



**Early Policy Recommendations on Migrant Workers
to the
Government of Nepal**

by

Nepal Policy Institute

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(A) Contemplating immediate measures:

1. The top priority of the government should be to welcome all stranded Nepali returnee migrant workers, daily wage earners and any other Nepali who has been impacted by the spread of the coronavirus, and arrange transportation back home to Nepal. At the same time, the government must also start planning for post-return livelihood and employment activities for these returnees.
2. Evacuate all stranded Nepali workers to safety on the basis of individual's needs and urgency of the situation, and organize repatriation in safety and dignity, preferably in groups, upon assessing their mental and physical health conditions.
3. Empower Nepali missions abroad to hire laid-off Nepalis workers/students as interns, with some living expenses, in support of the mission's work to provide extended services to the needy migrants and support their family members within communities during the crisis. Give special attention to needy migrants from Malaysia and Gulf countries by utilizing the **Migrant Workers' Welfare Fund**, centrally collected from the migrant workers.
4. Include social protection provisions in employment contracts and other safety nets to cover unforeseen calamities like this pandemic by destination and source countries, with financial incentives to those who may have lost jobs during the crisis and provide social counseling, mental and health services to all returnees in safety and dignity, including vulnerable groups.
5. Give financial cash support to migrant laborers, including those who also lost jobs domestically, for an initial period of two to three months and other in-kind material support and relief supplies during the period of lockdown and beyond if so required, and until the economy starts functioning and businesses resume operations.
6. Financially support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, farmers, and producers whose products have been held up in the supply chain process and/or destroyed due to disruptions from the extended lockdown.
7. Provide support to all workers in a safe and dignified manner, particularly to vulnerable people like women, children (boys and girls), and elderly who may have suffered during this crisis, including support to prevent domestic violence, social discriminations, psychological abuses, and rape.
8. At this stage, the precise impact of COVID-19 is unknown but likely to be widespread in all areas of the economy and human life. This is so because it is going to be a choice between human life and money. Priority must be on saving lives and then taking basic steps to safeguard economic activities. The government must ensure an adequate supply of basic food items, maintain food item reserves, ensure availability at affordable prices, and ensure basic medical and health care services.

(B) Thinking about the long term:

9. Prioritize large projects through a rescheduling work program and evaluate if such projects are able to employ returnee migrant workers. It is likely that many migrant workers will lose jobs in destination countries due to massive disruptions in the local economy, adverse impacts on businesses, and other disturbances in the world economy. The government should consider community-level self-help projects jointly with local governments and migrant workers, for example, community forestry, and promotion of environment-friendly kitchen gardening by growing food locally and organically.

10. Provide employment protection to those who may have lost employment due to natural calamities and pandemics, through contract negotiations with the employer and ensuring government's guarantee to safeguard migrant workers from sudden collapse of income, loss of access to basic health care, food and accommodation, and other basic necessities.

11. Gather data on all migrant workers and compile information on 'who, where and what' and the damages incurred; and how the local, regional, and global economic environment affects the business environment, and develop financing of activities to restore the economy from the local to national level. Additionally, involve the participation of business leaders, local entrepreneurs, and other industrialists in developing plans for restoring livelihood projects in the community and support social structures as well.

12. Local governments should prepare and maintain records on returnee migrant workers, collect information on their skills and work experiences, and encourage them to up-skill themselves by enrolling at the locally established TVET schools. The government should provide some financial support for this purpose.

13. Promote and encourage international investors who are interested to invest in many high-demand agri-products (eg, coffee, cacao, coconut, etc.) in the country.

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