsourcing agencies to issue receipt of service fee, foreign job permit, visa stamped passport, contract letter to foreign job aspirants before they depart, orientation certificate, medical report, Police report, receipt paid to Foreign Employment Welfare Fund etc.
- Individual workers have to show six documents, including attested job offer paper, relationship between mediator and migrant worker, valid visa and passport, medical report, orientation certificate etc.
- Internal measures are also being taken in order to improve the migration process. The High Level Monitoring Mechanism and Rapid Response Team (RRT) will monitor and “interfere” in long-term issues as policy review, revision and framing to ay-to-day actions. Whereas, the second, it will monitor day-to-day activities in foreign employment sector and to take rapid action against guilty.
- The Malaysian government raised 65 percent in basic salary, benefiting millions of low-income workers including migrants, effective from New Year 2013, as part of the government’s drive to transform the country into one of the high-salary nations. Among those benefiting are Nepali workers in significant numbers. The fresh salary hike has been enforced in line with the Malaysian government’s Minimum Wages Order 2012, published in the Federal Government Gazette. As per the hike, workers are to get a minimum salary of up to Ringgit 900 (Rs 26,000) per month, up from Ringgit 546, in most parts of Malaysia.

1 CESLAM 2012: Governing Labour Migration in Nepal
The government of UAE and Qatar announced the minimum salary wages of Nepali worker. According to the scale of the minimum salary in UAE currency will for Unskilled-800, Semi skilled- 1000, Skilled- 1200 and highly skilled-5000 per month in UAE. Meanwhile, In Qatar, the minimum salary of Nepali worker is for Unskilled-900, Semi skilled- 1100, Skilled-1500 and highly skilled- 4200 Riyal per month.

**HimRights Helpline Activities**

HimRights counseling centers were established in Bara, Parsa and Sindhuli districts in March and in Makwanpur it was established in 2008 at District Administration Office to disseminate information on safe migration and prevention of trafficking.

In the context of foreign labor migration, it is important to understand the complete process of migration from pre-departure phase to departure phase, working condition at abroad and to returned/repartition status. HimRights counseling centers provides information about safe migration and its legal process in order to help individuals to understand the safe migration process. District Administration is issuing the passport for the foreign job seekers and others also. Prospective emigrants are the target group of this counseling center. They get information on safe migration and legal procedure. The center is operating with approval from Foreign Employment Promotion Board and District Administration Office in the district.

The Helpline officer is sharing information on legal process and is making them aware about their rights and problems they might face. Similarly, Helpline Officer also lobbies and advocates to the concerned government authorities regarding the issue of migrant people. The issues regarding to fraud cases have been shared to Department of Foreign Employment and Foreign Employment Promotion Board for legal action. Informative booklets are provided to alert them about possible problems they might face.

**Objective/Goal:**

- To make migrant workers aware on safe process of migration.
- To protect migrant worker from possible fraud, deception, exploitation and trafficking at large.
- To highlight the issues of unsafe migration and trafficking.
- To give especial attention to provide orientation on safe migration for women migrants since they are more vulnerable to be trafficked from unsafe migration.

**Short introduction of the districts**

**Makwanpur district**, Hetauda is the district headquarters, with area of 2,426 km². It has altogether 43 Village Development Committees (VDCs) and a Municipality in this district. Tamang, Brahmin, Newar, and marginalized groups such as Chepang and Bankariya are living ethnic groups in Makwanpur. This is one of the districts from which many Tamang women and girls are trafficked.

**Parsa district**, Birgunj as its headquarters covers an area of 1,353 km². This district is situated in central region with 83 VDCs. Birgunj is the biggest business hub after Kathmandu with highest flow of people to
cross open international border between Nepal and India, most of which is not documented. Most prospective migrant worker who do not have valid legal documents take land route to India and migrate unsafely to other parts of the world. Muslim and Bhojpuri communities are higher than rest of the other groups.

**Bara District**, Kaliya is the district headquarters, covers an area of 1190 km². It has all together 104 VDCs and a municipality. Muslim, Tharu, Yadav, Kurmi and Brahmin are the main inhabitants of the district. More than half of the population is engaged in Agriculture, many aspire to work in Gulf.

**Sindhuli district**, Sindhulimadhi Kamalamai is the district headquarters, with area of 2,491 km². It has 48 VDCs and municipality with various ethnic groups Gurung, Tamang, Newar, Brahmin, Chetri and marginalized community.

**Progress on the activities**

1. **Counseling service in the districts**

In this reporting period, the counseling centers informed 4187 people about the safe migration and its legal process in four districts. 3000 male and 1187 female received the service (Chart-1).

56 male and 900 female in Makwanpur, 924 male and 31 female in Parsa, 971 male and 114 female in Bara and 1049 male and 142 female in Sindhuli district received the counseling service (Chart-2). We also provided ‘Safe Migration Information Booklet’, a HimRights Publication, after counseling for further information and to share it with others.

The local agents and returnees play key role in luring them to go for foreign employment. They lobby/convince most influential family members to pressurize the prospective migrants. The family members are provided with only the benefits of a “good job” and not the challenges they have to face, social environment, hours of work, and rest of what it entails. Usually families see this as a good opportunity to transcend from rural or urban drudgery and poverty.

With regard to labor sectors, a majority of the male migrants work in the manufacturing and construction sectors as welders, construction fixers, carpenters, electricians, masons, plastering and painting workers, drivers and plumbers, and they also find work as security guards and technical workers. Most female migrant workers, however, find employment as domestic workers and caregivers, and in hotels, catering, manufacturing, and health and medical services.

2. **Regular coordination with Foreign Employment Promotion Board and District Administration Office**

HimRights approached Foreign Employment Promotion Board (FEPB) which is part of the Government institute to regulate economic migration. They were happy to collaborate for effective implementation
of their policies through counseling centers and other programs. After getting the approval from FEPB, HimRights has established counseling centers in District Administration Office (DAO). The Board has requested the DAO of Sindhuli, Bara and Parsa to provide the necessary support to HimRights counseling center.

HimRights is working in close coordination with Department of Foreign Employment and Foreign Employment Promotion Board (FEPB). Brochures, leaflets and reports have been collected from FEPB for updated information on labor migration. These documents are also distributed to all four Helpline offices. The quarterly reports have been shared to the respective District Administration Officer and other relevant organizations in the districts.

3. Coordination and networking with other organization

HimRights is working in coordination with likeminded relevant NGOs, networks and media to support each other on human rights, anti-trafficking, child rights and safe migration issues.

a. Interaction between the returnees of foreign employment and National Human Rights Commission Nirjala Bhattarai:

On December 21, 2012, HimRights, Parsa has coordinated an interaction program between Nirjala Bhattarai of National Human Right Commission/UNDP and returnees of foreign employment from gulf countries (Dubai, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi etc.).

During the interaction program, the returnees raised several issues and suggestions based on their experiences, such as recent conditions of workers in the gulf countries, problems and obstacles by the employees and the specific roles and responses of Nepal embassy in the gulf countries.

Similarly, HimRights has also shared the information about the Helpline Centre situated at District Administration Office. Handbooks and pamphlets of HimRights were also distributed during the program.

b. Interaction Program on the occasion of International Migrants Day.

On the occasion of International Migration Day, HimRights Bara and Parsa jointly organized an interaction program at Kalaiya, Bara on December 18, 2012. Action Youth Nepal, Kahurastra, Lumanti, media person and the local youths were the collaborating partners of the program.

During the program basic awareness related to safe migration were given to the public and detail Information were given about our helpline centre.

c. Rally organized on the occasion of International Migrants Day

were the active participants. In the rally, VDC Secretary and representative of Foreign Employment Board had stressed for the safe labour migration and shared the information about its legal process.

4. **Orientation of Safe Migration Counseling Center and Human Rights.**

HimRights organized an ‘Orientation Program’ on June 13-14, 2012 in Kathmandu. All district Helpline Officers, District Coordinators, and central office staffs participated in the Program. The main objective of the program was to train Helpline Officers on counseling skills, provide the knowledge on national provisions on safe migration and basic principles of human rights.

A basic concept on Human Rights: seven big treaties on human rights, ILO, human trafficking, root causes and the historical background were also shared during the session. There was presentation on Internal and external trafficking, safe migration and its related laws and policies, there was a good discussion amongst the participants. The participants from the districts shared their experiences as well as the problems and challenges they have to face while working in Helpline Centers. Especially, Helpline coordinator from Makwanpur was able to share her experiences and good practices as it has been operating since 2008.

Earlier, there was no systematic documentation of service seekers. We have formulated formats to systematically document details of prospective migrant worker as well as information on the work, agents, workplace which will enable to seek the person if they are trafficked and their human rights violated, insurance etc. On the second day, discussions were focused on these format guidelines on the Individual reporting format of prospective migrant worker, format for application of the victim and family of unsafe migration, format of the case study and monthly reporting format of counseling service. Various ideas and feedbacks were taken from the participants. Some changes and updates were made on those formats.

5. **Review meeting of Safe Migration Counseling Center and Human Rights.**

One day review meeting was organized in Hetauda, Makwanpur on 10 October 2012. The helpline officers from Sindhuli, Bara, Parsa, Makwanpur and central staffs participated in the meeting. The main purpose of the review meeting was to refresh the district based staffs on safe migration program, sharing Project Activities, Documentation, Reporting and Response in detail, challenges and gaps and updating of the current status of legal and safe migration to prevent human trafficking.

The guidelines of reporting formats, case study and registrations process of case were also re-oriented to the district staff. The latest updates of policies regarding to the foreign employment also shared to all the districts staffs.

6. **Media monitoring**

HimRights has been monitoring the Nepali media to update the status of foreign employment and information on different cases of unsafe migration. All the national and local daily newspapers are the main sources of the information to get daily updates about the foreign employment of Nepal.
Questions raised by service holders during counseling:

- Where can we do a medical checkup and which is the best medical center?
- Which country and company should we go with for foreign employment?
- How much does a medical and insurance cost?
- What can we do if the recruitment agency demands more money and where to complain?
- Should we make accidental and life insurance in order to migrate for foreign employment?

Some findings during this reporting period

- Most of the Indigenous women apply for passports to go to Malaysia, Qatar and Dubai for domestic work or hotel/ restaurants.
- Most of the prospective emigrants are from poor, low educated and Indigenous communities. These people are not ready to take counseling when the agents are with them or listen to on legal provision of safe foreign employment.
- Due to the open space of Help Line Centre, victims from foreign employment do not want to share their stories.
- Educated people are also applying for passport for foreign work because they have no choice to do within the country.
- Small numbers of applicants from Brahmin/Chhetri apply for passport too for foreign employment.
- Agents and returnees from foreign worker have lured poor youths, girls and boys, to migrate for foreign employment.
- Children below the age of 18 changes their birth dates as over 18 to apply for passport with their parents because they are forced /influenced by agents and family to go for unsafe foreign employment.
- Almost everyone who has come to apply for passport does not have medical checkup and proper knowledge about migration.
- Most of the prospective emigrants have to pay more money than government rule.
- Majority of the applicants are unskilled and from agricultural background.

Challenges

- Due to the ineffective system within the DAO, the case registration on human Trafficking/migration in the district administration office is very difficult.
- During the counseling, they try to bypass us as the agents have taught them to say they have the right to go to work and the agents have best interests of their well being.
- Process of complain registration of fraud cases in the District Administration Office is difficult due to lack of concern bodies and proper response from the officials.
- Because of the counseling of brokers/agents, when we try to inform them about the process of safe migration they think the counseling center is conspiring against them.
- The strong network of brokers'/agents lures the parents to make passports of underage children to go for unsafe foreign employment.
Counseling saves Oshi Akthar from trap

Oshi Akthar Miya Ansari, 29 years old, of Majhriya-7, Bara District, is a victim of fraud. Shankhar Prasad Sahani of Patrahari-7 Bara District took Rs.1, 48,000 from him for employment opportunity in Malaysia.

On 26th July 2012, Trust Manpower Company of Kathmandu called him to Kathmandu for processing employment in Loshan Vesun Company, Kelong, Malaysia. He had to return from Kathmandu because he did not have medical test reports. Later on September 5, 2012, he did medical tests and orientation classes on September 6 and 7. He was supposed to leave for Malaysia on September 8, 2012. On the night of September 7, he came to know that he was being sent through another manpower company named ‘Khumbu’ rather than Trust Nepal Company. He came to our Counseling Center for suggestions. After getting all the information and counseling, he refused to go Malaysia and asked the agent to give his passport and money back.

He has not got his passport and money back from the agent yet. Hence, on December 31, 2012, he dropped in an application for pleading for justice in HimRights, Bara. HimRights has requested and send his all application to Department of Foreign Employment Board for the justice of Oshi Akthar.

Navin Kumar Pariyar and Ramesh Kumar Pariyar want to go for foreign work with full legal process

On November 28, 2012, Nabin Kumar Pariyar and Ramesh Kumar Pariyar of Lampanthar 3, Sindhuli district, along with their father, arrived at Sindhuli District Office to make their passports. In the process, District Administration Office staff told them to get counseling. Hence, they came to our Counseling Service. At first they were hesitant and were asking questions like, “What is this?”, “What’s the need to come here?” But after informing them about our counseling center and telling them that they could ask about any information they need to understand while traveling for foreign job, they started to answer calmly.

After counseling, their father started to cry. While asking about the reason for crying, he replied that everything we told them was true and it could happen to them as well. In fact, there were many such cases in their village. But due to lack of opportunities in Nepal, he had no other option than sending his sons abroad. He then told that his sons never wanted to study, no matter how much he asked them to. They are also willing to go abroad. He thanked us and said, “I will send my sons for foreign employment only after thoroughly understanding about the manpower agencies. I will make sure to follow all legal processes.” He added, “We will never blindly believes agents and man power agencies.”

Sangita Lama, 26 years, Manahari VDC-3,

Sangita had come to make passport to work in Kuwait. In the beginning, she was not ready to talk to us but when we told her that we wanted her to go safely, she agreed and told us that she didn't have any formal education and her sister who is working in Kuwait had called her. She also told us that she had to go because of her family’s poor economic condition. We gave her counseling and we came to understand that she didn't have any formal training and language skill. Moreover, she didn't even know anything about the process of safe migration and the work she has to do in Kuwait. After giving her all the information, she was very happy, she thanked and told us that she would go only after following all the legal process.
Padam Bahadur Tamang, 18 years

Padam Bahadur Tamang from Kakurthakur-3, Sindhuli. He has come to district administration office Sindhuli to apply for passport. He has completed 7th grade and wants to go to Malaysia to work, through a person he knew. In the beginning, he was not ready to talk to us but when we pointed out that he was too young to go for foreign employment, he told us: “My economical condition is low. So, I want to go to a foreign country for job”. He did not have any skill/formal training and did not know any other languages other than Nepali and Tamang. His parents urged him to migrate for foreign employment to earn money. We provided him the legal process of safe migration and child labor. Before counseling, he didn’t know anything about the migration process and its legal provisions. He told us: “I did not know what I will do in Malaysia”. After getting all the information he said to us that he would not go for foreign employment but he requested us to convince his parents. At last, he was very happy, and thanked us.

Anita returned home safely with the help of our helpline centre.

Anita Karki (Pariyar) of Makwanpur, who lived in a rented house with her husband Raj Kumar Pariyar and 3 children. On 19th July 2012 she got counseling and safe migration booklet before going to Kathmandu and went to Kathmandu with her husband and stayed at a Hotel where she met 3 other women who were getting ready to go to Saudi Arab with her. When she got information that they were being sent through Delhi and labor permit and insurance papers had to be made from Delhi from the agent Ms. Maya Lama from R.P International Pvt. Ltd. Anita became suspicious and called HimRights, Makwanpur district coordinator Kumari Waiba for suggestions. After getting suggestion, she refused that was not going through Delhi (which means sending them illegally) and the agent asked them to pay for the hotel. Initially she did not agree to it. But when they told the agent that they have reported the case to HimRights central office in Kathmandu she agreed to pay. The agent returned Anita’s husband’s ring which the agent took as her security. Finally Anita, her husband, Suntali Sunar from Manahari, Parwati and another woman were freed from the hotel on 24th July 2012. Instead of going to foreign work, they returned home safely. Later Anita said that she wanted to go abroad for work because her husband did not have any work and she was facing economic problem and domestic violence as well. However, she promised to take all the safety measures: take training and follow the process of safe migration. She also shared that she will not go for foreign employment if she gets work here.

Sarita Lopchan, 23 years, Dhiyal VDC,

Sarita studied till grade 3, had come to make passport with her aunt to go for Kuwait. We gave her counseling for an hour. She had taken only sewing training instead of any formal training for foreign work. When we gave her all the information about safe foreign employment, she was convinced that she could be in danger and she decided to go back without applying for the passport. She also said that she would contact us if she had any problems.
Sharmila Pakhin, 34 years, Aambhanjyang VDC

Sharmila had come to the DAO with Dolma, the agent to make her passport for foreign employment. She had very strong desire to go abroad, she didn’t want to talk to us and she blindly trusted her agent because the agent was sending her to Kuwait for just Rs.35, 000, but when we informed her that domestic workers could go to Kuwait for free, she realized that her agent had cheated her. Sharmila didn't have any basic education nor did she know anything about the process, she had even taken loan from the agent at high interest rate. When we told Dolma, her agent that we would take her to the police, she confessed that she was supposed to send Sharmila to Kathmandu and other agents are to take over from there. She also confessed that she got Rs, 10, 000 per person. When Sharmila heard this she realized that she was being sold, she tore her passport and decided that she wouldn't go for foreign employment until she knows all the details.

Sapana Kumari Karki, 28 years and Lata Devkota, 31 years

Sapana Kumari Karki of Kamalamai Municipality-6 and Lata Devkota of Ratanchura-2 of Sindhuli district had come to make their passport to work in Israel. In the beginning, they were not ready to talk to us but when we told them that we wanted them to go safely for foreign employment, they agreed. Then, they told us that they didn’t have any formal training or language skill, besides Nepali and their family economical condition is poor. They shared that they were tired of searching jobs. So, they wanted to go for foreign employment and earn money. Their families also agreed to this. HimRights helpline provided them legal process on safe migration and preparedness of safe migration process before going abroad. Before that they didn't know anything about the process of safe migration and the work. They did not even know what they were going to do in Israel. Then, after giving them all the information, including estimated expenses, they shared with us that the agent had demanded 1 million Rupees from them. They said that they would follow legal process of safe migration and thanked us for this service.

Manju Pariyar, Sharikhet, Makwanpur

HimRights, Maiti Nepal and shakti samuha and network members have been successful in saving an under age girl Manju Pariyar from foreign employment.

First she was not interested to listen, but when we told her father he would be arrested if he was doing anything wrong, he confessed that the agent was continuously forcing them to make passport and to send his daughter for foreign employment. Even he didn’t know what work his daughter would do, he just wanted the money. The girl was very innocent and she looked very scared. She didn't know anything about foreign employment, she asked us to tell her father that she wouldn't go at any cost. With the help of CDO office and district police office we were able to punish the agent Mr. Som Bahadur Lama. After providing counseling for a long time, Manju said that she was forced by his father and step mother. In the end, the agent and the father committed in written form that they will not repeated to force her to go abroad again. Manju is continuing her education, she is in class 7 and the network team has committed to support the girl to continue her education if her family is not able to do so. Her father was also thankful to us.
Saudi govt announces amnesty for illegal migrant workers

KATHMANDU, Feb 25: The Saudi government has decided to grant amnesty to illegal foreign workers, providing them opportunity to leave the desert kingdom without getting penalized.

Saudi Labor Minister Adel Fakeih announced the plan under which undocumented migrant workers, a significant number of Nepalis are among them, can leave the Kingdom on exit-only visas without paying any penalty.

The ‘arabnews.com’, a Saudi news portal, stated that Fekeih made the decision public while opening a forum of Saudization committees at regional governorates on Sunday.

The forum was aimed at tackling the issue of excess foreign workers and violators of local laws in a bid to clean up the local labor market.

Under the Saudization, a drive to generate employment for locals by replacing migrants, Saudi government has announced not to grant hiring permits to the companies that fall under Red Category, a group that represents companies that hire Saudi nationals less than 30 percent of the total workforce.

Saudi Interior Ministry has been supporting the Labor Ministry Officials for effectively enforcing Saudization drive that aims to create job opportunities for the increasing number of Saudi graduates.

“The forum discussed how to track undocumented workers, punishments to be imposed on them and how to activate regional Saudization committees,” said the online portal. There are an estimated eight million foreign workers in the Kingdom.

Responding to the public announcement by Saudi Labor Minister, Nepalese Embassy in Riyadh has sought the details of amnesty with Saudi officials.

“We have asked for detailed information from Saudi Labor Ministry Officials about the nature of the offer and those who are likely to benefit from the move,” Krishna Dawadi, Labor Attaché for Saudi Arabia told Republica by phone on Monday.

According to him, Nepali workers become illegal in the Saudi mainly due to the change of employer and visa overstay, among others. Dawadi said the embassy does not have the data suggesting the exact number of illegal Nepali migrants in Saudi Arabia. “However, a significant number of Nepali undocumented workers are sure to benefit from the scheme,” added Dawadi.

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Govt to ink labour pacts with six countries

KATHMANDU, NOV 05 -

The government is set to sign labour agreements with six emerging labour destinations— Malaysia, Kuwait, Israel, Oman, Jordan and Lebanon.

While labour pacts with Malaysia, Kuwait, Lebanon and Israel are in progress, the government is working on an initial draft to that effect with Jordan and Oman.

Various government bodies, including the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Nepal’s missions abroad, have been snowed under with work at the moment. MoLE officials say agreements with Malaysia and Kuwait are likely to be signed first. Pacts with the other countries will depend on their responses.

“Since an agreement is an issue concerning the two governments it might take some time,” said Buddhi Bahadur Khadka, MoLE spokesperson.

Thousands of Nepali migrant workers enter the six countries every year in search of jobs. In absence of a formal accord at the state level, a raft of Nepali migrant workers has been deprived of minimum rights, including their safety, wages and welfare.

During a recent visit of a Nepali delegation to Malaysia, officials of the two countries had consented to replace the old agreement with a new one. Nepal had signed a labour accord with Malaysia in 2007 and it has not been renewed so far.

Officials say the government, on its part, has already sent initial drafts to respective countries. Though the government started working on procedures some months ago, internal preparations have delayed the overall process.

“The government has already started doing the needful. It will still take some time,” said Purna Chandra Bhattrai, director general of the Department of Foreign Employment.

Stating that the number of overseas job seekers has increased significantly over the years, Bhattrai said that the government decision was driven by an urgency to guarantee safe migration.

MoLE officials say labour contracts will oblige the recipient countries to safeguard the rights of workers. Since most of the Nepali workers are unskilled, it’s increasingly difficult to ensure their minimum wages, welfare and security. Once labour agreements are signed, the host nations will be lawfully forced to promote safe migration.

Malaysia is the second biggest labour destination for Nepali workers with an estimated 500,000 currently at work there. A recent government record shows that 55,343 workers are currently working in Kuwait. As majority of workers enter Lebanon, Oman and Jordan through illegal channels, the government is clueless about the exact number of Nepalis working there. Some unconfirmed records claim that the actual number of Nepalis in the three countries has reached 150,000.  

The Kathmandu Post, Posted on: 2012-11-05 08:35
KATHMANDU, DEC 19 -

Around 40 migrant workers bound for various countries received garlands from the under-secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment at the Tribhuvan International Airport on Tuesday. The act is one of many annual rituals the government performs on the occasion of International Migrants’ Day.

Among the around 2.5 million migrant workers, the group at the TIA was lucky to receive such an honour. Everyday, around 1,500 job seekers fly abroad, but almost half of them land up in trouble at reaching the destinations. The government has done precious little to ensure their labour rights and safety.

The government has unofficially opened 108 countries for employment, but has signed labour agreements with only four of them. Most of the labour destinations do not have their embassy in Nepal, compelling the workers to depend on stamping visa while going abroad.

In the absence of a strict monitoring mechanism, the workers get swindled in Nepal itself by unscrupulous agents and manpower agencies and to some extent even by government officials.

As around 75 percent of the prospective migrant workers are poorly trained and uneducated, dishonest recruitment companies and agents lure almost half of them to take the illegal route and process. Further, they are handed down fake health, training and orientation certificates, making their stay abroad a sheer nightmare. Owing to the lack of these mandatory courses, they find it hard to accomplish their assigned duties and fail to accommodate themselves in the new country psychologically, mentally and physically.

Besides such problems, they constantly live under pressure of debt they take to go abroad. The high interest rates add to their woes. Sadly enough, it has become a custom in Nepali culture to expect high interest rates when one is going abroad. Although many workers tackle these problems, some can’t handle them and end up in disastrous situations. As a result, around three migrant workers are dying in foreign lands every day. Some go insane and a large number of them return with scars of exploitation and trauma. The condition of women, who are compelled to choose the illegal channel, is worse. According to the UN Women, out of the 2,810 Nepali women migrant who went to various destinations, 415 had gone insane, 86 had unwanted pregnancy, and 32 of them became mothers.

Government records show over 1,500 men and women migrant s are currently imprisoned in various countries.

“The state is neither in the position to create jobs in the country nor protect these breadwinners,” says Ganesh Gurung, an expert in migration issues.

The layers of corruption in offices of key stakeholders, including the Department of Foreign Employment and the Tribhuvan International Airport, speak volumes about where the actual problem lies.

The World Bank’s new report ‘Migration and Remittance Factbook 2011’ says Nepal is among the top five countries with remittance amounting to 23 percent of the GDP. The country received payments worth US$ 2.98 billion in 2009, which is likely to reach US$ 3.5 billion in 2010. “The state must not only take from workers, but also give them safety and security in return,” said Gurung.

The Kathmandu Post, Posted on: 2012-12-19 08:39
## Distribution of foreign labor migrants by destination countries, FY 2006/07-2011/12, Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
<th>Share of females out of total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>473,814</td>
<td>4,094</td>
<td>477,908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>483,745</td>
<td>2,164</td>
<td>485,909</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>344,647</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>345,393</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>224,962</td>
<td>9,374</td>
<td>234,336</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>32,974</td>
<td>21,742</td>
<td>54,716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>25,569</td>
<td>1,836</td>
<td>27,405</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>15,048</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>16,272</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>15,344</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>15,707</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1,759</td>
<td>3,297</td>
<td>5,056</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>1,759</td>
<td>3,297</td>
<td>5,056</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>5,309</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5,333</td>
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<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>5,076</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>5,396</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>21,232</td>
<td>2,237</td>
<td>23,469</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,651,23</td>
<td>57,099</td>
<td>1,708,33</td>
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</table>


## Number of agencies providing foreign employment services, Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agencies/Agents</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>License holder agencies currently in operation</td>
<td>765</td>
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<tr>
<td>License holder agencies permitted for operation of Branch Offices</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical check-up services</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation institutions approved and currently running</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation institutions cancelled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agents</td>
<td>116</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruiting agencies provided licenses for agents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agents registered year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>107</td>
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Some photos related to safe migration activities