

EVERY RETURN TELLS A STORY OF RESILIENCE, REINTEGRATION, AND RENEWAL.

For decades, Nepalis have sought opportunities abroad. Each year, over **770,000** labour approvals are issued, **with most workers returning home after two to three years.**

Coming home brings both opportunity and uncertainty.



The **Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers (ReMi) Project** a bi-lateral initiative of the Governments of Nepal and Switzerland with technical assistance from Helvetas Nepal, helps make this journey safe, dignified, and sustainable.

Meet Nepal's Returning Workers

The faces of return are diverse yet their stories share the same hopes, struggles, and determination.

Most are men aged 25-45, primarily from Koshi, Madhesh, Lumbini and Sudurpaschim provinces, with women migrants slowly increasing.

Migration is largely driven by limited local jobs, debt, and family expectations.

Drivers of Re-Migration

The **ReMi Project's** research shows who these returnees are, where they come from, and what shapes their journey home.

Returnees worked mainly **Middle East and Malaysia**, where most were employed in low-paying, labor-intensive jobs.



Over 76% had no formal skill training before departure

The majority of returnees came back **involuntarily**, often due to

- **Contract Completion**
- **Deportation**
- **Layoffs**

Many have come completed **2-3 migration cycles**, for a period of 4-6 years abroad.

The average age

of returnees is around 40 years, ranging from 20 to 60.

Marital Status

About 90% of returnees are married, having obligations towards spouses, parents, and children in Nepal.

Migration experiences are highly varied, leading to complex and varied return/reintegration experiences.

Cookie cutter approach to reintegration support is not possible)

Reintegration Matters

Reintegration is not the end of migration, it's where development begins.

Reintegration connects migration with Nepal's growth and economic development.

Sustainable reintegration helps them regain dignity, stability, and a sense of belonging, having contributed social and economic remittances to Nepal's emerging economy.



Economic Reintegration

Turning experience abroad into jobs, enterprises, and recognized skills.

- Minimum monthly household income of NPR 57,000
- Earning opportunities initiated with 6 months or return
- Minimum Monthly income sustained for minimum of 3 years

Based on the Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security's ordinance, the current minimum wage in Nepal (updated in Aug 2023) for a full-time worker (6-days per week, 8 hours per day) is 17,300 NPR per month per person. While the returnees, on an average, were making the income higher than the minimum monthly wage, if there is no other income earner in the family, their monthly household income is below the national average. Based on 2016 Nepal Rastra Bank estimates, the average daily income for a household is NPR 30,121 (NPR 27,311 for rural households and NPR 32,336 for urban households). This is the income average for 2015. With the inflation rate it would be NPR 57,749 (USD 425) for 2024. In 2030, considering the same inflation 33 RMW Qualitative Research – 12 Moments That Matter rate, the adequate income would rise to around NPR 89,124 (USD 656). The economic reintegration in this case would depend on whether other family members are generating income.

Remittances contribute
**over 22%
of GDP**

yet returnees often face **bleak employment/earning opportunities, fractured family relations, feelings of isolation and stigma upon return.**



Social Reintegration

Restoring belonging through inclusion, well-being, and dignity, especially for women.

The 12 Moments that Matter



The Way Forward

Reintegration requires coordination, inclusion, and long-term vision. These priorities shape Nepal's journey toward sustainable migration systems. **Key Priorities** include:



Provide holistic support across all 12 moments of the migration cycle



Strengthen local Employment Service Centres (ESCs) as reintegration hubs



Recognize and certify skills gained abroad for domestic employment



Design gender-responsive programmes for women returnees



Expand financial access for reintegration and entrepreneurship



Enhance coordination between federal, provincial, and local governments



Targeted interventions for personal with chronic illness or disabilities



Opportunities with higher-income earning potential, diversified income sources to improve household financial stability



Facilitate community-based peer-to-peer support through Returnee Migrant networks for improved community and individual resilience.

The **Reintegration of Migrant Workers (ReMi)** project supports returnee migrant workers to rebuild their lives in Nepal and participate actively in social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. Implemented from July 2022 to July 2026 by the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) in partnership with provincial ministries (Koshi and Madhesh) and 20 local governments, the project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The primary beneficiaries are men and women returning from the Gulf countries and Malaysia, while secondary beneficiaries include service providers, private companies, cooperatives, and civil society organizations. ReMi works with these actors to strengthen reintegration services, improve policy frameworks, and enhance coordination across all levels of government.

This leaflet draws on findings from a qualitative study on the experiences of returnee migrant workers in Nepal. The research can be accessed here: <https://remi.org.np/uploads/returnee-migrant-workers-1741760463.pdf>