

Qualitative Research in Migration, Return and Reintegration

12 MOMENTS THAT MATTER

Results From a Mixed Method Study
in Koshi and Madhesh Provinces in Nepal



FOREWORD

Migration has long been a cornerstone of Nepal's socio-economic landscape, driven by a complex interplay of factors including economic opportunities, political instability, and environmental challenges. Over the years, a significant number of Nepali citizens have sought employment abroad, contributing not only to their households through remittances but also to the national economy. However, the experiences of migrant workers often encompass challenges such as legal vulnerabilities, cultural adjustments, and reintegration issues upon return. Furthermore, the country has yet to fully realize the potential of migration as a catalyst for development. To bridge this gap, there is a pressing need for improved investments in the social and economic reintegration of returnee migrant workers (RMWs). This includes facilitating productive investments of remittances and utilizing social remittance such as skills, experiences, and work ethics—gained during foreign employment.

The Reintegration of Migrant Workers (ReMi) project, introduced in July 2022 as bi-lateral initiative of the Governments of Nepal and Switzerland, with technical assistance provided by Helvetas Nepal, seeks to address these pressing issues. The ReMi project understands reintegration as a holistic process where returnees develop sustainable income-generating activities, re-establish social networks, and feel safe and accepted in their communities. This project aims for successful reintegration when returnees achieve economic stability, improved social cohesion, and enhanced psychosocial well-being, enabling them to lead decent lives and cope with the negative push factors that lead to distress migration.

This research is a pivotal contribution to the ReMi project with the aim to illuminate the experiences of returnee migrant workers and provide valuable insights into the various factors influencing their reintegration journey. Data on returning migrants is scarce, making it challenging to analyze patterns, trends, and the realities that RMWs face upon returning home. This study aspires to fill significant knowledge gaps, contributing to informed discussions that are essential for evidence-based policy-making. While our primary focus centers on the lived experiences of migrants from Nepal, the trends and insights we present may also serve to enhance a broader understanding of migrant worker experiences in various contexts.

It is important to note that this report will be subjected to a comprehensive peer review process prior to its official release. The responsibility for opinions expressed within this report rests solely with the authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by Helvetas of the opinions expressed in them.

We are pleased to share this preliminary report to provide an initial insight into our findings, paving the way for significant discussions regarding the experiences of migrants, both domestically and internationally. We encourage stakeholders to engage with this preliminary report, as it lays the groundwork for meaningful dialogue about the complex realities faced by migrant workers in Nepal. Together, we can work towards creating an environment that facilitates the successful reintegration of returnee migrant workers, ultimately unlocking the full potential of migration as a driver for sustainable development.

Acknowledgement

This study is a collaborative initiative between the Research Inputs and Development Action (RIDA) and the Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers (ReMi) Project Support Unit of Helvetas Nepal. Its successful completion reflects the collective effort, guidance, and unwavering support provided by the ReMi project team at Helvetas and the study team from RIDA.

We extend our sincere gratitude to ReMi/Helvetas for entrusting RIDA with this significant study and for funding the project. Special thanks go to Ms. Madushika Lansakara and her team for their continuous support, constructive feedback on the research methodology and tools, and for sharing extensive reference materials that shaped the study. Their assistance in coordinating with key stakeholders in the study sites has been invaluable.

We also deeply appreciate the support of representatives from the Terre des Hommes Foundation (TDH), including Mr. Mohammad Ehsan Ul Islam Chowdhury and Ms. Sandhya Sitoula, as well as Ms. Juna Mathema from Blitz Media, whose insights and feedback were instrumental in refining the study and preparing this report.

Our heartfelt thanks go to local government representatives—mayors, deputy mayors, ward chairs, and focal persons from the Employment Service Centers in municipalities across Madhesh and Koshi Provinces—for their cooperation and coordination. We also acknowledge the ReMi focal persons at the municipal level for their critical role in local coordination efforts.

We are equally indebted to representatives of government agencies, including the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) and the Foreign Employment Board (FEB), for sharing their perspectives and policies, which greatly informed the study.

Additionally, the study benefited from insights shared by representatives of organizations involved in labour migration, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), Pravasi Nepali Coordination Committee (PNCC), National Network for Safe Migration (NNSM), Safer Migration (SaMi)/Helvetas, AMKAS, and Paurakhi. Their valuable contributions enriched the study's scope.

A special note of gratitude goes to the returnees and their families who participated in the study. Their willingness to share their experiences and insights was fundamental in making this study comprehensive and impactful.

Finally, we extend our deepest thanks to the dedicated research team, whose tremendous efforts in designing tools, collecting data, and preparing this report were instrumental to its success.

The Study Team:

Anita Ghimire, PhD
Jeevan Raj Lohani, PhD
Sunil Poudel
Sudarshan Rajbhandari
Manita Acharya
Sunita Bhattarai

Table of Content

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Acknowledgement | 8 |
| Abbreviations | 12 |
| Executive Summary | 13 |
| Terminologies | 15 |
| 1. Introduction | 17 |
| 1.1 Background | 17 |
| 1.2 Research Questions | 17 |
| 1.3 Conceptual Framework | 18 |
| 1.4 Research Methodology | 19 |
| 1.4.1 Study sites | 19 |
| 1.4.2. Research Methods & Tools | 19 |
| Focus Group Discussions | 19 |
| Mini workshop | 19 |
| Rivers of Life (ROL) Exercise | 20 |
| Imaginative Canvas | 20 |
| Body Mapping | 20 |
| Case Studies | 20 |
| In-depth interviews | 20 |
| Key Informant Interviews | 20 |
| Mini-Survey | 20 |
| SaMi Migrant profile data | 21 |
| 1.4.3 Limitations | 21 |
| 1.4.4 Data Analysis | 22 |
| 2. Study Results | 23 |
| 2.1 RQ 1. Who are the returning migrants? | 23 |
| 2.1.1 General profile | 23 |
| 2.1.2 What are the drivers of return? | 25 |
| 2.2 RQ 2. How do returnees define successful return? What are their aspirations, challenges, and opportunities? | 27 |
| 2.2.1 Perception of successful return | 28 |
| 2.3 RQ 3. What is the status of economic and social reintegration among returnees? | 31 |
| 2.3.1 Economic reintegration: | 32 |

| | |
|--|----|
| What contributed to successful economic reintegration: | 34 |
| Barriers to economic reintegration: | 35 |
| Return and skills | 36 |
| 2.3.2 Social Reintegration | 37 |
| Factors that supported social reintegration | 37 |
| 2.4 RQ 4. Lessons Learnt on Key Moments, Enablers, Challenges, Best Practices, and the Role of Government in Ensuring Successful Return and Reintegration | 39 |
| 2.4.1 Migration decision-making & processing phase | 39 |
| 2.4.2 While Abroad | 42 |
| 2.4.3 The Return | 45 |
| 2.4.4. Reintegration | 48 |
| 2.4.5 Remigration | 51 |
| 2.5 RQ 5. What are the most suitable outreach and communication strategies targeting returnees? What communication mechanism/theme could resonate with them? | 54 |
| 2.5.1 Information source and channel | 54 |
| 2.5.2 Outreach and communication strategies | 55 |
| 3. REMI-Specific Results | 60 |
| 3.1 RQ-6. Are REMI’s strategies, assumptions, and project indicators, as included in the logical framework, accurate? Are there any changes suggested based on the research? | 60 |
| 3.2 Building the Baseline: Project Indicators and their value during the stage | 61 |
| 4. Conclusion and Way Forward | 62 |
| References | 66 |
| Appendices | 68 |
| Appendix 1. Extended literature review | 68 |
| Appendix 2. Reintegration Policies Nepal | 69 |
| Recent Government Initiatives | 69 |
| Strategic Plans and Institutional Coordination | 70 |
| Regional and Global Cooperation | 70 |
| Appendix 3. Project’s Theory of Change | 70 |
| Appendix 4. Qualitative tools | 70 |
| 4.1 Focus group discussion | 71 |
| Guidelines for focus group discussion with the Returnee Migrant Workers | 71 |
| Guidelines for focus group discussion with the families of returnee migrant workers | 2 |
| 4.2 Mini Workshop | 5 |
| Guidelines for Mini Workshop with the Returnee Migrant Workers | 5 |
| | 10 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 4.3 Case studies | 12 |
| Guidelines for case study interviews with the Returnee Migrant Workers | 12 |
| 4.4 Key informant interviews (KIIs) | 15 |
| Guidelines for key informant interviews | 16 |
| 4.5 In-depth interviews | 17 |
| Guidelines for in-depth interviews with the Returnee Migrant Workers | 17 |
| Appendix 5. Suggested Communication messages per MTMs | 22 |

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| CoD | Country of Destination |
| CSOs | Civil society Organizations |
| DAG | Development Action Group |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DPs | Development Partners |
| EMIS | Education Management Information System |
| ESC | Employment Service Centres |
| FEMIS | Federal Emergency Management Information Systems |
| FGDs | Focus Group Discussions |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| GCC | Gulf Cooperation Council |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technologies |
| IDI | International Development Institute |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organization |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| KIIs | Key Informant Interview |
| LFP | Labour Force Participation |
| LGs | Local Government Service |
| MoLESS | Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security |
| MRCs | Migrant Resource Centres |
| NGOs | Nongovernmental Organization |
| OCMCs | One-stop Crisis Management Centres |
| PAO | Post-Arrival Orientation |
| PDO | Pre-Departure Orientation |
| PDOT | Pre-Departure Orientation Training |
| PEO | Pre-Employment Orientation |
| PMEP | Prime Minister Employment Program |
| PRO | Pre-Return Orientation |
| RMWs | Returnee Migrant Worker |
| SaMi | Safer Migration Project |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| SNA | Social Network Analysis |
| SSA | Social Security Administration |
| STATA | Statistics and Data |
| TCW | Temporary Contract Workers |
| UN | United Nations |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

Executive Summary

Return labor migration is a global phenomenon, with approximately one in four migration events classified as return migration (Azose& Raftery, 2019). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines "return" as the act or process of going back to one's point of departure, either across or within national boundaries, voluntarily or under compulsion (IOM, 2019). Nepal ranks as the 19th largest recipient of remittances globally and is third in terms of the share of remittances contributing to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Research on remittance utilization in Nepal shows two key outcomes: (i) increased household consumption, investment in capital assets, and spending on education among remittance-receiving families, and (ii) a significant reduction in poverty levels. According to the The Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security (MoLESS) the key reasons for the return of the migrant workers are the end of contract or layoffs, childbirth or delivery, legal amnesty, family reunification and visa expiration. Although the Government of Nepal has begun collecting data on returning migrants, there remains a limited understanding of their productivity upon return and the challenges they face during social and economic reintegration.

Helvetas Nepal's Return Migration (ReMi) Project aims to boost the economic productivity and social reintegration of returnee while addressing knowledge gaps on migration outcomes. The initiative seeks to explore key drivers behind migration, reintegration, and remigration decisions through insights from migrants, returnee, and their families, focusing on their expectations and experiences across migration stages. To achieve its goal of helping returnee re-establish themselves in Nepal and actively engage in social, cultural, economic, and political life, ReMi recognizes the need to go beyond quantitative data on their foreign employment. A deeper understanding of returnee and their families is essential to better support their needs for economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being.

The mixed method research had three key objectives: validating project's strategies and assumptions and provide feedback to the existing theory of change or logical framework in identifying suitable project strategies/interventions and outcome indicators, identifying approaches and methods effective to reach out to the Returnee Migrant Workers (RMWs), communicate/pass messages to RMWs, and provide them the support they need or would most help them in their social and economic reintegration process, and establishing baseline to enable the project to track the progress and/or evaluate the outcomes. The study collected data from eight municipalities in Koshi and Madhesh Province and collected qualitative and quantitative data from the returnee migrant workers, their families and the key stakeholders including government line agencies, civil society organizations and the development partners.

The study deployed standard analytical techniques to compile and interpret data from multiple sources. A literature review was conducted to synthesize existing research and triangulate the findings with data from fieldwork. The tools used for primary data collection focus group discussion, mini workshop, rivers of life (ROL) exercise, imaginative canvas, body mapping case studies, in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and mini survey. The study also used secondary data, especially the migrant profile data acquired by the local government in five provinces with technical support from the Safer Migration project. The qualitative data was analysed using MAXQDA following the combination of inductive and deductive analytical approach. Quantitative data were cleaned and analysed in MS Excel and STATA, with a focus on descriptive statistics.

The study discusses reasons for migration, key drivers behind their return, how returnees define successful return and their aspirations, challenges, and opportunities as well as people's perception of reintegration. We found that the return outcomes are affected by the entire migration experience. There are 12 moments that matter in the entire migration journey that shape up the return experience for a returnee across five different phases. The return migration journey involves several moments that migrants go through, broadly divided into five phases: (i) Phase - I: migration decision and process, (ii) Phase - II. While abroad, (iii) Phase-III. The Return, (iv) Phase - IV: Reintegration, and (v) Phase - V: Remigration, the cycle of trial and error. The key moments include: (1) taking the decision to migrate, (2) finding an agent and processing migration, (3) financing the cost

of migration, (4) onboarding to work and managing expectations, (5) continuing work while adjusting to job conditions, (6) managing family relations while abroad, (7) managing leave and round trip, (8) troubleshooting at work, (9) return decision, (10) back home: facing the family, (11) time between return and local job/income, and (12) the state of indecisiveness: migrate again vs stay back. The study finds that successful return experience involves careful planning and execution of the migration goals with support from family, government, and migration network. The key challenges identified were related to economic reintegration, social reintegration, and policy gaps. Limited employment opportunities and financial instability were highlighted as significant barriers to successful reintegration. Many returnees face stigma and challenges in re-establishing community ties, often compounded by inadequate mental health support. Inconsistent implementation of reintegration policies and lack of coordination between government agencies were frequently cited issues.

Based on the study findings, constructive suggestions and recommendations attributed to various stakeholders such as federal government, provincial government and local government and other stakeholders have been provided to make the return migration experience positive. The success lies in supporting migrants navigate through the 12 moments that matter in maximizing certainty, trust and support over uncertainty and mistrust.

Terminologies

Return: The movement of a person going from a host country back to a country of origin, country of nationality, or usual residence, usually after spending a significant period in the host country, whether voluntary or forced, assisted or spontaneous.¹

Returnee: A person going from a host country back to a country of origin, country of nationality or habitual residence usually after spending a significant period of time in the host country whether voluntary or forced, assisted or spontaneous (European Migration Network, 2011)² Throughout this report and unless stated otherwise “returnee” are Nepali migrant workers who have returned from foreign employment.

Reintegration: Reintegration is generally understood as a multidimensional process enabling individuals to re-establish the economic, social and psychosocial relationships needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity and achieve inclusion in civic life³.

Sustainable reintegration: In the context of international return migration, reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with possible (re)migration drivers.⁴

Employment Service Centres (ESCs): The ESCs is a service centre established in the municipalities and rural municipalities in Nepal. Its main objective is to provide employment promotion services, such as job matching and counselling, provide referral services, coordinate the provision of temporary employment programmes and any other services addressing the special needs of returnee.⁵

Pre-Employment Orientation (PEO): This is given before the prospective migrant makes a final decision to go for foreign employment. It equips prospective Temporary Contractual Workers (TCWs) with accurate and tailored information to enable them to make an informed decision on whether foreign employment is a realistic and adequate option.

Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO): This is provided when the prospective worker made a final decision to go abroad, invested in the process and has acquired a visa and any other legal documents required for migration. This is an orientation given to the migrant worker before the departure. The contents in these modules support outgoing workers in preparing for their journey, adjustment period, life, and work in the Country of Destination (CoD) along with providing guidance on ways to get access to support channels and grievance mechanisms.

Post-Arrival Orientation (PAO): This is given within a few days of arrival in the CoD. It is an orientation module that provides migrant workers who have recently reached the destination country with further information regarding local labour laws, socio-cultural norms and practices, workplace expectations and good conduct.

Pre- Return Orientation (PRO): This is given when the migrant worker is making decision to return to his/her country of origin. It helps prepare returning migrant workers before leaving the country of destination, with

¹Return. European Commission. Retrieved December 23, 2024, from https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/return_en

²European Migration Network.2011. Programs and Strategies in the EU Member States fostering Assisted Return to and Reintegration in Third Countries, 2011

³Sironi, A. C. Bauloz and M. Emmanuel (eds.), 2019. Glossary on Migration. International Migration Law, No. 34. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.

⁴Sironi, A. C. Bauloz and M. Emmanuel (eds.), 2019. Glossary on Migration. International Migration Law, No. 34. International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva.

⁵ For definition of PEO, PDO, PAO and PRO please refer to the following:

[https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl2616/files/documents/CIOP%20Infosheet.pdf#:~:text=Pre%2DEmployment%20Orientation%20\(PEO\)%3A,on%20safe%20and%20ethical%20recruitment.](https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl2616/files/documents/CIOP%20Infosheet.pdf#:~:text=Pre%2DEmployment%20Orientation%20(PEO)%3A,on%20safe%20and%20ethical%20recruitment.)

useful information to support their access to social protection schemes, skills development opportunities and related resources.

Self-employment: Self-employment is a kind of work where the remuneration is directly dependent on the profits from the goods or services produced. It includes people who own and operate unincorporated businesses, as well as members of producers' cooperatives.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Return labor migration is a global phenomenon, with approximately one in four migration events classified as return migration (Azose& Raftery, 2019). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) defines "return" as the act or process of going back to one's point of departure, either across or within national boundaries, voluntarily or under compulsion (IOM, 2019). Return migration takes several forms: (i) voluntary return, where individuals willingly go back with the intention of reintegrating and contributing to the economy of their home country; (ii) retirement return, where migrants return after accumulating savings to secure lifelong financial stability for their families, though in some cases, they may be forced to return after reaching the end of their economically active years; (iii) failed migration, where migrants, disillusioned by unmet expectations, return home shortly after arriving in the host country (Girma, 2017; Duleep, 1994; Ward, 2017); and (iv) deportation, where individuals are forced to return due to legal violations, health conditions, or failure to meet residency requirements (Paoletti et al., 2014; Davies et al., 2011). For labour migrants governed by bilateral agreements, such as those in Nepal, return is often inevitable once the employment contract concludes (Ilahi, 1999).

Nepal ranks as the 19th largest recipient of remittances globally and is third in terms of the share of remittances contributing to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Research on remittance utilization in Nepal shows two key outcomes: (i) increased household consumption, investment in capital assets, and spending on education among remittance-receiving families, and (ii) a significant reduction in poverty levels (Shrestha, 2017; Thapa & Acharya, 2017; Bohra-Mishra, 2013; Wagle & Devkota, 2018). Labour migration from Nepal also reveals distinct demographic trends: 88 percent of migrants are men, 77 percent are aged between 15-34 years, and 90 percent migrate to labour-destination regions such as India, the Middle East, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, particularly Malaysia (Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2011).

The Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security (MoLESS) reports that Nepal had 203,934 returnees in 2020/21, followed by 470,978 in 2021/22. The main reasons for return included the end of contract or layoffs (50.3%), childbirth or delivery (11.2%), legal amnesty where migrants choose to return (6.6%), family reunification (3.1%), and visa expiration (2.7%). However, the reasons for the return of 31.6 percent of migrants remain unknown (MoLESS& IOM, 2021). Although the Government of Nepal (GoN) has begun collecting data on returning migrants, there remains a limited understanding of their productivity upon return and the challenges they face during social and economic reintegration.

Helvetas Nepal's Reintegration of Returnee Migration workers (ReMi) Project aims to boost the economic productivity and social reintegration of returnees while addressing knowledge gaps on migration outcomes. The initiative seeks to explore key drivers behind migration, reintegration, and remigration decisions through insights from migrants, returnee, and their families, focusing on their expectations and experiences across migration stages. To achieve its goal of helping returnees re-establish themselves in Nepal and actively engage in social, cultural, economic, and political life, ReMi recognizes the need to go beyond quantitative data on their foreign employment. A deeper understanding of returnees and their families is essential to better support their needs for economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being.

1.2 Research Questions

The research had three fold objectives: (i) validate project's strategies and assumptions and provide feedback to the existing theory of change or logical framework in identifying suitable project strategies/interventions and outcome indicators, (ii) identify approaches and methods effective to reach out to the returnees, communicate/pass messages to returnees, and provide them the support they need or would most help them in their social and economic reintegration process, and (iii) establish baseline to enable the project to track the progress and/or evaluate the outcomes. The following were the research questions for this study:

- RQ1. Who are the returnee migrants?

- RQ2. How do returning migrants define successful return? What are their aspirations, challenges, and opportunities? Is that different for male and female returning migrants?
- RQ3. What is the status of social and economic reintegration of returning migrants? What factors contribute to the enabling environment for reintegration?
- RQ4. What are the key moments in the return process? What are the interests, motivations, and incentives for return/reintegration?
- RQ5. What are the most suitable outreach and communication strategies targeting returnees? What communication mechanism/theme could resonate with them?
- RQ6. Are ReMi's strategies, assumptions, and project indicators, as included in the logical framework, accurate? Are there any changes suggested based on the research?

1.3 Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework applied for the research explores the personas of returning migrants, their return profiles, and how migrants navigate key moments during the migration-return-reintegration cycle. It identifies critical decision points, examines decision pathways that lead to varying levels of success, and maps reintegration outcomes across a spectrum of failure to success. The framework also highlights how different elements of reintegration pathways and various influencing factors shape the reintegration process.

Persona: A persona refers to a set of shared personal characteristics that help identify and target individuals for appropriate support. These include socio-economic attributes such as education, training, and prior work experience, along with socio-emotional traits. Personas also capture insights into migrants' aspirations, the challenges they foresee, and the opportunities they seek upon return.

Return Profile: In this study, the persona is closely tied to the return profile, which includes the reasons for returning, the level of equity or capital accumulated by the migrant, and the migrant's potential or desire to migrate again.

Moments that Matter: Throughout the migration-return-reintegration cycle, migrants experience pivotal moments that significantly shape their reintegration outcomes. These moments could include personal milestones, such as the birth of a child prompting the decision to return, or external triggers, like the loss of a friend or hearing a story that influences return decisions. Similarly, an increase in salary may lead to an extended migration period. Identifying these critical moments is essential, as they can inform timely support, communication, and guidance that improve reintegration outcomes.

Decision Pathways: Migrants face critical decisions at various phases of their migration cycle, each of which influences their return and reintegration. Key decision points may align with or exist independently of the moments that matter. The framework seeks to identify these decision points, examine the available options, understand common choices and their rationale, and connect them to reintegration outcomes where applicable.

Reintegration Outcomes: While existing literature defines success in terms of sustained income, capital accumulation, or social integration, little is known about how returning migrants themselves perceive success and failure or what outcomes exist between these two extremes. This study aims to map the full range of reintegration outcomes identified by migrants and their families. These insights will help REMI provide targeted support that optimizes reintegration outcomes by aligning them with the migrants' personas, critical moments, and decision pathways.

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4.1 Study sites

The study was conducted in eight local governments across Koshi and Madhesh Provinces. The districts were purposefully selected to include ReMi intervention areas, with specific sites chosen based on high migration rates, diverse geographical features (plains and hilly regions, rural and urban settings), and a mix of ethnic groups. In Koshi Province, the study was conducted in Diktel, Rupakot, Majhuwagadi Municipality, Katari Municipality, Ramdhuni Municipality, and Kerabari Rural Municipality. In Madhesh Province, the study was conducted in Janaknandini Rural Municipality, Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City, Mirchaiya Municipality, and Kshreshwor Municipality.

1.4.2. Research Methods & Tools

The study employed a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative method consisted of primary data from a mini survey with returnees and data from municipal migration profile. The primary data collected in the study consisted of 260 samples (245 men and 15 women) collected in the year 2023. The migration profile data was collected by selected local government bodies in Bagmati, Gandaki, Koshi, Lumbini, and Madhesh province. This sample consisted of 95,253 current migrants and 41,659 returnees. The survey data was collected for the preparation of municipal migration profiles by the Local Government services (LGs), with technical support from the Safer Migration Program (SaMi).⁶ It was collected over a span of three years, from November 2020 to December 2023.

Qualitative leg of the study consisted of Focus Group Discussions (10), Case studies (16), In-depth interviews (16), mini workshops (8) with returnees and their family members and key informant interviews (32) at the federal, provincial, and local level. Below we summarize the tools. Details of the tools and the process can be found in Annex 1.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with returnees and families of migrants. Each FGD included 6-8 participants from homogeneous backgrounds and lasted up to 90 minutes. Facilitators guided the discussions using a structured discussion guide, with note-takers assisting in capturing key points. FGDs with families and migrants were structured around four key thematic areas to provide a comprehensive understanding of migration and return experiences. These areas were:

- General Information about Livelihoods and Migration within the Community
- Specific Questions Related to the Return Process
- Discussions on Support and Support Structures (using Social Network Hexagon Tool)
- Recommendations for Reintegration

These thematic areas provided a holistic view of the migration and return cycle, emphasizing both individual and community-level dynamics.

Mini workshop

Eight mini-workshops (6 with male returnees and 2 with female returnees) were conducted, one in each province. Initially, each mini-workshop was planned to include 8–10 participants. However, due to the difficulty in gathering female returnees in one location as mentioned above in case of FGDs, the team adapted

⁶Safer Migration (SaMi) Programme is a collaborative initiative between the governments of Nepal and Switzerland, aimed at promoting safer migration practices. The program is jointly implemented by federal, provincial, and local governments in Nepal, with technical assistance provided by Helvetas Nepal on behalf of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). <https://www.sami.org.np/index>

by conducting smaller group sessions with 2–4 female participants in different places. To maintain coverage, 3–4 such smaller group sessions were combined and treated as one mini-workshop. The Mini workshops lasted 2.5-3 hours and consisted of the following participatory activities.

Rivers of Life (ROL) Exercise

Participants were asked to draw a "river of life," illustrating key phases from migration to reintegration. The 'W' model by Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) was referenced to identify critical phases. In each phase, participants reflected on significant moments, crucial decisions, and reintegration outcomes.

Imaginative Canvas

Imaginative canvas consisted of an inductive drawing exercise where participants were encouraged to depict anything representing the challenges they faced and the opportunities they foresaw in the future.

Body Mapping

In this exercise, participants were asked to draw and bring to life a returnee migrant and discuss the experience of returnees in depth through mapping emotions and thoughts onto different body parts. Participants reflected on what made them happy or sad (heart), what preoccupied their thoughts (head), and how they felt others perceived them (ears, eyes), what they talked about with others and what and how others talked to them (mouth), where they went to (legs) and what they did (hands).

Case Studies

16 Case studies (10 male and 6 female) were compiled through in-depth interviews. Selected returnees and their families participated in 60-minute interviews with positive outliers (successful reintegration) and negative outliers (less successful reintegration). Participants were chosen purposively using snowballing from other participants or support from ReMi local facilitators. The interviews, guided by a discussion framework, discussed what led to successful integration for the positive outliers and what led to challenges in integration in case of the negative outliers.

In-depth interviews

A total of 16 in-depth interviews (12 male and 4 female) were conducted with returnees using a semi-structured checklist. These interviews explored various aspects of the returnee experience, including their aspirations for migration, pivotal moments that influenced their decision to return, their experiences of returning, their aspirations and expectations for reintegration, and their interactions with available support structures and services.

Key Informant Interviews

A total of 23 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with stakeholders at the federal (8), and local level (15). List of KIIs is given in Annex 2. Key informants were purposefully selected from a diverse range of relevant groups, including local government officials, institutions working on migration and local employment, Employment Service Centres, officials of employment service centres, local social and political leaders, women's rights workers, employers, business partners, and non-profit organizations involved in the reintegration process. Each interview lasted 30–45 minutes and focused on understanding the external environments and support mechanisms available to returnees.

Mini-Survey

A mini survey was administered to 260 returnees (245 male and 15 female) across 20 local governments. The sample size was calculated using a 95% confidence level and a 5-unit confidence interval. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered by trained enumerators, combining closed and open-ended questions. Each survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Throughout the report, this data when discussed separately has been referred to as the ReMi survey.

SaMi Migrant profile data

As discussed earlier this survey was conducted by the local government in 5 provinces with technical support from the Safer Migration project to make migrant profiles in the local government units. The total sample size was 95,253 current migrants and 41,659 returnees. Among the current migrants, 89% were men, while among the returnees, only 4% were women. The data captured a range of information, including the general profile of migrants, frequency of migration, challenges faced, marital status, and livelihoods, among other aspects. When data points align perfectly, such as when both the studies have the same response indicators, the study used data from 11,960 returning migrant workers from Koshi and Madhesh province that were relevant to the ReMi project. In other cases, it has referred to the SaMi data for validating or when there are contrasts between this data and the Mini Survey (ReMi data) conducted specifically for this study. Table 1 gives further details of the research design and sample size.

Table 1: Research Design for the qualitative study

| Tools | Type of participants | Number of activities | Per LG frequency | Remarks |
|-------------------------------|---|--|------------------|--|
| Focus group discussion (FGDs) | Returnees | 10 (7male and 3 female) | 1 in each LG | 6-8 participants per FGD. Conducted separately with men and women. 50 % were caste/ethnic minority |
| | Families of returnees | 8 (1 male- spouse of migrants, 7 female) | 1 | 6 -8 participants per event, 50% were ethnic minority |
| Mini Workshop | Returnees | 8 (6 male, and 2 female) | 1 | 8-10 participant per group |
| Key-informant interviews | 23 | | | 8 at Federal Level 15 at local level |
| Case study | 1 successful reintegration case and 1 challenging reintegration | 8 positive and 8 negative outlier | 2 per LG | 10 male and 6 female |
| In-depth interviews | Returnees | 16 | 2 per LG | 12 male and 4 female |
| Mini Survey | Returnees | 260 | 30 per LG | 30 from each LG, 245 male and 15 female |

1.4.3 Limitations

Despite the availability of detailed information on returnees through ReMi, it was challenging to locate the required number of returnees in a single location. This was particularly true for female returnees, who were often dispersed across the district. Adding to the complexity, many returnees (both male and female) were not residing in their villages of origin or frequently moved between their places of origin and nearby cities. Originally, equal number of interviews were planned with male and female returnees. However, it was impossible to find female returnees in Madhesh Province. This might be due to very less migration of women from Madhesh province. Hence, 2 FGDs with female returnees were conducted in Kathmandu. Similarly, while the study initially planned to conduct an equal number of FGDs with both male and female family members, only one FGD with male family members was conducted due to lack of participants. This discussion involved husbands of female migrants. We had expected that the participants would be reluctant to discuss their experience, but we found that they were quite forthcoming about sharing their experience and perception around return and their experience of re-integration.

Following were other limitations of the study:

- a) The study focuses exclusively on labor migrants who pursued foreign employment as contractual workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and countries of SouthEast Asia.
- b) As detailed earlier in the report, challenges in accessing certain participant groups have influenced the composition of the data:
 - Returnees: The data for returnees is predominantly drawn from male participants due to limited access to female returnees.
 - Family Members: Conversely, the data for family members is primarily based on responses from female participants, such as spouses or mothers of migrants. This is attributed to the limited access to male family members, likely due to their work commitments or social dynamics.
- c) The study incorporates data from two distinct surveys: the Migrant Profile Survey by SaMi and the Mini Survey. While data from both surveys have been utilized when the questions overlapped, readers are encouraged to note the following distinctions:
 - Purpose: The Migrant Profile Survey was conducted earlier for a purpose different from this study. The Mini Survey, on the other hand, was specifically designed and executed for this study. The response choices were different in the two datasets even when some of the questions are similar.
 - Timeline: The Migrant Profile Survey data predates the Mini Survey data, reflecting potentially different contexts and conditions during the time of data collection.
 - Data Integration: Due to the differences in purpose and timing, the two datasets cannot always be seamlessly merged. While overlap in questions has allowed for some comparative analysis, not all variables or data points align perfectly.

Whenever data from the Migrant Profile Survey is discussed separately, it is explicitly referred to as SaMi migration profile survey data, ensuring clarity and transparency for readers. Similarly, when the data from the Mini survey is discussed separately, it is referred to as data from the ReMi survey.

1.4.4 Data Analysis

The study employed standard analytical techniques to compile and interpret data from multiple sources. A literature review was conducted to synthesize existing research and triangulate the findings with data from fieldwork. This approach ensured that insights from both primary and secondary sources were aligned and validated.

In case of qualitative data, all individual interviews and FGDs were recorded with consent of the participants. The recorded interviews were transcribed and translated. For Mini workshops which were longer and included activities where participants were dispersed in different parts of the room for certain activities, detailed notes were taken. For qualitative analysis, a combination of inductive and deductive approaches was applied. Deductive themes were derived from research questions and interview or FGD guidelines, serving as initial codes for the data. Inductive themes, emerging organically from participants' responses, were also identified to refine the coding framework. The data was coded using MAXQDA. Coded data was analysed thematically while also looking for cross cutting emerging findings.

Quantitative data from the mini-survey and perceptual mapping were cleaned and analysed in MS Excel and STATA, with a focus on descriptive statistics. The survey data were also used to develop a predictive model for reintegration outcomes based on key variables, such as persona, return profile, decision pathways, and significant life moments. The findings from quantitative and qualitative analyses were triangulated to draw robust conclusions about the reintegration experiences of returnees.

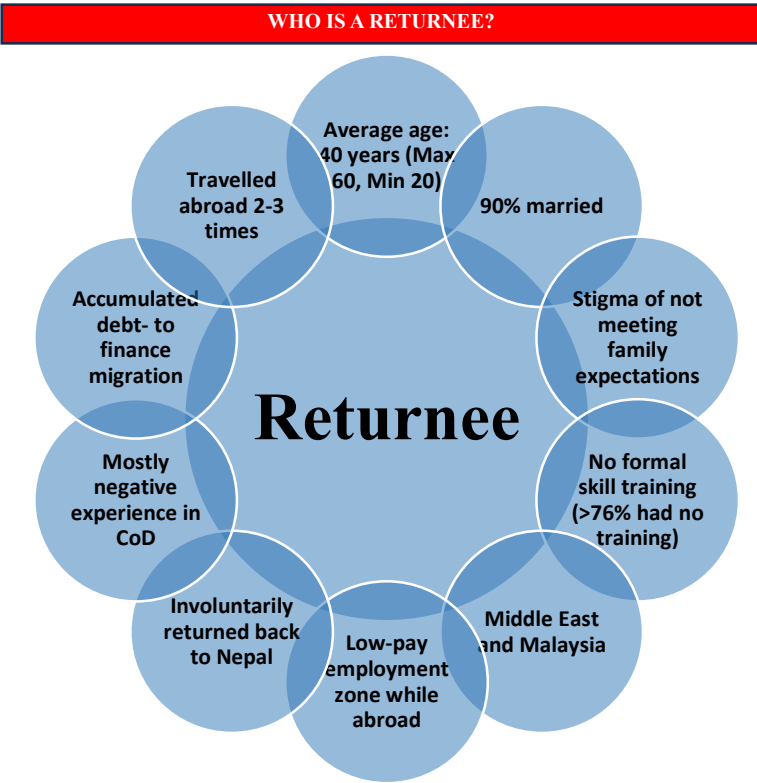
2. Study Results

We have organized the study results in line with the research questions.

2.1 RQ 1. Who are the returning migrants?

2.1.1 General profile

According to the demographic profile of migrants, the individuals who return are identical to those who initially migrate for labor opportunities (Lohani, 2021). There are no differences in age, sex, or geographic origin between those who leave and those who return.



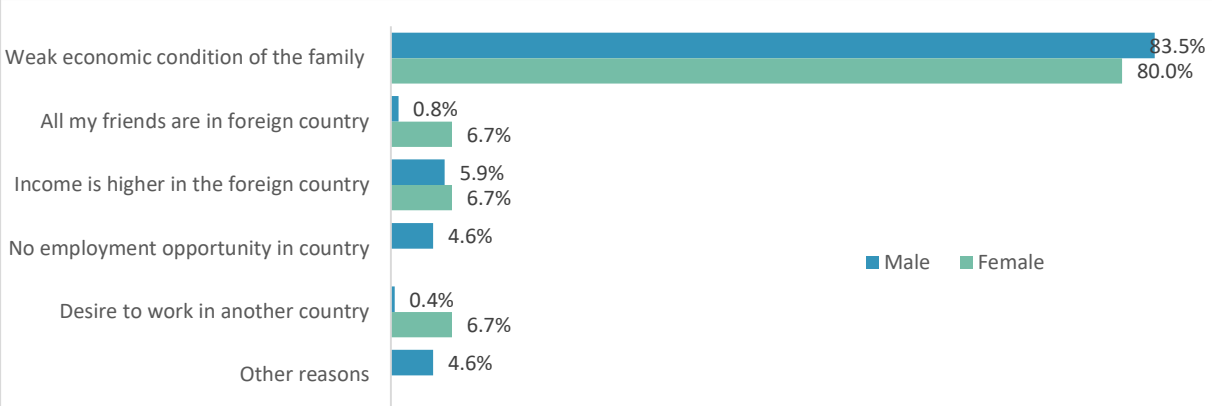
This consistency underscores the gendered nature of migration patterns in Nepal, where males predominantly migrate for work, leaving women and other family members to manage household responsibilities in their absence. There is also a strong ethnic dimension in female migration. As also discussed in section 1.4.2, it was impossible to find female migrants from the Madhesi ethnic group. This reflects broader socio-cultural dynamics, as women from the Hill region are generally more empowered to pursue work abroad despite risks, compared to those from the Terai region, where traditional gender norms restrict mobility" (UN Women, 2023; ICIMOD, UNEP and UN Women, 2021). The largest proportion of returnees are between 30-40 years of age in both ReMi and SaMi data.

In terms of ethnicity, in both the quantitative datasets, the largest proportion of migrants were from Janajati groups. In the SaMi survey data, Janajati make 51.2% of the total and in the ReMi mini survey, Janajatis make 49% of the total returnees.

Returnees were largely married (in the home country). 94% of the male respondents and 86.7% female respondents were married. In the ReMi survey, 6% of male respondents had never married, and % were single. This resonates with data from the SaMi Migrant Profile survey where 5.5% male were unmarried and 0.4% of male and 13.3% female were divorced or living separately.

Below we share other findings on the profile of returnees from the ReMi survey. While weak economic conditions of the family were common causes of migration for both male and female returnees, having friends in the foreign country was the second important driver for females (7%) while this reason was not significant for males (only 0.8%). Similarly, desire to work in another country comes as a stronger driver of migration for females compared to males (7% female vs 0.4% of male).

Chart 1. Reasons for foreign labor migration



The ReMi survey asked participants about the number of children. About 13.1% (33) of returnees had no children, with families averaging 3 children. The largest family size recorded was 21 members⁷, while the smallest was 2, with the average family size being 6 members. The ReMi survey also asked questions on time since return and the number of years spent in foreign employment. Migration duration varied, with 58.7% of migrants returning within the last six years (after 2018) and 41.3% returning earlier. On average, they spent 8 years abroad, with some staying less than a year and others up to 30 years. The number of years spent abroad has a gendered trend; while none of the female returnees had stayed less than a year abroad, 3.4% of males stayed below a year. However, 13% female had returned after a year compared to only 3% male. It suggests that females spend much less time abroad compared to male. The highest number of years female returnees had spent abroad was 14 years while male returnees spent up to 30 years in foreign employment.

There is a strong gender difference in the proportion of returnees who had never been to school- the largest proportion of females had never been to school (27%) while only 10% male returnees had never been to school. The largest proportion of male returnees had completed secondary education: 27.0% male (same for female returnees as well). 31.6% of male and 13.3% of female returnees had not completed secondary education, and 10.5% of the male and 13.3% of female returnees had completed undergraduate education.

The largest proportion of both male and female (40.5% of the male and 46.7% of the female) were engaged in agriculture before they took on foreign employment. However, a significant proportion of female returnees shared they were not in any profession before migration (27%) compared to male (3%). Besides agriculture, other occupations that female migrants were commonly engaged in prior to migration were trade and repair service and education (7% for both) while for male it was construction and education (9% for both) and personal business (3%). None of the females were engaged in business activities before migration while upon return 20% of females started their own business (further discussion in section 2.3).

⁷ Family members includes depended parents, siblings and children who stay together and share the same kitchen.

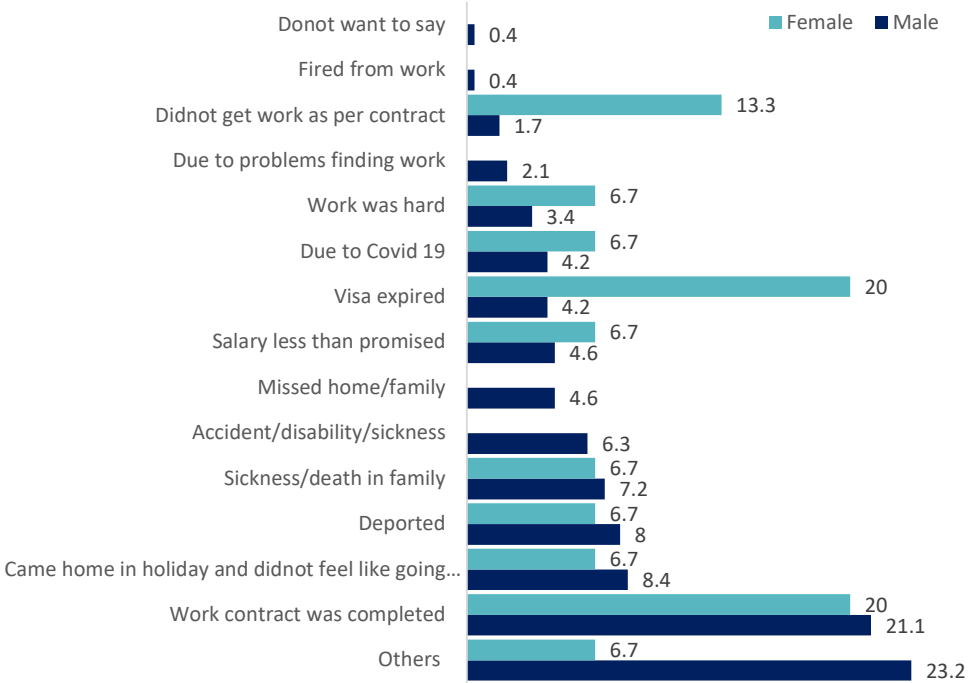
89% of the male returnees and 73.3% of the female returnees owned land. Before migration, 54% of the male and 53.3% of the female returnees had monthly family incomes below NPR 10,000, while 33.3% of the male and 40% of the female returnees earned between NPR 10,000 and 20,000. The study also finds that females with higher income brackets are likely to migrate more than male; for example, 7% of females earned between 40-50 thousand NRs before migration compared to 4% of male. However, 2% of male returnees earned above 50 thousand NRs before migration.

2.1.2 What are the drivers of return?

As also highlighted in other studies (for example, Mixed Migration Centre, 2024; Wickramasekara, 2019), the study finds that the majority of return decisions were influenced by factors that were related to the employment or the destination country and were beyond the control of the migrants. End of contract was the most common reason for return followed by deportation and not feeling like returning to the employer after coming back on a holiday. Some reasons are gendered as well;

while 13% of female returnees returned when they did not get work as per contract, male returnees seem to have stayed on to complete their contract (only 2% returned due to the reason). Similarly, 7% of female returnees had returned because they found the work hard while only 3% male had returned for that reasons indicating they might have endured the working conditions. 5% of male returnees returned because they missed home while none of the female respondents gave this as the only reason for return. This might point to the challenging circumstances they have back home that forces them to resist emotional drivers of return. 20% of female returnees returned upon expiration of visas, only 4% male returnees had returned for that reason. These reasons also come commonly in the qualitative data with migrants stating that they returned against their desire to continue working.

Chart 2: Reasons for return (ReMi Survey)



5% of male returnees returned because they missed home while none of the female respondents gave this as the only reason for return. This might point to the challenging circumstances they have back home that forces them to resist emotional drivers of return. 20% of female returnees returned upon expiration of visas, only 4% male returnees had returned for that reason. These reasons also come commonly in the qualitative data with migrants stating that they returned against their desire to continue working.

"I was deported after my visa expired, even though I still wanted to work." (FGD, Men returnees, Udayapur)

Discrepancy between actual and promised salary was the fourth most common reason for return in the ReMi survey; 8% of respondents returned due to discrepancy in salary. The SaMi migration profile data shows that discrepancy between promised salary comes strongly for Madhesh province while was not reported for Koshi Province.

8% of the male and 7% of the female migrants had stayed back after holidays because they did not feel like returning to the employer. This is also the third most common reason for returning. Other reasons for return include accidents, 6% of the male returning because of sickness or disability- self, 7% of the male and 7% of the female returning because of sickness or death in the family.

Qualitative data indicates that a combination of factors, both at home and at the workplace, influence migrants to either extend their stay in the destination or make a hasty return. While some of these factors appear tangible at first glance, the way they were expressed suggests they are often intertwined with emotional aspects, such as trust, and a sense of fairness, justice, and dignity.

"The employers would throw away my food while I was eating. I couldn't take it anymore, so I came back." (FGD, Women returnee, Sunsari).

Migrants have stayed longer in the destination when they have had the prospects of a stable job, such as being employed directly by a fixed company rather than by outsourcing firms, and when they found the terms of work acceptable, even if not always entirely fair. Factors such as acceptable pay (even if not fair) and favorable, adaptable working conditions, timely leave had also contributed to their decision to stay.

"I worked with the same employer for years because I could visit my family and return without trouble." (FGD, Men returnee, Khotang).

Additionally, females often referred to treatment by employers as a factor for return or staying longer. Female migrants who stayed for a longer time shared they did it because they found the employers to be fair and cherished small gestures of kindness from the employer reinforcing emotional elements in return decisions such as below:

"I used to eat with my hand sitting in the kitchen. Madam and sir used to eat outside. They used to give me the same food they ate. If they bought something to eat, they always shared it with us. They didn't hide anything. If they went somewhere, they would also take us. They kept us well so I stayed there for 5 years then I returned after my passport expired." (IDI, Woman returnee, Siraha)

For those who returned before their contract, the contrast was true. They often shared that they were not given agreed payment and other facilities by the employers which led to their return even if the work was easy. At the home front, those with strong family relationships and a clear sense of shared financial goals stay longer and retire voluntarily, often after reaching their 40s.

"I stayed abroad till my children's education was complete, then decided to retire." (IDI, Man returnee, Dhanusha)

Other important personal factors that supported longer stays were a sense of support derived from social networks. The study finds that those who stayed abroad for extended periods had often integrated socially in the destination country, developing social circles. Being able to bring immediate or extended family members with them played a significant role in staying longer in the destination.

"I stayed longer because my brother joined me, and we started working together." (IDI, Man returnee, Dhanusha)

In contrast, poor-paying jobs, difficult working conditions, or a lack of trust in the employer, force migrants to return earlier than planned. Employers denying leave to visit home and not paying wages seems to have strong influence in return before the contract ends.

"The pay was not what I was promised, and when I wanted to visit home, the employer refused." (IDI, Man returnee, Siraha)

Personal or health of the family comes as a strong reason for early return. Largely migrants discussed physical health when they were discussing their own health as reasons for early return. The study indicates that health issues are quite strong among migrants; migrants discussed health challenges due to the working and living conditions that prompted them to return in the first place but also impacted their life after return. Even

migrants for whom health was not the most pressing concern for return faced health issues that were related to their work and non-work life in the destination.

"Health problems started affecting my work, and I had no choice but to come back." (IDI, Woman, returnee, Morang)

In general, male migrants have stayed longer in the country of destination (CoD) and returned at an older age. In contrast, female migrants stayed for shorter periods and returned at younger ages. This was also corroborated in FGD with female returnee who often shared the following:

"Men who leave often don't return." (FGD, Women returnee, Morang)

In qualitative interviews, female returnees attached strong sentiments to the negative impact of their migration on children and it was a non-negotiable factor for return.

"I decided to go to work in another person's country for them (children), no? I thought I will help them and they will not have to go through the same difficulties I have had. But my daughter is interested in other bad things. My son does not want to study. So, I returned" (IDI, Woman returnee, Sunsari)

In the case of male returnees, while two respondents mentioned feeling estranged from their children, they did not identify this as a primary factor influencing their decision to return. When children are the reason for returning, male returnees have often done so to retire after their children have completed their education, as illustrated in the quotes in earlier paragraphs of this section. This is not particularly surprising given the gendered roles in family management, where women are traditionally held responsible for the non-economic aspects of raising children, while men are expected to focus on fulfilling the family's economic needs.

Poor working conditions such as long hours of work, forced labor such as having to work for multiple families without pay, workplace violence such as physical violence including from employer's children comes more commonly as push factors for women's return than for men. This might be because female migrants were largely working as domestic workers where poor working conditions are more prevalent.

"I suffered. I worked for a family with nine children. The parents went to work, leaving me with the children, who continuously beat me." (FGD, Women returnee, Sunsari)

Female returnees also discussed language barriers and lack of skills compounding their struggles and forcing them to take return decisions more often than males. This is especially for those employed as domestic workers.

While this did not come up as the main reasons for return, respondents shared those challenges in accessing the embassy due to lack of knowledge about where it is, distance to the embassy, lack of knowledge on the procedure, lack of confidence to approach the embassy has also meant that the returnees did not explore if they could have stayed full term in the destination.

2.2 RQ 2. How do returnees define successful return? What are their aspirations, challenges, and opportunities?

The return events were evaluated per cycle more than the accumulated experience. And migrants mostly referred only to their last return. In the ReMi survey, we also asked migrants to rate their return migration as successful or unsuccessful. A large majority of returnees (63%) consider their return migration experience to be either very successful or successful⁸. 30% returnees experience their return not so successful, and 7% find it either bad or very bad in the ReMi survey. However, most migrants shared that they last experience in the

⁸ Return was considered successful if the net income is more than what they spent for migration.

destination was not positive- includes underpayment, wage theft, bad treatment by employers, and supervisors among others.

2.2.1 Perception of successful return

Perception of successful return primarily involves economic gains except in cases where migrants succeeded in overcoming life-threatening situations in the destination. Successful return was often associated with a combination of comfortable migration experience, accumulated savings, accumulated capital such as land and house, and ability to invest in children's education.

"People expect you to return with a lot of money, and when you don't, they treat you like a failure." (IDI, Women returnee, Siraha)

The study finds that the perception of success, or lack thereof, typically involves the following situations:

Positive sum: This involves situations where returnees can bring in accumulated savings enough to start ventures and visibly improve economic well-being of the family as shown in the quote below:

"I've had both successful and failed returns. The time I saved enough to buy land felt like a success." (IDI, Woman returnee, Siraha)

Positive but inadequate sum: This involves cases whereas shown in the quote below, the amount saved is too little to reinvest meaningfully.

"I saved a little money, but it wasn't enough to open a shop or buy land. Now I'm struggling to figure out what to do next." (FGD, Women returnee, Sunsari)

Negative sum: In the study, this involved returns where migrants came back in debt or losses as shown by the following below.

"I had to sell my farmland to repay the debt from my migration. I came back with nothing but loans." (IDI, Man returnee, Dhanusha)

Zero sum: This situation, as shown in the quote below, involves cases where returnees do not have outstanding debts but also come back with no savings after covering migration expenses and family needs

"I sent money every month to support my family, but now I'm back with nothing. It feels like I worked for nothing." (IDI, Man returnee, Khotang)

The adverse situations mentioned above can often be attributed to interrupted employment in the destination due to factors such as COVID-19, factory closures, expiry of visas or passports, illness, accidents, personal challenges, deportation, denial of wages, or lack of overtime work. These circumstances frequently result in an unplanned and unprepared return, which poses significant hurdles to achieving reintegration successfully.

"I lost my job and had to return early. It wasn't part of my plan, and now it feels like I failed." (IDI, Man returnee, Dhanusha)

Returnees who did still have loans but have a backup also express that while it is neither successful nor unsuccessful for them; they have no regrets in terms of what they have achieved from migration.

"I had nothing and I had no loans to pay but now I have some profit and also a loan. I don't have regrets even though everything didn't turn out well, it's not like I have nothing, I have land under my name. I have loans to pay. If I get to work of some kind, I will do it. I won't be staying at home doing nothing." (IDI, Man returnee, Sunsari)

The diverse perception of success discussed above depending on economic assets comes from their experience of the community. While it differs for female returnees (will discuss in detail in the coming paragraphs) most male returnees shared that the community judges their success based on tangible economic assets as illustrated by the quote below.

"People ask what you did abroad. If you can show them something like savings or land, they call you successful." (IDI, Man returnee, Dhanusha)

Hence, male returnees perceived that they had to demonstrate the worth of their migration efforts to be deemed successful in the community. Having something to show for their time abroad—whether savings, a house, or even a small business—allowed them to validate their journey and they perceived that this gave them social recognition in the community.

*"It took me 10 years to save enough to build this house. Now people see my time abroad as a success."
(IDI, Man returnee, Khotang)*

Re-migration or changing jobs at the destination were often used as strategies by returnees to enable them to maintain their status as successful individuals in the eyes of their community. Comparatively only a few female returnees had changed employers (in domestic work). They had returned home and re-migrated when the salary was less/not paid or when employers were exploitative.

"I returned because the salary was less. There are no other reasons for returning. Then I went to Oman with a sister again." (IDI, Woman returnee, Morang)

Sustaining success after return

Returnees and family members also brought up the issue of long- and short-term success. They shared that while initially they are judged on how much wealth they have accumulated, as they continue to stay in the community, the notion of success changes. Returnees shared that, over time, the community measures success not merely by the savings accumulated abroad but by how effectively those savings and experiences have been utilized to improve the lives of the individual and their family. According to returnees, long-term success is perceived when they can invest their earnings and skills in productive ventures or initiate something new within the community. Returnees who continued to be regarded as successful over an extended period were those who often came back with savings and invested in activities such as poultry farming, animal husbandry, fish farming, or driving. In discussion, participants highlighted several instances where returnees had used their skills and income to create new opportunities, as illustrated below:

"They come and do new things here. For example, people who returned from Korea and worked in agriculture have introduced techniques like tunnel farming" (FGD, Women returnee, Morang.)

Those who came without financial resources were deemed as unsuccessful and sometimes turned to alcohol after return and attempt to go abroad again.

In-depth interviews and case studies in this study shows that people who have become successful in the long term had achieved so due to planning and extended time abroad to accumulate meaningful savings or skills. Migrants who return after working for several years are better positioned to invest their savings in productive ventures or apply their skills in new businesses. However, not everyone carefully planned their ventures. For some, success only becomes apparent over time as they learn to apply the knowledge or income earned abroad. As they build businesses, homes, or farms, their achievements gradually reshape their own perceptions and the opinions of their communities.

"I worked for eight years in Qatar, and after returning, I opened a small grocery shop with my savings. That's how I know my return was worth it." (IDI, Man returnee, Morang)

Returnees also shared that in some instances; the family had thought them as unsuccessful when they had come back with fewer savings. However, overtime as they applied their knowledge and used their income to establish a sound business, the perception changed.

"At first, my family thought I didn't bring back enough. But after I invested in a poultry farm, they began to appreciate what I had achieved." (FGD, Women returnee, Susnari)

This also applied to migrants who migrated more than once but failed to earn in their last migration. In such cases, a combination of their savings from previous migration and their skills from the latest migration has helped them establish ventures and changed the perception of the community towards them.

"I worked as a cook abroad. When I returned, I started a food stall, and now people think my migration was a success. When I came back without money, people thought I failed. But after I started my shop with what I saved earlier, they saw me differently." (IDI, Women returnee, Siraha)

Beyond the above discussed economic factors, success was also attributed to health outcomes and conditions that led to return and it varied between family and community. When situations were adverse, returnees and families also deemed return as success if the migrant member had been able to overcome adverse or a life-threatening situation in the destination and returned safely. The situations often included surviving health complications, dangerous working conditions, and abandonment. In such cases, returning home safely outweighed financial setbacks both for individual migrants and their family as shown by the quote below:

"The company abandoned my husband during COVID. We are just happy he made it back." (FGD, Family members of returnee, Udayapur)

However, this might not always resonate at the community level according to returnees. They shared that while the family members might see it as successful, the community might not see it as a very positive outcome unless they were able to do well economically post return.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us were forced to return without finishing our contracts. It felt like everything we worked for was lost." (FGD, Men returnee, Udayapur)

Similarly, returnees shared that the circumstances surrounding their return—such as job loss or illness—significantly influence the community's perception of their success. They observed that local narratives around success often disregard how long they stayed at the destination or how consistently they were remitting prior to the adverse conditions that prompted their return. Instead, the focus tends to be on the unfavorable circumstances of their return.

"I lost my job abroad and had to return early. No one cares how much I sent before, only that I came back empty-handed." (Interview, Man returnee, Dhanusha)

Returnees shared experiencing such perceptions from the community also when they returned due to illness.

"I had to come back after getting sick. It feels like all the years I spent abroad don't matter because I returned with nothing." (FGD, Women returnee, Sunsari)

Multiple migration and perception of success

Migrants who had undertaken foreign employment more than once believed that their success as returnees is often judged by their family and community based on the outcome of their most recent return, rather than their entire migration journey. For many, the perception of their migration experience hinged on the results of their last return. While a few migrants managed to combine savings from their first migration with skills acquired during a second migration to improve perceptions later, they noted a lack of recognition for past remittances or the benefits their families received over the years. If they failed to return with a sum positive outcome discussed in the earlier part of this section, they experienced that their earlier contributions were often overlooked.

"It doesn't matter that I sent money every month for years—people only ask what I brought back with me now." (IDI, Man returnee, Morang)

Debt acquired during migration is a major factor behind failed returns for returnee migrants, as many come back burdened with loans taken for recruitment fees, travel, or emergencies. Even substantial earnings abroad were perceived as meaningless if they migrants had not been able to clear household debts. This made financial recovery seem impossible for them. On the other hand, being debt free was often associated with successful return.

Respondents also shared that they get trapped in a cycle of borrowing, taking new loans to repay old ones, leading to deeper financial instability. When migrants were unable to earn well in the destination, their earnings were often found to go toward survival or interest payments, leaving the principal debt untouched. They often perceived that this was a failed migration.

*"Even though I earned well, I came back still owing the agent and the moneylender. To me, that's a failed return."
(IDI, Woman returnee, Siraha)*

Returnees also shared frustrations as their money was misused by their family, forcing them to consider re-migration as their only way to escape financial distress.

"I sent money regularly, but my family used it up. Now, I'm back with no savings and debts piling up." (IDI, Man returnee, Khotang)

Personally, for the returnee themselves, family feuds and family breakdown, chronic health issues that surfaces after return and impedes active participation in family life and smooth reintegration. As shared above, health issues come commonly as a challenge for both economic and social reintegration. Lack of substantial savings to meet family expectations were challenges to successful post return experience. This often had negative emotional repercussions on the returnees. Even migrants who returned with substantial savings found it difficult to reintegrate if family conflicts arose, leading to emotional distress and instability. Many returning migrants experienced strained relationships with their spouses or parents upon return. Disputes over money, misuse of remittances, or unmet expectations from family members often created tension, undermining the migrant's sense of settling. In these cases, for the migrants themselves, the emotional toll of family conflicts overshadowed any financial gains made abroad, leaving migrants feeling like their efforts were wasted.

*"I built a house with my savings, but my brother and mother constantly argue with me. It feels like I failed."
(IDI, Man returnee, Khotang)*

2.3 RQ 3. What is the status of economic and social reintegration among returnees?

The study finds that economic reintegration is the most pressing reintegration concern currently for most of the study participants and more so for male returnees. Most male returnees as well as a significant number of female returnees brought up economic reintegration first when discussing what a successful reintegration was for them. For other groups of women, family wellbeing, particularly that of children was an important part of reintegration. For the study participants, sustainable reintegration meant breaking the cycle of re-migration voluntarily before retirement, overcoming personal challenges such as health issues, and achieving a sound socio-emotional state. It also involved securing sufficient family income, ensuring children attended decent schools, resolving relationship issues with their spouse and extended family, and actively participating in social and cultural activities upon return. While access to local government reintegration services was often expected and something returnees were disappointed about, political participation came least common in their definition of successful reintegration. This might not be due to political reintegration not being important but perhaps because economic reintegration was the most difficult challenge and overshadowed any strong aspirations for political participation.

The study finds that successful reintegration is deeply influenced by individual circumstances and experiences across the entire migration cycle. The specifics of reintegration varied by gender, age, and the immediate conditions faced upon return. For instance, while economic success was critical for both male and female, in qualitative interviews, female returnees often cited concerns about their children going astray as a key factor in their decision to return before completing their contracts. Therefore, ensuring the well-being of their children was a crucial aspect of reintegration for females. For males, however, making the family economically stable was the primary focus for successful reintegration. All three aspects - economic integration, social integration, and arriving at a sound mental and emotional state - were critical for reintegration.

The ReMi mini survey data indicates that 55% of returning migrants had plans for their post-return life. However, the effectiveness of these plans depends heavily on timely execution. The plans were predominantly focused on economic reintegration. The study suggests this focus stems from two factors: an underestimation of the significance of psychosocial reintegration needs in comparison to the more immediate and tangible

economic concerns, and a lack of awareness about the long-term implications of unaddressed psychosocial needs on personal and family well-being.

2.3.1 Economic reintegration:

The study points to a trial time window of 1-5- 2 years in economic reintegration. Usually, the first 1.5-2 years were important in terms of time to test whether the business works. Participants who had migrated more than once had re-migrated when their business did not work in this window. The mini survey results also showed that 35% returnee migrants started with self-employment but only 18% are continuing with it.

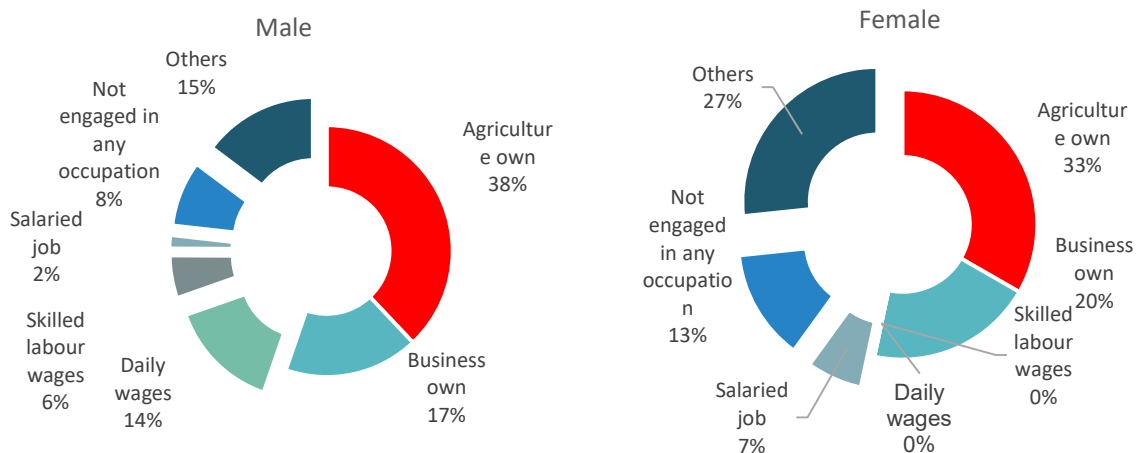
"I opened a small shop after returning, but within a year, I realized it wasn't working. I had no choice but to think about going abroad again." (IDI, Woman returnee, Siraha)

Remittances and savings were the strongest support base in economic reintegration. The largest proportion of the remittances had been used to meet daily expenses; according to the SaMi migration profile, 65% returnees used their saving to meet daily expenses followed by 33% using the amount to repay their loan, health treatments (23%), building/maintaining house (20%), purchasing land (19%), and children's education (14%).

"Yes, they have some money. They open a big firm and start business here and run it for 1-1.5yrs to 1-2 yrs and after that because of lack of skill or knowledge the business goes bankrupt and there are loans to be paid. Then they are forced to migrate." (IDI, Man returnee, Udayapur)

Salaried or daily wage labor and self-employment were the two most common forms of economic reintegration pathways taken by returnees. Agriculture and own business were the two most important sectors both men and women returned to upon their return from foreign employment. Agriculture was the main occupation after return for both men and women as it was before migration (as described in section 2.1) showing the importance of the sector in returnee's reintegration programs. While women were not involved in business before migration (section 2.1), business was the second most common sector for them after return; 20% of female returnees were engaged in their own business upon return. The proportion of males who were engaged in business was 17% showing an increased involvement in business after migration (before migration it was 3% - section 2.1).

Chart 3. Comparison on occupation of male and female returnees (after return)



Source: ReMi Mini Survey

The SaMi migration profile documented a similar picture but identified that a greater number of returning migrants are idle: 12.5% have salaried or wage employment, 20% are generating income from agriculture/livestock, 25.5% are involved in self-employment, and 23.9% are not involved in any economic activity. The difference in pattern might be because the SaMi migrant profile data was collected since 2020 to the point of the survey so has data of fresh returning migrants as well while the ReMi mini survey reached out to migrants who returned back in the last 7 years (since 2017). As they settle down, we have found that the returnees who are idle or self-employed in the short run seek economic engagement.

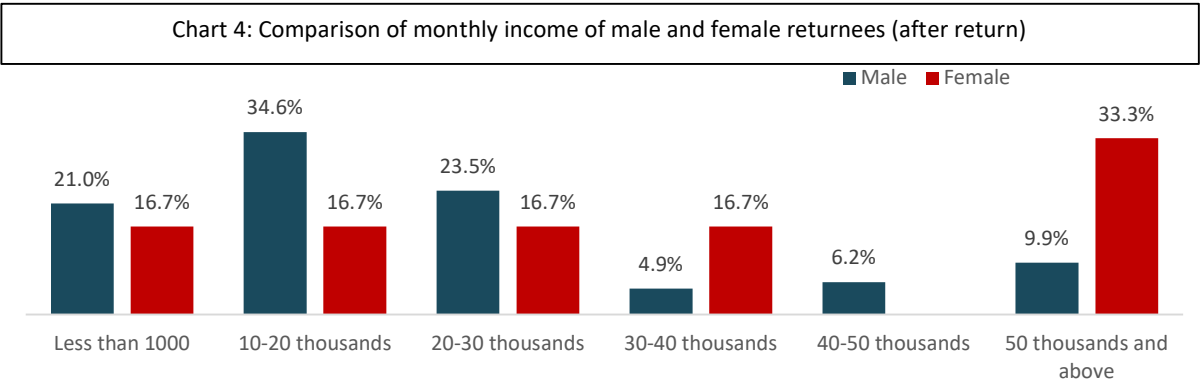
The ReMi survey data also shows that 59% of returnees found a new source of income within three months of returning, while for 19% it took up to six months. This transition period was a critical period of reintegration for returnees- they largely tried to rebuild their financial stability and address the challenges that arose during migration, such as debt, family conflicts, and health issues during this period.

The first few days at home were also a time when they had reflected on their future and made plans for economic reintegration. According to the mini-survey, 55% of returnees had some form of plan about what they wanted to do after returning. These plans ranged from starting small businesses to seeking domestic jobs or re-migrating.

Migrants who returned with savings had taken the first few months of their time to explore meaningful economic opportunities or invest in small businesses. However, migrants who did not start income generations early on in this period shared that they had gradually spent their earnings from abroad on everyday expenses and had no funds remaining for economic engagement later.

"I wanted to invest in a business, but I wasn't sure where to start. In the end, I used the money for family expenses." (IDI, Man returnee, Khotang)

The ReMi data shows that average income post return was NPR 22,000, almost half compared to the average income while abroad. Majority (33%) earned 10-20,000 per month followed by 24% who earned 20-30,000. The average income is below the average national household income.



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

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.

From the qualitative leg of the study, we found that employment probability was lower among returnees with higher savings, if they were forced to return, and if they were of a higher age.

What contributed to successful economic reintegration:

Family support, acquiring locally sellable skills, and manageable amount of debt repayment supported migrants to get an employment. When returnees had local experience employers had trusted them with employment. Similarly, those living close to cities were more likely to pursue employment compared to those who lived in rural areas.

The mini-survey data reveals that the reintegration experience was more positive for self-employed migrants compared to those in job employment or unemployment. Autonomy and flexibility in self-employment provided a sense of fulfilment, contrasting with the rigid and often exploitative environments they encountered overseas. When respondents discussed self-employment, they discussed returns beyond monetary income. While self-employed returnees earned less on average, they shared that they preferred self-employment because they like the sense of control they had over their income and schedule. They often reflected that this was something they lacked while working abroad or in formal jobs at home.

"I feel more satisfied earning less in my business than working under someone again." (FGD, Women returnee, Sunsari)

Regarding who are more likely to pursue self-employment, the mini-survey data shows that returnee migrants with higher accumulated savings are less likely to engage in economic activities altogether while typically, returnees who opt for self-employment include those with low savings, high incomes abroad often linked to higher education or skills, those with adverse experiences abroad, or with lower levels of education. Cash-rich migrants preferred to hold onto their savings for security than invest in anything as illustrated by the quote below.

"Starting a business feels too risky. I'd rather keep my savings for emergencies than lose it on something uncertain." (IDI, Woman returnee, Siraha)

An OLS regression analysis on the ReMi survey data reveals that self-employment prospects were positively associated with higher monthly income abroad and poor migration experiences, but negatively correlated with savings accumulated from migration. Interviews with such migrants reflect that experience, self-confidence, exposure, and capitals from migration played a role in their pursuing of self-employment:

"The job abroad paid well, and with that experience, I felt more confident starting my own enterprise here." (FGD, Woman returnee, Sunsari)

Respondents with bad migration experience also entered self-employment locally than going for employment.

"Being self-employed means, no one orders me around. It's a relief after what I went through abroad." (IDI, Man returnee, Dhanusha)

The qualitative study reveals that returnees are generally highly mobile, with their livelihoods often spanning original villages and the nearby cities and district centers and this gives them better chances at economic reintegration. Both male and female returnees tend to move between their original villages and peri-urban areas or district centers, leading to multi-local livelihoods which had helped their economic reintegration. This pattern of mobility was particularly pronounced in hilly areas of Morang where they would come to the cities in the adjoining plain area for self-employment and business.

Returnees applied the skills they learned abroad in self-employment. They leveraged their overseas experiences to establish businesses; for instance, individuals who worked as cooks abroad opened restaurants, while those with experience in the construction sector started working as contractors. For some, the exposure from staying abroad helped them get confidence to start business and they started business such as poultry farming.

"I worked as a cook abroad, and now I've opened a food stall here." (IDI, Woman returnee, Sarlahi)

Barriers to economic reintegration:

The study finds the following main barriers for economic reintegration:

a. Lack of information and ideas for economic reintegration:

Lack of guidance upon return for economic reintegration comes strongly in the interviews as shown below. Most migrants who did not have a good economic reintegration experience shared that the reason for failure was lack of counselling on what livelihood activities would work best for them and how to pursue it. As shown in the quote below, this had led to returnees making hasty investment decisions and entering a business without adequate background information which resulted in failure of their investments.

"I made a plan to start a small business, but without guidance, it's easy to feel lost." (FGD, Women returnee, Sunsari)

b. Time constraints

The study finds that while returnees who started an income in the first three months of the return are more likely to be successful in reintegration, the pressure to start earning as soon as possible also pushes returnees towards wrong decisions. Similarly, respondents who did not have savings or reliable family income were forced to accept any available work, regardless of whether it aligns with their skills or interests.

"I came back with nothing and had to find a job immediately. There was no time to think or plan." (FGD, Women returnee, Sunsari)

Most returnees shared that they face significant pressures to start an income soon after their return. Starting late has often led to depletion in savings and resulted in re-migration and poor economic reintegration. However, for others the time constraint also led to economic reintegration challenges later as shown in the quote below:

"The pressure to make something out of the savings was huge. I invested in a small poultry farm, hoping it would work but it was not a good idea." (IDI, Man returnee, Khotang)

c. Debt

Debt came as another critical barrier to economic reintegration. The ReMi data finds that 22% of male and 33% of female returnees had incurred debt during migration. The debt was higher for males than females (highest 400,000 NRs for male and 60,000 NRs for female) perhaps signifying trust issues with females and less capacity of females to show formal or informal collateral to be able to get a loan. For 80% female returnees and 62% male returnees, the debt was not for foreign employment showing already existing economic challenges back home.

d. Health issues

Health issues came as another strong barrier to economic reintegration. At least 17% returnees reported that they returned with migration-induced health issues. Chronic illnesses and physical disabilities acquired while working abroad prevented returnees from engaging in productive work after return. Some returnees also shared that while they did not suffer from any health issues, they realized that their capacity to work had decreased after migration. So, due to the above reasons they had not been able to take the job altogether or engage at the level they wished to.

"I returned from Malaysia with an injury, and now I cannot lift anything heavy." (IDI, Woman returnee, Morang)

e. Lack of institutional support

This includes both information and linkages with financial services. Male returnees shared that they did not get any institutional support. The interest rates in the banks were high and the loan window starts immediately which made it impossible to use loans for any form of self-employment. Some male returnees also shared that they found the loan process difficult and terms not useful. Hence, most returnees found that loan was not helpful for economic reintegration.

Returnees have reported mixed experiences in accessing reintegration support from government and non-governmental agencies. While some participants acknowledged the availability of financial schemes and programs, many struggled to access these services due to bureaucratic hurdles, mistrust, or lack of information. Some returnees noted that even when financial programs were available, they were not effectively tailored to their needs, reducing the practical benefit of such support.

Other challenges encountered included difficulties in navigating government support structures. Some described these programs as being poorly implemented or inaccessible due to complicated processes, geographic constraints, and lack of follow-up.

"I reached out to the municipality for assistance, but they didn't offer anything. We've had to manage on our own." (Mini-workshop, Men returnee, Sunsari)

Apart from financial support, they also shared that there was nowhere to go for any support on self-employment generation and linkages to employers. This lack of information and institutional support to link them to the information also hindered their economic reintegration.

Migrants who were forced to return had pending issues such as debt, family emergencies which delayed their engagement in employment. They had also not thought about economic reintegration after returning due to other pressing issues that led to their return. In contrast, those who returned after completion of contracts had contemplated return and income generation after return and had spoken to friends and family members about it.

Return and skills

The study finds that returnees return with some human capital gain both in terms of hard skills and soft skills. The SaMi migration profile data shows that only 24% of migrants in Koshi and 18% migrants in Madhesh had learnt skills before migration. However, it changes with migration; in the ReMi survey, 42% of returnees reported that they learned some skills during the job abroad. The most common skills learnt were vocational such as skills related to construction, driver, transporter, electrical work, and hospitality management. Participants discussed several challenges related to using the skills in Nepal upon return.

Most returnees shared that the skills they learnt cannot be exactly applied in the jobs here because there is a lack of demand for the service or the infrastructures and systems in Nepal are different from those in advanced countries they have worked.

"I worked as a helper for two years before becoming an operator with a Qatar license. Unlike abroad, there are no advanced tools or machines here. In foreign countries, repairs are immediate, but here, if we use something like an Excavator and the chain breaks, it will cause major issues." (IDI, Man returnee, Udaypur)

A lack of certification and formal recognition of skills acquired abroad often limits their ability to access higher-paying jobs in Nepal. Participants shared that even when they had the skills for the job, they were not given the job due to lack of certificates.

"I know the job well, but without a certificate, people don't trust my skills." (IDI, Man returnee, Morang)

Some respondents who wanted to secure loans for starting a new venture could not convince the loan providers because the idea was new, and they did not have papers to show they had done the same work

abroad as the quote below:

"I wanted to register my business, but they asked for papers I didn't have from my time abroad." (FGD, Women returnee, Sunsari).

2.3.2 Social Reintegration

In the ReMi mini-survey, 1 out of 2 returnees reported that they feel happy to have returned while the remaining 40.5% were neither happy nor sad that they returned back home. 93.5% do not feel that their future is secure, and 28% reported being nervous about their future.

The study finds that successful social return also hinges on the successful reintegration with the family. In qualitative discussions, it was observed that the dynamics of the relationship of a migrant with their spouse, children and extended family changes with migration. Due to communication challenges and mismatch in expectations, the major challenge returnees face during the reintegration process is to amend and strengthen the family ties.

Factors that supported social reintegration

a. Family support

Behavior of the family comes as the most important aspect of social reintegration. As highlighted above, returnees both male and female were more concerned about reintegration in the family and were not worried much about the wider community. Also as shared above, they found the community was not outright negative towards them. Male returnees shared many instances where families supported them in difficult times, which had made them return and reintegrate successfully even when their migration was not successful. Many husbands shared about the critical role of their wives in making their reintegration easier.

"My wife supported my return decision. She said, come home, we will manage. She has been very understanding and my return has been easy and successful" IDI, returnee migrant, Saptari

As with the above, family support comes as the main support that migrants receive upon return. Many returnees who returned with ill health shared that their spouses had played a critical role in their wellbeing even when they had been unsuccessful in their migration. This had helped them stay emotionally strong and lead a normal life after returning.

"When I came back, my wife took care of me. She massaged me and motivated me to get treatment." (FGD, Men returnee, Khotang)

b. Soft skills

Apart from hard skills discussed in section 2.3.1, participants commonly discussed soft skills they had learnt while abroad. The most common were time management, hard work and discipline, cleanliness and personal hygiene, value of home and family, language and networks and they have carried it with them which has helped their social reintegration.

We had to follow strict rules—always be on time and presentable. Cleanliness was important, and I still carry that with me."

They shared that while they did not do this in Nepal, they had learnt to value wearing clean clothes, taking care of themselves, working in a team, interpersonal skills of working with people from varied cultures, conflict management and respecting differences which had helped them navigate the relationship back home as well.

"We had to work with people from different countries, so we became better at managing conflicts and respecting differences," (IDI, Man returnee, Siraha)

c. Learning to value family and family life

Returnees shared that being away from family made them realize the value of family and home and changed their attitude towards living with the family and valuing the way of living in Nepal. They shared these realizations in their life such as spending time with the family, being grateful that they survived to be back home among others.

"Even with economic struggles, there's comfort in being home," (IDI, male returnee, Saptari)

For many returnees, the hardships faced abroad brought profound life lessons and changed their perspective towards life. Some of the common life lessons discussed were about valuing the simple life in Nepal, the difference between working for oneself and for an employer, the missed moments in life such as watching children grow or being around when the spouse needs them.

"We worked tirelessly under extreme conditions, often alone. It made me appreciate the simple joy of being with my family." FGD, returnee male.

Some respondents valued the language skill and social networks they were able to make while abroad. They believed compared to the networks they had in Nepal; the new networks they had acquired after migration was extensive. However, once in Nepal, these networks lost value and so they were contemplating using it for migration again. Others who had been in life threatening situations while abroad shared that they were happy to just return back alive.

"It was hard, but I'm lucky to return alive," FGD, male returnee, Morang

However, some female returnees' social reintegration was different than that of male returnees. The closest to returnees are the spouses, children, parents. Fear of not being accepted by these close networks - stigmatization and violence by husbands, violence by in-laws leading to breaking of the family, not accepted well by parents were frequent concerns for female returnees. Challenging relationships with husbands and having to work hard to win favor of in-laws were most common social reintegration challenges for women. Most female returnees perceive that households have become worse after their migration because the children have gone wayward and do not come much in men's interviews. Female returnees perceive that their intimate relationships are affected negatively. Female respondents, unlike males, also shared that their relationship with children also changed after going abroad which was very much a burden to their hearts.

"When I went abroad, my relationship with my husband and in-laws became worse. My daughter also does not care for me. Whether it was a right or wrong decision, I went abroad to make their lives better." (FGD, women returnee, Sunsari)

Following were the main challenges in social reintegration:

a. Lack of understanding and pressure from family

The main challenges in emotional integration according to the returnees were lack of understanding and pressure from the family when they could not fulfil financial expectations of the family members, broken spousal relationships, betrayal, and family conflicts. Respondents shared that they already felt very guilty in the destination when they were unable to send much remittances home, but once back home, this weighs more on them when families start bringing up the issue.

"People in the family say I should have brought more money. It weighs on me, and I feel like I've disappointed them." (FGD, Men Returnee, Udayapur)

Participants discussed betrayal from spouses, and this was particularly the case where the spouse had run away with the remittances. For some migrants, it was a feud between the husband and the wife while for others the larger family was also involved making the situation more complicated upon return.

"My family blamed me for not bringing enough money, and it negatively affected my marriage." (IDI, Woman returnee, Siraha)

b. Disputes over joint property

Participants pointed out that shared family property was also a challenge with emotional re-integration. They discussed instances where the relationships were strained with other family members including

parents and brothers because the migrants invested in shared property and other family members wanting ownership over it or because of joint property families blaming them for their expenses abroad.

"After returning, I found my family arguing over how I spent the money. It made me feel helpless and exhausted." (IDI, Man returnee, Dhanusha)

c. Judgment by society

Returnees largely shared that they have been treated well by their community and society. In the ReMi survey, 64% returnees reported that they were treated well by other community members. However, in qualitative discussion, some returnees shared facing stigma and criticism from their communities for not meeting expectations, especially if they returned without significant wealth.

"After returning, I felt isolated because people judged me for not bringing back enough money." (IDI, Woman returnee, Siraha)

d. Lack of reintegration support

Most of the returnees referred to economic reintegration support when they were discussing support. Direct cash support or concessional loan (62%) followed by skill training (20%) were the most sought after support. In the ReMi mini-survey, 80% returnees reported that they did not receive the reintegration support and only 20% returnees who were at the verge of retiring from the active economic engagement reported that they do not need reintegration support. The SaMi migration profile also shows similar perception among migrants; 14.6% of returnees shared that they received some support from local government and other local agencies for their reintegration. The rate is slightly higher for female returnees at 21.6%, compared to 14.3% for male returnees.

However, it was evident that economic reintegration or the lack thereof strongly influences reintegration into the family. And this was particularly important for men. For female returnees, parenting support after migration, support in emotional healing and mental wellbeing, support in dealing with difficulties from family, intimate partners and child led seems to be the most important support needed for social reintegration. While they were able to articulate the challenges from intimate partners, in-laws and children, they were unable to articulate what support they would require to deal with the above. This perhaps points to the lack of awareness on the services available for social reintegration.

2.4 RQ 4. Lessons Learnt on Key Moments, Enablers, Challenges, Best Practices, and the Role of Government in Ensuring Successful Return and Reintegration

The study finds that for labour migrants, return and reintegration is influenced by key moments, activities and decisions in the following five phases in the migration trajectory; (i) Phase - I: migration decision and process, (ii) Phase - II. While abroad, (iii) Phase-III. The Return, (iv) Phase - IV: Reintegration, and (v) Phase - V: Remigration⁹. Based on finding of the study we discuss why this phase was important in return and reintegration, what aspects in the above five phases contributed to successful return and reintegration and what factors impeded successful return and reintegration, what are some of the best practices and what could government and other institutions do to support successful return and reintegration of migrants.

2.4.1 Migration decision-making & processing phase

Migration decision-making and processing phase is an important phase for return and reintegration because this is the initial phase that shapes choice and decisions related to all important aspects of migration. Migrants make decisions around destinations, trajectories and investments in this phase. Personal and family aspirations connected with the migration are contemplated and discussed in this phase. This phase allows

⁹ In this report, this term is refers to returnee migrants who again leave the country for foreign employment

space for contemplation around potential benefits and risks of migration to the person and the family. Time-wise, this is an important phase as migrants are still at home, in their community or inside the country, so interventions are easier. Additionally, at the initial stage of this cycle, migrants will not have invested much financially in the migration process and hence it has relatively less risks. The study finds that by not conducting sufficient background checks on potential employers and promised jobs, migrants often found themselves in less-than-ideal working conditions – often leading to exploitation, non-payment of wages, etc. Having a negative working experience abroad often leads to non-fulfilment of the migration objectives, or commitments to the family back home, leading them to return feeling disappointed and later face challenges in reintegration. Below we discuss the key moments of this phase and what factors during this phase contributed to successful reintegration later, and what factors impeded it?

Table 2. Phase I MTMs

| Key MTMs | What worked | What worked less |
|---|---|--|
| MTM 1. Taking decisions to migrate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migrants were actively involved in information seeking. Decisions were relatively well informed and resources and risks contemplated Information was verified through multiple and formal sources before investing in migration Family members were part of the migration decision-making Family members and the migrant had a shared financial goal related to the migration and had a migration exit plan around when they would return permanently. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions were taken in haste and in desperation with no clear plans on mitigating risks Social norms and other circumstances impeded free information seeking and sharing of migration decisions Migrants did not/ could not use formal sources for verifying information about the recruiter, employer, destination country and work |
| MTM 2. Finding an agent and processing for migration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about formal agents and cross-checking on previous records such as through MRCs Visiting MRCs to understand risks, safe migration pathways process involved in migration and services available Well informed about skills required for the job and acquired necessary skills. For example, the SaMi migration profile data shows that 24% of migrants in both Koshi and Madhesh province had taken skill training before migration. More women took skill training than men (24% women and 23% men) in Koshi while less women took skill training in the Madhesh province (23% men and 18% women) Migrants who have attended the mandatory Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) and were able to retain information, do follow ups to continually upgrade information and use the information while abroad have better chances to access services in case of problems in the destinations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliance of local informal networks to decide on the agent Lack of information on the process, on the risks during the processes, safe migration pathways Lack of information about the nature of the job offered and skills required for the job Over-dependency on agent due to lack of information about available services Lack of avenues to check whether the company is outsourcing company or an employer company In case of domestic work, lack of access to information about the potential employer Relying only on information provided by the agent and not being able to access complete information from the agent/ Migrants not being well informed about the mandatory PDOs and its benefits. For example, the SaMi migration profile data shows that 70% men and 54% women in Madhesh province had not taken the PDOs. Migrants who participated in the PDO not being able to retain information shared in the PDO. |
| MTM 3. Financing migration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verified actual cost of migration from multiple sources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration being financed by unregistered agents and or on high interest rates. For example, the SaMi migration profile survey finds that male |

| Key MTMs | What worked | What worked less |
|----------|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Had access to low cost loans and loans without collateral such as through women's saving, farmers cooperatives for financing migration ● Having family resources to finance migration (such as having a family member in the destination country reduced costs of migration significantly) ● Having back-up plans/resources including financial safety nets to cover losses if any- for example savings from earlier migration. | <p>migrants incur up to 67% interest and female migrants incur up to 35% interest for migration loan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of knowledge on the actual cost of migration and on sources for verification of this information ● Family members not investing/ aware about investments in the migration process |

What are some of the available resources and best practices?

Some best practices observed were the following:

- Making it mandatory for migrants to go to MRCs when they are making passports but also working on behavioral change practices of aspiring migrants through communication and awareness raising about the benefits of MRCs
- Migrants using digital technology to access information about the jobs and working conditions
- Active information giving at local level such as through MRCs, through mobilization of migrant and returnee volunteer networks, returnee co-operatives and formal channels. Use of street dramas and other individual counselling sessions to aspiring migrants
- Other best practices include provision of financial safety nets (such as funding migrants through grants and soft loans which do not require collateral and where interest is less). An example in Nepal could be the interest free migration loan under the SulavKarja programme through the local farmer's co-operatives.

What should be the government's role?

- Expand services of the MRCs at the local government level so the migrants get factual information as and when needed. Use existing human resources such as returnee volunteers, returnee migrant networks to support MRCs at the municipality level. Local resources such as community buildings, local co-operatives where migrants go regularly can also be used as spaces for establishing small information corners for aspiring migrants.
- Currently the information available locally is generic. Establish infrastructures so aspiring migrants can access specific information such as about the employer, working conditions in the factory they are going to be employed in, living conditions, ways to timely verify if they are being placed in outsourcing companies, companies that do not have good track records and so on.
- Leverage the use of digital technology to check facts about the employing company before paying fees for migration. Information kiosks at the local government level and wards can be established and youth and returnee networks can be mobilized to teach migrants to use the kiosks.
- Establish pre-employment orientation (PEO)¹⁰ for aspiring migrants and their families at the ward level. The PEO equips prospective foreign workers and key family members with accurate and tailored information to enable them to make an informed decision on whether foreign employment is a realistic and adequate option. It also better prepares them for safe migration pathways, management of long-distance family relationships, gives them financial literacy classes and enables them to make individual risk reduction and mitigating plans for any potential financial and non-financial risks due to migration.
- Enforce current legal mechanisms to ensure action against fraud or incomplete information to migrants
- Invest locally in the skill development of migrants and collaborate with destination governments for skill accreditation. Develop strategies to address enrolment gaps in skilling centers usually caused by opportunity costs and create plans to bridge skill mismatch.

¹⁰<http://abudhabidialogue.org.ae/sites/default/files/document-library/PEO%20Regional%20Guide.pdf>

- Provide soft loans to potential migrants.
- Network with Nepali embassy, destination country’s embassy in Nepal and Nepali diaspora to establish digital information kiosks so potential migrants can learn basic language, cultures of the host country, ways to navigate daily life such as how to access local sims, send remittance, use local transportation, as well as verify information about potential employers, job, working and living conditions before they invest financially in the migration process.

2.4.2 While Abroad

As discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, successful reintegration of migrants depends heavily on several factors, including their economic achievements while abroad, remittances sent to their families, maintaining sound health during their employment and upon return, and preserving strong family ties with their spouse, parents, and children. The sections also highlight how hasty returns often hinder successful reintegration. The time migrants spend abroad is typically invested in achieving economic milestones, supporting their families financially, and fulfilling both personal and family migration objectives. Additionally, this phase significantly impacts migrants’ physical and mental health, safety, and well-being, as well as their intimate and familial relationships. Hence this phase is important for ensuring successful reintegration. Below we discuss the key moments that mattered in this phase, what worked and what impeded successful return and reintegration.

Table 3. Phase II MTMs

| Key MTMs | What worked | What worked less |
|---|---|--|
| MTM 4. On boarding to work and managing work expectations managing work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Well informed about the travel, pickup and the transfer process to the working site ensured migrants did not face emotional and financial challenges and their overall perspective during the transition phase remained positive. ● Access to Nepalis networks, information about the accessing the embassy support ● Being near the embassy. ● Knowing which document one should have with themselves. ● Smooth transition to the workplace- for example timely pick up at the airport, direct transfer to the accommodation/company led to smooth transition and helped migrants focus on their work and supported them to get timely wages, good income. This in turn led to overall positive experience and supported in better managing return and reintegration. ● Basic knowledge of language and culture (for example for second time migrants, migrants who actively seek information) helped increase income, get better working conditions and helped them emotionally and financially. ● Learning language before migration helped escape violence and better job prospects. ● Continued interaction with families helped migrants to excel emotionally which in turn helped them to maintain healthy relationships back home, with peers and employers. ● Presence of Nepali support networks, friends, supervisors helped them navigate difficult times and supported in smooth return and reintegration. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not verified any information about the travel, pick up and transfer process. No timely pickup by the employer/ having to wait for long hours/find the employer by oneself led to financial and emotional distress which led to poor migration experience. ● Lack of information on how to present oneself to the employer, how to deal with the supervisors. ● Lack of knowledge on what is illegal and what is legal. ● Jobs, place of work, type of work and other facilities not as per information provided in Nepal led to disruptions in plans and expectations and hindered return and reintegration. ● Lack of language skills led to unsatisfactory financial achievements, led to loss of jobs or violence in jobs making migrants return under distress and causing challenges in reintegration. ● Feelings of isolation and lack of support systems to deal with mental stresses and violence by employers leading to unplanned return and/or penalties and economic and emotional challenges in reintegration. |

| Key MTMs | What worked | What worked less |
|---|---|--|
| MTM 5. Adapting to life in country of destination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having Nepali friends, relatives and supervisors helped them to stay in jobs and led to continued income generation. It was also the most important support to deal with homesickness and loneliness which as per migrants are very strong emotions during the first few months of reaching the destination and during difficult times. ● Basic knowledge of the local language ● Personal skills liked by employers led to better working environment and economic gains at times ● Spending leisure time and doing activities with other Nepalis helped them cope with the situation abroad and maintain better ties with the family. ● Continuous support from home and family helped them continue the job ● Regularly remitting and so keeping family trust intact helped improve community and family perspective towards migrants ● Career progression and job satisfaction helped them continue work ● Having formal recognition of skills – licence that can show skills learnt helped them get better opportunities ● Legal support for any legal challenges ● Visits and case management for migrants who are in jail | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges due to regional dialects even when learning the basic language before migration. ● Lack of access to Nepali community ● Inability to communicate with families back home ● Failed in skill test and got demoted. ● Less salary, non-payment of salary ● Migrants in prison not being able to access legal services. ● Migrants in prison not having access to cell phones/forgot the phone number of their family members and not being able to inform their whereabouts. |
| MTM 6 Managing family relations while abroad | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Satisfaction of managing critical economic support to family helped their self-esteem in reintegration. ● Ability to save, helped migrants to remit well and helped to achieve financial goals for the family. For example, the ReMi survey data finds that migrants remitted up to 65% of their salary. This in turn would support smooth reintegration both economically and in family life. ● Financial planning between the migrant and the family members ● Financial literacy among the spouses ● Communication that continues to nurture and sustain caring relationships. ● Supportive environment to migrants and shared goals between family members were other factors that helped migrants manage family well and keep family intact until return. ● Frequent communication with the families back home. For example, the SaMi migration profile data shows that 76% of men in Koshi and 82% in Madhesh communicate daily with their family. This was less among females - 62% in Koshi and 63% in Madhesh. The difference might be due to less access to cell phones or | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unable to send remittances as expected due to low wage than expected ● Dissatisfaction with remittances expenditure ● Family disputes about access to remittances ● Limited communication and communication focused solely on financial matters ● Overwhelming family expectations feeling unappreciated for financial sacrifices and mental health struggles ● ● |

| Key MTMs | What worked | What worked less |
|---|--|--|
| | <p>being prohibited from using cell phones during work hours in case of domestic work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to positive coping mechanisms that alleviate stress and address mental health challenges- such as team sports, peer networks helped migrants hold on to their life as migrants, fulfil migration aspirations and stop them from making return decisions due to distress. | |
| MTM 7 Managing home visits and leave | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work having flexibility of visits ● Tickets being paid for by the employer ● Stronger emotional bonds with family and children ● Participation in family life important family affairs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No leave ● Migrants having to pay to the employer for absence ● Migrants having to incur traveling expenses on their own ● Expensive flights and lack of access to travel agents ● Emotional of leaving the family again after short visits |
| MTM 8. Troubleshooting at work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support network that helps navigate challenges at work ● Companies having rules and policies in place and implementing fairness to workers ● Working in formal and international organizations that comply with labour rights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working in informal sector such as domestic work or informal sectors where there is less compliance of human rights ● Non-payment of wages affecting relationships back home (In the SaMi migration profile, 8% men and 9% of women faced issues of non-payment) ● Lack of access to free legal services for migrants facing jail terms affecting family life, increasing financial burdens on families and causing anxiety to family and migrants |

What are some of the best practices?

Following are some of the best practices drawn from the study:

- Having networks in the destination or MRCs in Nepal where migrants can access information on how to navigate airports, deal with delays in pick-ups, access sim-cards and use digital technology if stranded in the airport.
- Having free skill training classes before migration that teaches skills as well as makes migrants familiar with the work environment in the destinations.
- Availability of basic language courses that migrants can enroll before they migrate
- Providing free hotlines and flyers by the MRCs and in the PDOs which migrants can use to access support services
- Nepali migrant networks and returnee volunteers who can support migrants with information about potential challenges in the destination, and ways of troubleshooting.
- Contracts in Nepali language that helps migrants understand provisions related to leave, working hours, overtime, payment of airfare etc. and potentially negotiate with employers as well as inform their family before they start their journey
- Active diaspora support networks in the destination
- Nepali embassies extending outreach to migrants in the destination by hosting programmes for migrants during national events

- Post arrival orientation to migrants by home country based organizations in the destination, Nepali embassy in the destination, destination country's embassy in Nepal or organizations of the host country
- Availability of online mental health services

What should be the government's role?

- The government could support in establishing systems and structures for orientations at the local level so migrants can get PEO and PDO at their own ward office
- Work with the destination country to address challenge related to non-payment of wage, enforce employers to maintain safe and dignified working conditions, and fulfil agreements in the labor contracts
- Support in case management for those who are in prison. Regular visits to Nepalis who are in jail through the embassy and facilities to connect to their family members.
- Work with the destination country to provide validation of skills to workers through formal certificates from the employer or the government
- Work with the destination country to link migrants to support systems in destination where migrants can take tests and have their skills certified by the government. This could also be for upgrading of skills.
- Facilitate awareness raising activities about services related to validation of skills in the home country so they can validate their skills when they come for holidays
- Maintain records of migrants and invest in periodic refresher classes for those in destination countries, focusing on stress management, effective communication with family back home, financial literacy, basic information about what is legal and what is illegal in the country and other relevant topics."
- Use migrant outreach strategies and support them to participate in national celebrations in while in the destinations
- Negotiate with the destination country for employers to provide leave and arrange periodic tickets for migrants to visit their home.
- Use the destination country embassy in Nepal as resource to give post arrival orientations or provide resources that helps in post arrival stages including digital resources which could help migrants learn local language, cultures and access services of daily use in the destination country

2.4.3 The Return

The study finds that the return phase is a key moment in reintegration as this phase has a strong emotional bearing on the migrant. As discussed in Section 2.2, community and family perception of success depends strongly on the conditionality of return and the conditions in which the migrants return to- for example, whether the migrant returned after completion of the contract or without, whether s/he returned in sum positive, zero sum or sum negative state and whether the migrant is returning to a flourishing family life or a disintegrated one. It is also during this phase where the family and community perceptions are divided; as illustrated in section 2.2, families might consider returning a success if the migrant has been able to escape adverse conditions, but communities would still consider it a failure. As the migrant has to deal with the above-mentioned circumstances and perception, this phase was found to have a huge bearing on the migrant who is returning home. Most of the migrants shared that they are both happy that they are returning home but also anxious that the family and the community would judge them, about the pressure to mend their home life, to show that the years they spent abroad brought them success on various fronts.

Below we discuss the key moments that matter for integration in this phase, what helped migrants in those moments and what were the barriers at those moments for successful reintegration. This will be followed by discussion of what were some of the good practices and what the government's role could be at this phase to support successful reintegration.

Table 4. Phase III MTMs

| Key moments that matter | What worked for successful reintegration | What created challenges for successful reintegration |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| MTM 9. Return decision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family support in the return decision (inReMi survey, 48% of migrants got support from family in the return decision) ● Returned was planned with the family much before the actual return so both the migrant and the family were economically and emotionally prepared for the return (for example, the family had decided that the father would return after the son completes his studies) ● Return was financed by the employer ● Travel arrangements to the airport was facilitated by the employer and the return journey was smooth ● Return still had avenues for the migrant to go back to the same employer ● The family had post return economic engagement plans and had worked towards it. ● There was institutional support for migrants who had to return in distress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of a structured framework and, consequently, an institutionalized and comprehensive return service. ● Having to return under distress/without completion of the job contract ● Problems with family or children or health problems leading to return ● Migrants had to pay the employer for early return or had to face penalty or threat of such ● Migrant used all his/her saving, needed to take debt for financing return ● The return journey was not smooth- eg lost baggage, theft of good, goods broken, baggage arriving late so unable to collect baggage before going home/had to stay in a hotel and incurred costs and challenges |
| MTM 10. Facing the family | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Had savings and was remitting well ● No outstanding debts/ have worked out plans with the family on how to deal with debts ● Multiple income sources ● Families were supportive of migrants immediate need for mental and social space (for example, understand that they would not want to talk about the difficult circumstances that led to return) and prepared to take the migrant back into their previous roles ● Family members had asked for the return/ the migration objectives were accomplished ● Had continued strong networks of friends in the destination to support transition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of multiple income sources in the family ● Low self -confidence when the return was due to stressful conditions, ● Overwhelmed, feeling of guilt and shame if it was sum negative migration ● Wanting to avoid returning to the family due to ● No counselling on how to face the families and community. ● Coming back to handle stressful family responsibilities. E.g, death, estranged family members, family disintegration, behavioral problems in children ● Outstanding debts ● Huge expectations from the family members |

What are some of the available resources and best practices?

- Migrant formal and informal networks available to support migrants in making return decisions
- Informal networks helping in the return process (e.g. friends and other organization helping to purchase tickets, transfers to airport)
- Support from family in the return process
- Presence of MRCs which could be used as a resource to support migrants and families in preparing for return.
- Presence of ESCs which with an extended role could be used as resources to support migrants plan for economic reintegration
- Providing certification of skills that migrants have learnt in the destination after tests here in Nepal

- Keeping database of migrants/ their skills and matching them with employers' need through the ESCs

What should be the government's role?

- The government's role should primarily focus on building a structured framework for return services and ensuring their implementation. These services should offer a comprehensive bundle tailored to the needs of different groups of migrants wishing to return. An effective starting point could be integrating services in the destination to link with the screening facilities for returnees already initiated by ReMi. This approach offers three key benefits: first, it ensures the continuum of pre-return and post return services are maintained, second, it allows the reintegration process to begin already during the return phase; and third, it enables the government to leverage existing structures and systems established by ReMi, rather than building new ones by simply enhancing these with additional services for aspiring returnees.
- The screening process mentioned above should be followed by providing a bundle of services for aspiring returnees in the destination. The implementation should be coordinated in liaison with the embassy of the destination country in Nepal and the Nepali embassy in the destination country. These services should be tailored to the specific needs of different categories of aspiring returnees, such as those who have completed their contracts, those intending to re-migrate, returnees with pending legal issues, unpaid wages, or other work-related grievances in the destination country, as well as those returning with health issues, debts, or without completing their contracts.
- Develop Pre-return orientation module and management system and provide PRO to families and migrants 6 months before the contract ends and provide the following:
 - Periodic orientation to the migrant while in the destination which also touches on the issue of planning for return.
 - Pre-return orientation (PRO) to families and migrants that helps them navigate challenges of return and plan and be prepared for smooth return even if the return is under distress.
- Raise awareness to migrants on the availability of online counselling facilities
- Strengthen redressal mechanisms in the destination embassy so it can support migrants to deal with challenges that impedes their return.
- Negotiate with the host government about removing penalties for migrants who have to return home due to family or health situations, or because they are unable to continue to work due to other valid reasons.
- Establish infrastructure and systems at district level where migrants can continue upgrading and certifying their skills
- Work in extending MRCs to local municipal level and slowly establish focal points also at the ward level
- Extend MRC's role to support families and migrants prepare for return including making personalised return and reintegration plans
- Train and mobilize returnee volunteers in supporting migrants and their families to make return and reintegration plans
- Conduct awareness raising activities for families of migrants on the importance of making return and reintegration plans. Currently this can be done through placing additional staff at the ESCs and directing migrants to the ESCs through private sector service points such as banks and money transfers where families of migrants come for service or collecting their Social Security Allowances.
- Support services and special privilege for returnees; this consists of service for returnees stay or for safe delivery if baggage comes late and the migrant must go to his hometown, proper baggage handling system for compensation of lost goods and baggage. Customs having special privilege for returnee workers and special extra baggage allowances negotiated for returnee workers with airlines. Free phone facilities at the airport.

2.4.4. Reintegration

For labor migrants, reintegration is a multidimensional concept encompassing health, economic, social, and psychosocial well-being. It involves living with dignity, securing a livelihood, and actively participating in community and family life after return.

As illustrated in Section 2.2.1 and 2.3.1 on returnees' perceptions of successful return, reintegration depends on and extends beyond success in all preceding phases of the migration cycle. The study finds that the period between return and the next income-generating opportunity, was a critical phase in the reintegration cycle for returning migrant workers (RMWs). It was what returnees did at this window that resulted in whether they were able or not to establish a solid foundation for reintegration both economically and emotionally. The ReMi survey data indicates that 59% of returning migrants found a new source of income within three months of returning, while 19% took up to six months. This transition period was vital for rebuilding financial stability and addressing challenges such as debt, family conflicts, and health issues that arose during migration. However, delays in re-engaging with income opportunities exacerbated financial stress and strained family dynamics, making timely economic reintegration essential.

The findings also indicate that reintegration is a fluid concept. Returnees' experiences reveal that some were regarded as successful immediately upon return but struggled to sustain that perception over time. Conversely, others, initially considered unsuccessful due to challenges such as an inability to save during their last migration attempt, later gained recognition as successful through entrepreneurial ventures. This means that while the initial stage mentioned above serves as a platform for take-off, the risk of failed reintegration persists well beyond this phase, highlighting the complexity of this stage.

While the study points that economic stability was the most important factor for most of the study participants, economic integration, social integration, and achieving a sound physical and emotional state are interconnected. Success in one area often positively influences the others, creating a spill-over effect, and the reverse is also true. In the mini-survey, 80% returning migrants reported that they did not find the reintegration support, particularly the economic reintegration that they were looking for. Only 20% returning migrants who were at the verge of retiring from the active economic engagement reported that they do not need reintegration support. Below, we discuss the key moments that matter in this phase, the factors that help or hinder migrants during these moments, and examples of good practices. This will be followed by an exploration of the government's role in supporting successful reintegration.

Table 4. Phase III MTMs

| Key moments that matter | What worked for successful reintegration | What worked less for successful reintegration |
|---|---|---|
| MTM 11. Time between the return and local job/income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs that help meet family income needs are available nearby Self-employment: those with self-employment were happier than those who had jobs even if the income was less- after migration, autonomy and flexibility seems to give a sense of fulfilment Family having multiple sources of income so the average monthly household income is above the national average 30,121¹¹ NPR (USD 222) for 2024 (57,749 NPR, USD 422) and differs slightly for rural and urban areas). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a structured framework and, consequently, an institutionalized and comprehensive reintegration service. Not involved in any income-generating activities within the first three months, or having no sound livelihood plans by that time. No multiple sources of income in the family, with the monthly household income well below NPR |

¹¹ This was 2016 average monthly income of hhs. Based on an estimated average annual inflation rate of 7.5%, the adequate household income for Nepali households in 2024 should be approximately NPR 57,749 (USD 425). In 2030, considering the same inflation rate, the adequate income would rise to around NPR 89,124 (USD 656).

| | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Start earning between 1-3 months of return or at least has a sound plan within this window ● Self-employment sustains beyond the 1.5-2 years critical window ● Necessary infrastructure is available: self-employment fared better if it was close to bigger cities. We found it did better in Morang. ● Financial literacy among spouse and a sound financial plan ● Family support ● Participation in civic life, rebuild relationship with local government ● High savings: however, those with high savings were more reluctant to invest in entrepreneurship and rather went for jobs- they would like to hold onto their income for a risk free condition than invest. ● Willing to work in partnership ● Resolved any health issues related to migration, family conflicts, and intimate partner issues. ● Access to information and able to avail institutional support | <p>57,749 (USD 425) (estimate for 2024 based on actual data of 2015- calculated at the annual inflation rate 7.5%).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Debt or recurring expenses, such as health problems within the family or for oneself, that require regular spending ● Lack of savings, capital or collateral ● Health issues ● Family relationship not intact ● No financial literacy ● Business could not sustain in the critical 1.5-2 years window (In the ReMi survey, 35% of respondents started business but only 24% still have it running) ● No partnership ● No access to backup funding and no insurance against venture failure |
|--|---|

What are some of the best practices?

- Multiple income sources for the family, through returnee cooperatives and savings groups providing seed funding to the family even while the migrant is still in the destination country
- Returnee targeted programs such as Sahuliyatpurnakarja¹²¹³ project-based loans for returnees¹⁴ providing loan packages¹⁵
- ESCs job matching and helping with information on available jobs
- Returnee focused livelihood program (for example, Skills for Employment)
- Returnee focused economic reintegration programs
- MRCs giving information on counselling facilities
- Growing availability of crop and animal insurances, investment in home production of fertiliser and linkages to market to support agribusiness
- Local employment opportunities targeted to returnees (for example, donor programs on local employment and infrastructure support¹⁶)
- Financial literacy programs

What should be the government’s role?

The government’s role should primarily focus on building a structured framework for reintegration services and ensuring their implementation. These services should offer a comprehensive bundle tailored to the needs of different groups of returnees. The provincial government should work on strengthening the role of current ESCs taking leverage of the donors who have a considerable share of interest on migrants in their country plans such as ILO, SDC, IOM, DFID, World Bank and ADB among others. It could play the role of facilitator in

¹²https://www.nrb.org.np/category/faqs/faq_bfr/faq_bfr-sahuliyatpurna-karja/

¹³ <https://moeap.bagamati.gov.np/content/13337/details-of-the-progress-of-the-past>

¹⁴ <https://www.adbl.gov.np/products/loan-and-advances/subsidized-loan/project-based-loan-for-youth-returned-from-abroad/>

¹⁵ For example, in Province 3 the government has allocated 3 billion NPR this year for their project “Utpadantatharogarsrijana ka lagisahuliyatpurnarinlagani” program.

¹⁶ <https://www.seepnepal.com/who-we-are/alignment-with-government-of-nepal/>

bringing these development partners together in identifying structural gaps in the current ESCs to provide a comprehensive bundle of services for return and reintegration. It could then work with the sectoral ministries to identify capacity gaps to deliver those services and propose DPs to fill those gaps. Following are other areas for government's role:

- Make policies to target households instead of individuals in the existing and future employment programs, and design packages that aim to diversify household income sources. Based on the current baseline, the net target income for households (should exceed NPR 57,749 (USD 425) for 2024. This will increase annually in line with the inflation rate.
- Work towards recognition and utilization of migrant's skill through competition-based project calls in existing government and non-government programs. This could include individual calls for returnees to apply alone as well as group calls for larger works. Current programs which can be used for those are Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project, Prime Minister Employment Project among others.
- Work with development partners to create cushions to cover risks of venture failure, facilitate DPs in development of financial support packages and job creation. Focused actions can be done in the following sectors:
 - Nationally, agro-processing (including forestry and fishery) and light manufacturing in the agriculture sector, transport, storage, and communication in the ICT sector, transport in the tourism sector, and hydropower have been identified as having the highest potential for economic transformation, job creation, and inclusive growth¹⁷. Conduct provincial-level sectoral analyses of these industries and collaborate with development partners to create jobs and promote self-employment in these sectors targeted to returnees.
 - Given agriculture and agro-processing are already of high interest to returnees (for example, x% of returnees were self-employed in the agriculture sector after return), develop targeted packages for returnees in these sectors. Similarly, forestry and fishing are less explored for returnees but had major positive impact on growth whilst also being an inclusive sector¹⁸. Provincial government could liaise development partners to work in public private partnership model with the returnees in this sector to support income generation and create local jobs.
 - Studies in Nepal have found that while growth in construction sector does not create labor demand, growth in agriculture significantly increases labor demand¹⁹. Provincial governments could bring together DP who invest in agriculture (seed, fertilizer, irrigation, value chain and market linkages) and partners such as banks who provide collateral free loans in agriculture to create packages targeting returnee households.
 - Current programs on productive reintegration of returnee migrants (such as from IOM, ILO, SDC, ADB and DFID) targets on improving job access of DAG groups but does not focus on increasing labor force participation²⁰. There is already a negative labor force participation of women from households of migrants who work outside Nepal²¹. The provincial government could work with these partners to facilitate in increasing LFP through hh targeting model in IG support.
 - Private investments have been found to have a major positive impact on job creation and productivity. Create low-risk investment opportunities for returnees who have high savings but hold on to their cash due to risky investment climate
 - Like the development of pocket areas in agriculture, establish specialized zones for manufacturing in hinterlands located between villages (resource areas) and big cities

¹⁷ Lemma A and Willem teVelde.D 2017. Pathways to prosperity and inclusive job creation in Nepal. London; ODI

¹⁸https://set.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1.-Nepal-Sectoral-Growth-Paths_Oct-2017.pdf

¹⁹Parikh V and Shakya A. undated.Nepal: A Review of Jobs Portfolio. World Bank Group.

²⁰Parikh V and Shakya A. undated.Nepal: A Review of Jobs Portfolio. World Bank Group

²¹Parikh V and Shakya A. undated.Nepal: A review of jobs portfolio. World Bank Group

(markets). Provide infrastructure, insurance, and financial packages to encourage returnees to invest in manufacturing.

- Currently there are three main challenges with the migrant/ returnee focused loans; a. the interest rate is high (12%), b. the process is complicated, and c. the repayment starts from the first month of taking the loan. This pushes returnees into further debt traps from such loans. Hence, it is not useful to the returnees. Reduce the rate of interest and push the payment window to at least 6 months and simplify the process so the package is useful for returnees.
 - Currently aspiring returnees cannot apply for loans from the country of destination already. Leverage the use of digital technology, incentivize private sectors to make connection with international banking systems in the CoD and make it possible for returnees to process for loans while they are still in the CoD. This will save time for securing financial capitals for ventures and they can plan return financially.
 - Collaborate with Development Partners (DPs) to establish "innovative pooled funding" mechanisms to support the effective utilization of skills acquired by migrants during their time abroad after they return. This can be started with a pilot project from the ReMi study areas for the country.
 - Leverage digital technology to simplify application processes, allowing aspiring returnees to apply online, including from their country of destination (CoD), if they choose.
 - Work with the CoD embassy in Nepal and the Nepali embassy in the CoD to explore how aspiring returnees can access resources such as training, knowledge, and networks in the CoD to enhance their productivity and performance in above activities.
- Provide financial literacy training to migrants and families tailored to support economic reintegration into the labor market.
 - Develop pre-return orientation program that provides tailored sessions on awareness raising about importance of timely economic reintegration- such as why they should start engaging in income generating activities within 3 months of return, sustaining jobs and entrepreneurship until the 1.5-2 years critical period, why they should aim for hh income diversification, important of developing ventures that engages multiple family members and so on.
 - Local government should develop regular local outreach program for returnees to support social reintegration such as access to public services including health, skills, social protection schemes and civic information
 - Local governments could leverage cultural and religious events, such as festivals and days of national importance, to facilitate the reintegration of returnees into civic life, civil society structures, and community groups, while also helping them reconnect with local values and traditions.
 - Develop sectoral outreach program for returnees- for example, free health check-ups upon arrival, links to health service centers such as OCMCs.
 - Raise awareness on the importance of mental health screening and accessing psychosocial counselling centers and make these services returnee friendly.

2.4.5 Remigration

While the European framework considers re-migration to impede sustainable development, studies in Asia find that re-migration is an integral part of the migration cycle for Asian labor migrants for the foreseeable future and could also provide a thrust to their socioeconomic development (Bikis, 2022; Siddiqui and Bhyuan, 2013; Rashid and Ashraf, 2018).

The study finds that in Nepal, re-migration should be addressed with a dual approach. Firstly, given that income from in-country jobs is less likely to meet family economic aspirations, returnees who perceive prospects abroad are likely to compare domestic income opportunities with those from foreign employment after their first migration experience. If their family and personal situation permits, they are less likely to stay back if domestic income conditions remain unsatisfactory. Secondly, the aim could be on creating an

environment where the second migration is a choice, not a compulsion. It cannot be sustainable if it is about stopping re-migration. If a returnee wishes to migrate, it is important that we facilitate and enable them to make voluntary and informed decisions about re-migration in this phase.

In the ReMi mini-survey, 33% plan to return abroad and another 7% would migrate if circumstances require it. In the SaMi Migration Profile, 55% of the returnees were interested in re-migrating and 15.8% had already initiated the re-migration process. There are similar findings on high aspirations for remigration from other parts of South Asia as well (see Siddiqui and Bhyuian, 2013, Bikis, 2022). Largely, the driver of re-migration is economic. Participants expressed disillusionment created by the lack of economic reintegration services in the country.

A regression analysis from the ReMi mini-survey reveals that the decision to re-migrate is strongly influenced by the quality of the economic reintegration experience, rather than factors like age or family situation. 80% of those planning to re-migrate identified income-related challenges as their primary motivation. Qualitative data aligns with these findings, highlighting that migrants often feel driven to leave again when their income at home fails to cover debts, meet family needs, or provide economic stability, and when they are unable to utilize their skills effectively post-return. In contrast, the main reasons for deciding not to re-migrate included advancing age, chronic illness or disability, a desire to remain close to family, behavioral challenges in children and a determination to build a livelihood in Nepal.

Returnees viewed migration as a high-risk gamble, knowing it could increase their financial burden but also recognizing it as the only viable option to resolve pressing issues quickly. For some of them, it doubled their debt but they had taken the chance in the hope of achieving financial stability. Those who have faced failed returns in the past had often decided to migrate again, believing that success is still attainable. They adjusted their approach by changing countries, jobs, or recruitment agents, hoping these new factors will improve their outcomes.

Those with prior success pursued migration again thinking that if it worked once, it could work again. They shared the feeling that repeating migration is a proven strategy to resolve financial problems. For most others, the idea of trying again brings renewed hope and enthusiasm, no matter the challenges ahead.

Below, we discuss the key moments that matter in this phase, the factors that help or hinder migrants during these moments, and examples of good practices. This will be followed by an exploration of the government's role in ensuring migration is a choice and not a compulsion and is safe, orderly and productive.

Table 5. Phase IV MTMs

| Key MTMs | What supports are needed? | What hinders migration out of choice and makes it risky and less productive migration? |
|---|--|--|
| MTM 12. The state of indecisiveness - migrate again vs stay back | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Psycho-social counselling and medical treatment ● Awareness about the importance of screening for mental health/psychosocial health ● Strengthening family and community support systems to ease the emotional burdens returnees face. ● Access to migrant networks ● Financial packages for returnees to come out of debt bondages ● Insurance and interim loans to cover costs during job search period, covering opportunity cost of skill trainings or venture. ● Linkages to existing support systems –such as loans and financial support systems from different sectoral Ministries at the province and local | Lack of awareness about psychosocial counseling. This gap often results in delayed economic reintegration, as returnees may struggle with unresolved mental health challenges, family issues or other stress. Delays in economic reintegration can escalate financial pressures, potentially triggering risky re-migration driven by desperation rather than informed choice |

- Mediation for fraudulence
- Compulsory PEOs, and PEOs widely available at MRCs and ESCs. The PEO should have the following among others:
- Vulnerability assessment related to re-migration (we have proposed for digital simulation facilities at Municipalities)
- Information and linkages to service about recognition of prior learning of skills, skill accreditation services and certification of experience.
- Counselling about income generation and linking to jobs in the country.
- Job matching facilities for foreign employment available the MRCs and ESCs
- Family migration management and return plan made by the migrant and the family during the PEO with the help of ESC/MRC staffs.
- Other supports include:
- Incentives for enhancing skills/ topping up on the skills they have learnt abroad to get promoted to higher paying jobs.
- Provision of re-migration loans with less interest and delayed payment window and incentives built in for families who have undergone PEO.
- Existing networks and connections in the destination

What are some of the best practices?

- On-line psychosocial screening, referral and counselling for migrants including those that they can use from destination
- Free online psychosocial counselling services through ReMi and other partners after return
- Screening for economic aspirations and linkages to services through ESCs and ReMi
- Targeted loans for entrepreneurship, youths, migration and other sectoral loans (for example, on agriculture) through DPs and banks
- Availability of facilities for skill tests and certification and free skill training including in the ESCs.
- Social networks in the destination that support transition phase during reintegration (such as keeping networks alive for emotional wellbeing and connection, tangible support for remigration)

What should be the government's role?

- Provincial government needs to play an active facilitating role to invest in increasing resources at MRCs and ESCs and making it possible to use facilities of the municipality.
- Have programmes that engage families in reintegration efforts—such as counselling and social support initiatives to reduce emotional stress and encourage migrants to stay.
- Conduct awareness raising activities to dispel the myths that successful migration is about luck, and do wide information sharing on how to reduce the uncertainty and increase the certainty in making migration successful and what services are available for it.
- Most migrants with high cash do not want to invest their savings due to perceived risks of venture failures. Have insurances and interim loans designed so migrants do not have to use their savings during the job search period (for those who are looking for jobs)/have a backup if their ventures fail (for those who want to go for self-employment).
- To ensure migration is not out of compulsion, extend ReMi work and invest more resources to increase current human resources and activities. This should be facilitated by the provincial government by bringing together DPs for engagement. Some activities that need to be added to current ESCs are:
 - Distinction of skills of returnees and directing them with employers in Nepal- For example link the EMIS and the SaMi profile to connect returnees with the skill accreditation centres, employers, development partners' schemes and employment opportunities in Nepal.

- The study finds that returnees are more mobile than non-migrants, but are currently only moving between their hometowns and nearby city centres after returning. Capitalize on this to direct returnees toward job opportunities across the country. This can be done by linking the Employment Management Information System (EMIS) to facilitate nationwide job matching, enabling Employment Service Centres (ESCs) to connect returnees with employers in all seven provinces.
- Link Employment Service Centres (ESCs) and Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) to all calls from recruitment agencies to facilitate job matching for international employment opportunities.
- Resource ESCs and MRCs so they can provide counselling on skill development, pathways for higher-income foreign employment, and comparisons between income from international jobs and jobs available within the country so returnees can make well informed decisions if they want to re-migrate
- Ensure MRCs and ESCs have updated training centers and they are regularly updated.

2.5 RQ 5. What are the most suitable outreach and communication strategies targeting returnees? What communication mechanism/theme could resonate with them?

Below we discuss findings about the common source of information, kind of information, outreach strategies and communication strategies that can be used to support returnee migrants for smooth reintegration and for remigration if they wish to. The study finds that while information sharing is crucial at all points in the migration cycle, there are certain points where such support is crucial for reintegration. We give information around communication strategies and information based on the key moments we have identified in the study as described in section 2.3.

2.5.1 Information source and channel

The study used social network tools to understand returnees' sources of information and other social support. It finds that returnees depend on a small circle of informal relations for support. They would usually lose touch with formal systems and a larger network during their migration phase. The most common source of information for returnee migrants are friends who have previous migration experience, or those that are still in the destination, friends from the community and family members. Mostly with these people they discuss their ideas around economic reintegration and challenges. While returnees often rely on local unregistered agents for information before migrating, they tend not to seek support from these agents after returning.

They also do not approach formal sources for information. When returnees received information from formal sources, it was often due to proactive outreach by these sources, such as staff members from organizations meeting them during some occasions. We did not find cases where returnee migrants had actively gone to the ESCs. Alternatively, the information reached them through friends, family members, or neighbors who were aware of the formal sources. In the study area, ESC and ReMi seem to be filling an important vacuum as there are no other formal sources of information. However, returnees largely expect quick, tangible and sustainable economic benefits from ReMi and ESC. This does not align with the mandate and capacity of these centers. Due to preexisting financial expectations, returnees are biased about the potential advantages from ReMi and ESC services. They do not value the information and follow the advice. There are challenges with the ESC as well to effectively deliver its mandate; it is severely under-resourced and due to it, the current structure and service is neither able to consider the local labor market characteristics, skills, and service needs nor work with the employer to link job searchers with the employer.

Besides the above, friends and family are important sources of support. Hence it is important to work with spouses of migrants and inform them about where returnees can seek support for reintegration after return

and the importance of these services for smooth reintegration. This can be done as a part of the already existing regular community awareness and behavioral change component in sectoral programs of the local, provincial and the federal government.

Besides the above, family, extended family such as in-laws, friends and community people were found to play an important role in psychosocial reintegration of the returnees. In the current state, the following might be important:

- Upgrade the services of the centers to make services stronger.
- Map existing community awareness and behavioral change programs of different sectoral ministries in the province and scope potential areas where ReMi and ESC can work together for awareness raising about the importance of seeking formal reintegration services. This meeting can be coordinated by the provincial chief Minister's office.
- Awareness raising programs to inform the returnees about the importance of services provided in the center for reintegration. Case studies of local success can be used as role models and disseminated in the community to inform returnees about the importance of services which might bring behavioral changes.
- Continue current work that ReMi and SaMi are doing with returnee volunteers and use them for providing reintegration services.

2.5.2 Outreach and communication strategies

Study findings highlight that the outreach and communication that fosters smooth return and reintegration should happen in continuum throughout the migration cycle in general. The 12 moments that matter discussed in section 2.4 are pivotal points. The services required at these critical moments may vary. For instance, during the initial migration decision-making phase (MTM1), migrants and their families need support about developing plans for their eventual return and to consider adaptive measures in case they are compelled to return due to unforeseen challenges. Below we highlight the main potential communication points to support returnees in terms of time, outreach and communication strategies across the key moments that matter. We would like to reiterate that while support and information should be always available, the below moments are points for focused interventions for smooth return and reintegration.

Table 6. Information & Communication

| MTMs | Kind of information | Outreach strategies | Communication strategies | Targeted groups |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| MTM-1. Taking decisions to migrate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why planning about return is important ○ Why involving family in the return plan is important ○ How to finance migration so you don't fall into debt bondage when there is emergency return/or when situations are not conducive ○ Return plans should encompass both standard return scenarios and adaptive measures for situations where migrants need to return due to unexpected circumstances. ○ How to make plans for return (involving the family) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Through compulsory PEOs ○ Through the MRCs/ points where migrants come to make the passport ○ Local government units when aspiring migrants come to make referral documents ○ For returnees who want to re-migrate- this information should be given at ReMi points in the ESCs ○ Through structured PEO and PDO ○ Through the district administration/points where migrants go to make | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local government service points mentioned in outreach strategies should direct them to the MRCs and PEOs. The MRCs and PEOs should deliver the services/ information and support. ○ Develop a sample flyer outlining different scenarios and facilitate the migrant and the family member to fill it. They can then take it back with them and keep them for | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Migrants ○ Relevant family member of the migrant |

| MTMs | Kind of information | Outreach strategies | Communication strategies | Targeted groups |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the passports/or local government offices where they go for referral documents Financial literacy classes to migrants and families | use/adapt plans as needed. | |
| MTM 2. Finding an agent and processing for migration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migrant workers social security (why it is important, what is available and how to use it) from Local government. It is possible to renew labour permits at the local government units. | Through an information counter at the airport before the migrants depart | | |
| MTM 5- Adapting to life in country of destination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return is a possibility and should not be taken as failure. Return and reintegration works better if it is meticulously planned When and why to seek psychosocial support to prepare for return. Support services are available for preparing for return and reintegration Available support for planning economic reintegration Available psychosocial support at CoD and upon return. Re-integration support services in CoD and back home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embassy sending SMS giving emotional support upon arrival at the destination to report any issues. Through the MRCs and PEO before migration Migrants calling the employment service centres to share about the violence they are facing at work and from home. Through Post Arrival Orientations given periodically and facilitated jointly by MoLESS and by Nepali embassy in CoD, Through diaspora and NGOs working with Nepali migrants At arrival points in the destination airports Cultural programs and diaspora outreach activities done by embassy and migrant/networks Online sessions by Nepali Embassy in CoD Through helpline of the COD Nepali Embassy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works best with individual or group face to face interactions/sessions Calls with the counsellors of the MRCs and with the employment service centre. Keep a designated person for remote counselling calls at the ESCs so migrants can seek support in mental wellbeing but also plan financially about return. Accompanied by flyers which highlight importance of support in pictorial forms and list of support available. Make flyers available to all stakeholders listed in column 3 and ask them to give it to the aspiring migrants when they come to their point for services Periodic dissemination through the various sources (see Column 3) | Migrants and the relevant family member who was in the PEO plan |
| MTM- 6 Managing family relations while abroad | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reminder to update planning about return and reintegration with family members Reminders to stay updated about economic and psychosocial support available through visits to MRCs and ESC. Reminders to save their income Reminders that if their family members can plan for return | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At passport/visa renewal units in CoD and Nepal (when migrants come for holidays) Asking family members to drop in and avail services at MRCs/ESCs when they visit for other purpose Register and send reminders through SMS. | | Family members so they can communicate with their migrant member who are in |

| MTMs | Kind of information | Outreach strategies | Communication strategies | Targeted groups |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| | <p>while they are still working abroad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How to establish linkages to job opportunities available and how they can apply for in-country jobs through ESCs while abroad | <p>(For example; since a significant proportion of returnees have gone back to agriculture –we propose cross-sectoral linkages between ReMi/ESCs and digital services used in agriculture²². Keep help desks at banks, co-operatives and IME centers for returnee migrants and use them as MRCs for migrants and their families</p> | | <p>the destination</p> |
| MTM-7. Managing home visits and leave | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reminding them to visit MRCs and ESCs at their areas for support services ○ Reminding them to get information about potential supports in planning return for future ○ Reminding them to visit ESCs to get information about job possibilities in Nepal/ available financial and non-financial support for entrepreneurship/ mentoring about planning for return or re-migration. ○ Information about whom to share problems, how to communicate with the family about problems ○ Information about what documents they should bring from abroad and what document to take to the local government unit for renewal of labour permits ○ About why it is important to be integrated in the SSA programme for returnees | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flyers with message (and contact number of focal person) ○ At the airport (when migrants come for holidays/return). ○ At airports when migrants are going back to their destination countries ○ Keep information flyers reminding linkages to ESCs and MRCs ○ Keep flyers in migrants boarding houses/accommodation using Nepali diaspora ○ Keep flyers in malls, Nepali restaurants, other private service centers such as travel and visa renewal support centers frequently visited by migrants ○ Outreach activities in the airport arrivals (home and CoD) ○ ESCs, MRCs in country and in the destination, networks of migrants and returnees ○ Remittance points in the destination ○ Public places frequently visited by migrants in the home village (such as farmers market, local fairs, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flyers ○ SMS ○ Community awareness and behavioral change programs of the sectoral ministries ○ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Migrants ○ Families of migrants |

○ ²² Other studies have found that use of digital apps such as GEOKRISHI has a good uptake and the app has regular SMS services. We have found in research that their “weather forecast SMS service” is famous with farmers including women farmers who have low digital literacy. Hence, we can use the app occasionally to provide information on migration or about MRC and ESC services such as “ A kind reminder: if your family members are in foreign employment, please visit the MRCs or ESCs to understand what services they have for migrants and their family members”. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TWQX.pdf

| MTMs | Kind of information | Outreach strategies | Communication strategies | Targeted groups |
|--|--|--|---|-----------------|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ward office, points where migrants receive SSA and get remittances) ○ Through the MRCs, local government representatives and ReMi and SaMi volunteers, returnee migrants networks, and local government units | | |
| MTM 8: Return decision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why psychosocial preparedness is important in return decisions ○ Counselling services available online, in the destination and after they are back home ○ What should returnees and their family do to be emotionally prepared for return ○ The importance of having a financial plan and starting income generation within the first 3 months of return ○ Job vs. entrepreneurship- how to make a decision and where to follow up for support in simulations and decision-making ○ The importance of having multiple income sources ○ Support for debt bondage ○ Support they can avail for financial planning and preparedness for economic reintegration ○ Where to avail services if returning in distress | | | |
| MTM-9. Facing the family | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What to expect and how to deal with stress during facing the family ○ The importance of being prepared to face the family ○ Information kits for people in distress to prepare/ deal with stresses ○ How to support returnee family member emotionally during the first few weeks, including what are the emotional needs during that phase ○ How to access psychosocial services | <p>Through community awareness programs. The programs can give information about MRCs and other relevant places such as the OCMC for</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Migrant ○ Family members | |
| MTM-10. Time between the return | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Simulations on whether self-employment or job is better for the returnee and support from ESCs to make that decision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the airport at arrival points ○ In public places such as market, local tea stalls, | <p>Flyers with pictorial information about how to</p> | |

| MTMs | Kind of information | Outreach strategies | Communication strategies | Targeted groups |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| and local job/income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The importance of looking for formal sources of information/ institutional information ○ Services provided by the ESCs and how to avail it ○ Services provided by MRCs and how to avail it ○ Information about special financial packages offered for returnee migrants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> farmers market, local liquor shops, bus stops and local fairs ○ Through home visits from ward representatives ○ Home visits from other sectoral staffs ○ To family members from points where they collect their SSAs | | |
| MTM 12. Deciding to remigrate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being successful in migration is not about luck but about sound decision and preparation ○ What services are available for you to better decide and prepare for foreign employment ○ Accessing options for employment away from home village but internally within the country through ESCs. ○ The importance of conducting simulations to assess whether re-migration is the best option and links to ESCs and MRCs for support for simulation ○ The importance of assessing risks and resources to determine successful migration ○ The importance of making informed decisions and facilities (including simulations) available for supporting decision-making ○ The importance of getting information from formal sources ○ The importance of using formal channels in migration process ○ Importance of visiting ESCs and MRCs before making decisions ○ Support for remigration available in MRCs and ESCs. ○ Importance of taking PEO and PDO ○ Skills test and what income difference skills can make in their income | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Using locally elected representatives, social leaders, ward office staffs, community leaders, teachers through SMC meetings, (such as “Badghar” in case of Tharu community, religious leaders in Muslim communities) ○ Using returnee volunteers to do individual counselling to direct returnees who want to migrate to MRCs and ESCs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use flyers that present information in diagrams and give contact information ○ Use community meetings such as women’s groups monthly meetings, forest and water user groups meeting, important occasions to disseminate the flyers/ information about ESCs and MRCs support in reintegration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family of migrant who wants to remigrate ○ Returnee who wants to remigrate |

Further specific draft message samples for specific phases are given in Appendix 5.

3. REMI-Specific Results

3.1 RQ-6. Are REMI's strategies, assumptions, and project indicators, as included in the logical framework, accurate? Are there any changes suggested based on the research?

As part of the research, we assessed the theory of change included in the project's document (see Appendix 3) from the perspectives obtained from the qualitative as well as quantitative data. A table below narrates the goals/assumptions and provides comments.

| |
|---|
| <p>Goal: Returnee Migrant Workers (RMWs) have re-established themselves in Nepal and actively participate in social, cultural, economic, and political life.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The research results suggest that RMWs do not value cultural and political reintegration to the extent of social and economic reintegration, and one of the top priorities for them upon return is also to attain a sound economic status of the household and good socio-emotional state.• Moreover, the study finds that returnee migrants live multi-local livelihoods- living and working between their village homes and district headquarters, adjacent cities, and towns. Hence, the reintegration space is much more extended and fluid for most except those who are thinking of retirement to the same place. The concept of re-establishment and reintegration must take this mobility into account and reintegration services must be catered to address multi-local embeddedness. |
| <p>Assumption 1. When families and communities recognize the positive contribution of migration to development and understand that women and men have equal rights and no one has the moral authority to harm the other, then RMWs will be accepted in their families and community of origin.</p> |
| <p>This statement assumes that social stigma related to return migration affects only women. This was validated by the qualitative results. While it is true that women face stigma regardless of their financial success, it is important to note that men also experience similar challenges, particularly if they return without achieving financial success, face family breakdowns, or endure a failed migration experience. Qualitative interviews revealed that all RMWs reported socio-emotional challenges and frustrations, with some even admitting to having contemplated suicide.</p> <p>The interviews underscored that the most critical reintegration need lies within the family. Many RMWs expressed a greater fear of facing their families than the community upon return, with familial relationships significantly influencing their emotional well-being. While the community's impact on RMWs was present, it was notably less than that of the family.</p> <p>Takeaways. The study suggests the need to revise the project's assumption to include male RMWs, especially those who were forced to return, and prioritizing family reintegration. This should include emotional support, counselling, and fostering a sense of stability and acceptance within the family, as these are foundational to successful reintegration.</p> |
| <p>Assumption 2. When a returnee and their families can access reintegration support services, including for family and psychosocial counselling, then RMWS and their families will be able to use their migration experience to create income generating activities, re-establish social ties and networks, and feel safe, and while having access to justice.</p> |

The findings confirm that this assumption is correct. However, services that helps them plan for social and economic reintegration after return should start while they are already during the migration phase and continue in the destination country and after return. As discussed in section 2.5, there are areas where the return focus should be strong and others where just reminders can help. Currently, migration and return are often left to chance, highlighting the importance of shifting from reactive reintegration services to proactive, preventive measures. Reintegration orientation should be seamlessly integrated across all four phases of migration: Pre-Employment Orientation (PEO), Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO), Post-Arrival Orientation (PAO), and Pre-Return Orientation (PRO). While Migrant Resource Centers (MRCs) provide some pre-employment counselling, these efforts need significant expansion. Sessions should include family-focused components, offering guidance on family management plans, relationship and communication strategies, mental health care, emotional well-being, and fiscal planning for return. Such comprehensive orientations will better equip migrants and their families for the challenges of migration and reintegration, fostering healthier and more sustainable outcomes.

Economic reintegration may also indirectly aid family reintegration, as engaging in productive activities can provide a sense of purpose and alleviate some emotional and social pressures faced by returnee migrants.

Assumption 3. When three spheres of government are aware about the needs of migrants and their families and coordinate together with the private sector and CSOs for the provision of needs-based and gender-sensitive reintegration support services, then the policies, legislation, budget and planning processes will include reintegration needs and the government will provide reintegration services to the returnee migrant workers.

The qualitative discussions suggest that RMWs mostly looked to receive tangible financial support more so than information alone because they are unaware about the importance of information. Currently ESCs are a part of the federal government and not completely owned by local government in all places. Moreover, there is a lack of active involvement of provincial government line ministry in return and reintegrating support. The line ministry should take the lead and play facilitator role in system building. It should bring the local government together to assess what resources they have for effectively supporting the migrants in all the five phases of migration and the 12 crucial moments discussed above. After identifying the gap, it could bring together development partners, bi-laterals and multi-laterals working in the province to plan and map out where the work of the partners align, what resource and technical support they can provide, how can the gap support the DPs to plan their country/ interventions strategy and how they can work together in making a strong system to support return and reintegration.

3.2 Building the Baseline: Project Indicators and their value during the stage

As part of the research, we have compiled the baseline data for REMI. Table 7 provides the details.

Table 7. Baseline data for ReMI

| Level of outcomes | Metric | Baseline value | Remarks |
|---|---|--|------------------------|
| Goal: Returnee Migrant Workers (RMWs) have re-established themselves in Nepal and actively participate in social, cultural, economic, and political life. | Qualitative assessment of RMWs regarding participation in social, cultural, economic and political life | RMWs are facing challenges to maintain their emotional and social health in absence of any external support. | |
| | % of RMWs who want to migrate again for employment | 54.5% (N=11,390) | SaMi Survey in Koshi & |

| | | | |
|---|--|---------------------|-------------|
| | | | Madhesh |
| Outcome 1: Men and women returnee migrant workers in project working area establish a stable social and economic situation. | Proportion of RMWs in waged employment | 12.5% (N=11,390) | SaMi Survey |
| | Men | 12.6% (N=11,247) | SaMi Survey |
| | Women | 4.9% (N=143) | SaMi Survey |
| | Koshi | 3.1% (N=3,939) | SaMi Survey |
| | Madhesh | 17.4% (N=7,451) | SaMi Survey |
| | Proportion of RMWs who are self-employed | 25.5% (N=11,390) | SaMi Survey |
| | Men | 25.5% (N=11,247) | SaMi Survey |
| | Women | 22.4% (N=143) | SaMi Survey |
| | Koshi | 31.2% (N=3,939) | SaMi Survey |
| | Madhesh | 22.4 (N=7,451) | SaMi Survey |
| | Proportion of RMWs with improved psychosocial well-being: % of RMWs who feel fully engaged socially | 30.6% (N=252) | Mini-Survey |
| Outcome 2: The three tiers of government implement effective mechanisms to provide reintegration services to returnee migrant workers | % of RMWs who are aware about the reintegration services | 23.4% (N=252) | Mini-Survey |
| | % of RMWs who are satisfied with reintegration services provided by local governments (disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, caste) | 35.7% (N=252) | Mini-Survey |
| | Policies, procedures and legal provisions in place related to reintegration in the three tiers of government | | |
| | Provincial and local governments have coherent plans and budgets for the reintegration of migrants | | |

4. Conclusion and Way Forward

The study was conducted by the ReMi project to support the returnees to re-establish themselves in Nepal and actively engage in social, cultural, economic, and political life. The study was conducted to have a deeper understanding of returnees, including their profile, their aspirations and challenges, emic perspective and their families is essential to better support their needs for economic self-sufficiency, social stability, and psychosocial well-being.

The report aimed to understand the profile of returnee migrants including their age, sex, years of migration and reasons for return, how returning migrants define successful migration, the status of social and economic reintegration, key moments in the return and reintegration process. It also aimed to understand the interests, motivations, and incentives for reintegration. Finally, the study looked at the most suitable outreach and communication strategies for returnee migrant workers at different phases of migration and how ReMi's

strategies, assumptions and project indicators fare against the context of return and reintegration in the study sites.

The study finds that economic reintegration challenges are the most visible challenges for many returnee migrants, male. However, underlying challenges with the family leads to negative economic reintegration as well as emotional health issues. This could also occur for men and seems to be at high risk for women. Women migrants raised the issue of children as their pressing concern.

The study finds that returnees come back with knowledge and skills and other resources which with small support and enabling environment can help in economic reintegration. Critical barriers to economic reintegration are lack of information and financial literacy among returnees and their families, lack of well contemplated return plan before return, lack of financial and knowledge support services and pressure to start an income generating activity among others. Majority of returnees had taken self-employment and were happy with the pursuit. Cash rich returnees are however more likely to choose jobs than to use their cash.

Families and other support networks have provided critical support in social reintegration. Social reintegration comes out as a stronger challenge for women and for men who have not been very successful in saving and remitting well in the last migration cycle. As with economic reintegration, family plays the most important part in successful reintegration. Other skills that returnees have learnt in the destination about interpersonal behavior, appreciation of family and living with family were other factors that worked for social reintegration. The study has identified 5 stages and 12 critical moments that shape return and reintegration. It has also highlighted what has worked and what are challenges at each critical moment. Furthermore, for each stage the study has identified what are the existing resources, systems or structures in place that have potentials to support reintegration and recommendations on ways to make an enabling environment for better social, economic and psychosocial reintegration. Those are the way forward for the study.

Below we summarize some of the way forward for different stakeholders and the evidence that this study has found out that are critical to reintegration policies and programs.

Federal government

Revision of sectoral policies to integrate migration, return and reintegration

Revise sectoral policies to integrate migration, return and reintegration. Some sectoral policies have rightly started focusing on reintegration –such as agricultural policies but gaps in implementation and resourcing are still a constraint there. Others such as policies related to youths, health, social security, and employment need to also align with the reintegration priorities for migrants.

Working on bilateral agreements

Use evidence and rework on bilateral agreements to make them address issues of Nepali migrants which drive unplanned return- such as those related to wages, working conditions, human rights and protection and wellbeing of Nepali migrants. This should also include addressing issues around migrants' health facilities and compulsory post arrival orientation within 3 days of reaching the destination.

Focusing on addressing the health issues of migrants

This should be done during migration and after their return, with a strong emphasis on the responsibility of the destination country governments and support from development partners. Health challenges are very strong barriers in migrant wellbeing and migrants' health seems to deteriorate significantly due to migration. Take steps to address this problem with the destination government and the development partners such as WHO.

Work with development partners on employment generation focusing on return and reintegration

- Work with critical development partners who have migration, green growth and employment creation strongly in their agenda such as Swiss Development Cooperation, USAID, Swedish Embassy among others to make enabling environment in the employment sectors that have high potentials (see discussion in section 2.4)
- Work with destination government to create system for skill accreditation and skill matching digital systems
- Use destination country resources situated in the home country (such as destination government's embassies, philanthropic networks) to resource Pre-Employment and Post arrival orientations and make them available locally.

Working with Nepali diaspora to support Nepali migrants and run Post Arrival Orientation

Non-Resident Nepali Association and Nepali networks have a strong presence in some of the destination countries. There are also other district-based networks. These can be used as important resources to support migrants in the post arrival stage, while adapting to work and living in the destination and for making plans to return. The Nepali embassy situated in the destination must keep robust data of people who come to their territory. This data should be used to reach out to the migrants as soon as they reach the destination. The government should provide a sim of the destination country to the migrants after the PDO.

Develop a holistic migration policy

Have a holistic migration policy that looks at internal, cross-border migration, return and reintegration in addition to return from foreign employment.

Provincial government

Strengthening Employment Service Centers (ESCs) to Support Returnees

- Efforts should focus on strengthening Employment Service Centers (ESCs) and expanding their services to better support returnees. This process can begin by mapping the resources and identifying technical gaps within the current ESCs to ensure they are equipped to provide effective return and reintegration services. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 provide detailed descriptions of the required services.
- Once the gaps are identified, collaboration with local governments and cross-sectoral ministries is essential. Start by mapping available resources within provincial sectoral ministries and local governments. This should be followed by convening dialogues with multi-sectoral actors, including development partners and multilateral organizations, to explore how they can contribute to addressing the remaining gaps.
- Together with local governments, development partners and sectoral ministries, a comprehensive system-strengthening plan for ESCs should be developed to ensure the delivery of holistic and effective services for return and reintegration

Work in making PEO and PDO available locally through the ESCs and MRCs

- Currently PDOT is provided by private sectors and only available in Kathmandu/province capital. The local government should have PDOT facilities available locally to enable migrants to get low cost and easily accessible PDOTs.
- Make local governments aware about PDOT and ensure they give the PDOT services locally.
- The provincial government could make Pre-Employment Orientation (see developed module in link in section 2.4) compulsory and give it through the MRCs and ESCs at the local level.

Extend health services for migrants and returnees

Work with the federal government and development partners to strengthen health services for migrants while they are in the destination and upon return.

Strengthen returnee and migrant outreach systems

- Revise current outreach mechanisms to ensure returnees are well-informed about existing facilities and services. Focus on creating awareness about the importance of connecting with critical services such as social protection and implement efforts to make returnees feel welcomed and supported.
- Collaborate with local governments and development partners to develop targeted programs addressing the needs. Additionally, train local representatives on their roles and responsibilities in supporting returnees effectively.
- Elected representatives can play a strong part in making returnees feel welcome and in supporting emotional reintegration. Currently they are not aware about the different challenges associated with return and reintegration. There is a need to do awareness and capacity building workshops with the elected representatives at the local level.
- Elected representatives can play a strong part in making returnees feel welcome and in supporting emotional reintegration. Currently they are not aware about the different challenges associated with return and reintegration. There is a need to do awareness and capacity building workshops with the elected representatives at the local level.

Strengthen economic support packages to returnees by working with employers, private sectors and banks

- Work with banks and other private sector financial institutions to provide better loan services to returnees. This should contain longer payment windows and less interest.
- Work with insurance companies to ensure against self-employment failures
- Link the EMIS system at the ESC to the FEMIS system and keep a database of returnee skills. Use this to link them to demands available in different parts of the country
- Work in market strengthening to ensure returnees in self-employment have access to timely goods and services (such

Local government

Extend outreach and support to returnee migrants: Most returnees were not parts of any local committees which shows that there are barriers to active community participation after return. Returnees who were not part of the network shared that they were trying to solve their own economic and or family reintegration and had not had the time to look towards further participation in the community actively. Women returnees additionally shared that they were not interested in such participation except in group based savings as they felt disconnected and due to fear of backbiting for their foreign employment experience. This led them to restrict their engagement to home and family only.

- Support ESCs to deliver their functions efficiently at the local level
- Strengthen returnee outreach mechanisms and link them with ESCs and MRCs
- Run social and behavioral changes activities in community and family to support in social reintegration of returnees. Local government can take support of development partners to learn good practices in different countries
- Support in PEO and PDO by running classes at local level
- Female returnees expressed disinterest in community participation beyond group-based savings initiatives. Many felt disconnected due to their foreign employment experiences and feared stigma or backbiting, leading them to limit their engagement to household and family responsibilities.
- In contrast, returnees who were part of local returnee networks had greater voice and agency in navigating their return and reintegration processes. Those without such support networks often faced reintegration challenges in isolation, lacking the group-based assistance available to network members.
- Use the community psychosocial health volunteers to support women and men access counselling and linkages to emotional and psychosocial wellbeing services

Further evidence generating

Due to time and resource constraints the study has not been able to cover many different aspects of return and reintegration. Following are the some of the areas that need further studies:

- How costs of education, health and other expenses are pushing migration and how can this be addressed? How can sectoral policies such as agricultural, industrial, health etc be leveraged to support smooth return and reintegration of returnees?
- The study found that health is an important area of integration. Currently there were many migrants who shared their health deteriorates during migration. Some have come back being unable to work while some have faced bad health conditions quickly after returning. The study points to a very strong health focused research to inform re-integration programmes and policies.
- The study recognises that there are specific needs of some groups such as those who are undocumented, domestic workers which we have not been able to cover widely. There is a need for further focused study for these. Other structural challenges such as about attitudes of implementers towards women's return and reintegration needs to be further studied.
- The study finds that some returnee workers come back after working for several years as undocumented workers. These returnees have largely faced non-payment of wage and other social protection related benefits from the employer. In case of undocumented workers who return without getting their share of payments, the government should work with the destination government on how to ensure they get their rightful share of salaries and allowances.
- The current employment service centres have the mandate to link job seekers with employers. The study finds that the implementation has not been very successful. There is a need for further studies on what are the barriers in this system and what can be done to address the issue.

References

- Amuedo-Dorantes, C., & Pozo, S. (2006). Remittance Receipt and Business Ownership in the Dominican Republic. *World Economy*, 29(7), 939–956. <https://doi-org.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/10.1111/j.1467-9701.2006.00830.x>
- Azose, J. J. & Raftery, A. E. (2019). *Estimation of emigration, return migration, and transit migration between all pairs of countries*, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Jan 2019, 116 (1) 116-122; DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1722334116
- Bhattarai, S., Baniya, J., Shrestha, S., Thapa, P., Neupane, R., Tumsa, D., Nepali, S. & Mademba, S. (2023). *Return, Weak Reintegration, and Remigration: A Study of Nepali Migrant Workers*. PNCC/CESLAM.
- Black, R., & Castaldo, A. (2008). *Return migration and entrepreneurship in Ghana & Cote D'ivoire*. Oxford: Blackwell publishing Ltd.
- Barrett, A., & Mosca, I. (2012). The psychic costs of migration: evidence from Irish return migrants. *Journal of Population Economics* (26). Pg. 483-506. Springer Publications.
- Bohra-Mishra, P. (2013). Labour migration and investments by remaining households in rural Nepal. *Journal of Population Research* (30): 172-192. Springer Publications.
- CBS [Central Bureau of Statistics]. (2011b). *Nepal Living Standard Survey (Volume I & II)*. Kathmandu: CBS.
- Davies, A. A., Borland, R. M., Blake, C., & West, H. E. (2011). The dynamics of health and return migration. *PLoS medicine*, 8(6), e1001046. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001046>
- Duleep, H.O. (1994). Social Security and the Emigration of Immigrants, *Social Security Bulletin*, 57 (1), 37-52.
- Evans, D., & Jovanovic, B. (1989). An Estimated Model of Entrepreneurial Choice under Liquidity Constraints. *Journal of Political Economy* 97, 908-827

- Girma, H. (2017). The salience of gender in return migration. *Sociology Compass*, 11(5), n/a-N.PAG. <https://doi-org.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/10.1111/soc4.12481>.
- Gullahorn, J. T., & Gullahorn, J. E. (1963). An extension of the U-Curve Hypothesis 1. *Journal of social issues*, 19(3), 33-47.
- Hausmann, R., & Nedelkoska, L. (2018). Welcome Home in a Crisis: Effects of Return Migration on the Non-migrants' Wages and Employment. *European Economic Review*, 101, 101–132.
- Ilahi, N. (1999). Return Migration and Occupational Change. *Review of Development Economics*, 3(2), 170. <https://doi-org.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/10.1111/1467-9361.00059>
- IOM (International Organization for Migration). (2019). *International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration*. Geneva: IOM. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf
- IOM [International Organization for Migration]. (2017). *Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of return*. Retrieved from: https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf
- IOM [International Organization for Migration]. (2022). *Mapping of Reintegration Services in Nepal*. IOM.
- Lohani, J. R. (2021). *Return Labor Migration and Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of Nepal* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, Baltimore County).
- Kunuroglu, F., Yagmur, K., van de Vijver, F. J. R., & Kroon, S. (2015). Consequences of Turkish return migration from Western Europe. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 49, 198–211. <https://doi-org.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.10.004>
- Martin, R., & Radu, D. (2012). Return Migration: The Experience of Eastern Europe¹ Return Migration: The Experience of Eastern Europe. *International Migration*, 50(6), 109–128. <https://doi-org.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2012.00762.x>
- Mesnard, Alice. (2004). Temporary migrations and capital market imperfections. *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (2004), 242-262. Oxford: Oxford University Press Ltd.
- MOLESS [Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security] & IOM [International Organization for Migration]. (2021). Profiling Returnee Migrant Workers for Labor Market Integration. Retrieved from: https://nepal.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1116/files/documents/moless-iom-profiling-of-returnee-migrant-workers-for-labour-market-integration_0.pdf
- MOLESS [Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security]. (2023). Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022. Retrieved from: https://moless.gov.np/storage/files/post_files/Nepal%20Labour%20Migration%20Report_2022.pdf
- Paulson, A & Townsend, R. (2004). Entrepreneurship and Financial Constraints in Thailand. *Journal of Corporate Finance* 10, 229 - 262. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0929-1199\(03\)00056-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0929-1199(03)00056-7)
- Paoletti, S., Taylor-Nicholson, E., Sijapati, B. & Farbenblum, B. (2014). *Migrant Workers' Access to Justice at Home: Nepal*. Open Society Foundations. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/53aa85ec4.pdf>
- Shrestha, M. (2017). The impact of large-scale migration on poverty, expenditures, and labor market outcomes in Nepal. *Policy Research Working Paper 8232*. The World Bank.
- Thapa, S., & Acharya, S. (2017). Remittances and household expenditure in Nepal: evidence from cross-section data. *Economies*, Vol. 5, pp. 1–17.

- UNFPA [United Nations Population Fund]. (2017). *Population Situation Analysis of Nepal*. <https://nepal.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Nepal%20Population%20Situation%20Analysis.pdf>
- UN Women. (2018). *Returning Home: Challenges and Opportunities for Women Migrant Workers in Nepali Labour Market*. Kathmandu: UN Women.
- Wagle, U. R., & Devkota, S. (2018). The impact of foreign remittances on poverty in Nepal: A panel study of household survey data, 1996–2011. *World Development*, 110, 38–50. <https://doi-org.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.05.019>
- Wahba, J., & Zenou, Y. (2012). Out of sight, out of mind: Migration, entrepreneurship and social capital. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 5, 890
- Ward, Z. (2017). Birds of passage: Return migration, self-selection and immigration quotas. *Explorations in Economic History*, 64, 37–52. <https://doi-org.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/10.1016/j.eeh.2016.09.002>
- Woodruff, C., & Zenteno, R. (2007). Migration networks and microenterprises in Mexico. *Journal of Development Economics*, 82(2), 509–528. <https://doi-org.proxy-bc.researchport.umd.edu/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2006.03.006>
- Zhao, Y. (2012). Causes and Consequences of Return Migration: Recent Evidence from China. In M. Czaika & C. Vargas-Silva (Eds.), *Migration and Economic Growth* (pp. 227–245). Elgar.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Extended literature review

Return Migration and Reintegration: Patterns, Impact, and Challenges

Globally, approximately one in four migration events results in return migration (Azose & Raftery, 2019). The International Organization of Migration (IOM, 2019) defines ‘return’ as the process of going back to the point of origin, whether voluntary or forced. Several forms of return migration exist, including: (i) *productive return*, where migrants voluntarily return to engage in economic activities in their home country; (ii) *retirement return*, in which migrants accumulate capital abroad to secure long-term family income, with some cases reflecting forced returns after reaching the end of economically active years; (iii) *disillusioned return*, where migrants return shortly after migration due to unmet expectations (Girma, 2017; Duleep, 1994; Ward, 2017); and (iv) *deportation*, where migrants are returned due to legal or health issues (Paoletti et al., 2014; Davies et al., 2011). Ilahi (1999) emphasized that returning is a default action for migrant workers, regardless of individual outcomes.

The literature debates whether return migrants demonstrate productive behaviors upon reintegration. Some studies suggest that migrants accumulate knowledge, skills, and capital, making them more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Hausman & Nedelkoska, 2017; Black & Castaldo, 2008; Zhao, 2000). These advantages help returnees overcome credit constraints, a major obstacle to entrepreneurship in low-income countries (Evans & Jovanovic, 1989; Paulson & Townsend, 2004). However, not all research presents an optimistic view. Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo (2006) and Barrett and Mosca (2012) highlight social, behavioral, and psychological challenges that migrants face when reintegrating into their communities. Furthermore, social expectations regarding income and behavior often create difficulties for returnees (Kunurogulu et al., 2015). While remittances have played a vital role in reducing poverty and stabilizing household consumption (Lohani, 2021), the long-term productivity of returning migrants remains a topic of debate.

In Nepal, remittances have become a major contributor to the national economy, ranking the country third globally in terms of remittance-to-GDP ratio (Shrestha, 2017; Thapa & Acharya, 2017; Bohra-Mishra, 2013). A recent Ministry of Labour report (MoLESS, 2023) found that 203,934 returnees arrived in 2020/21, followed by 470,978 in 2021/22. During the COVID-19 pandemic alone, over 66,000 migrants (92% men, 8% women)

returned to Nepal, primarily due to job loss, contract expirations, or personal reasons (MoLESS & IOM, 2021). Despite these returns, many migrants re-emigrated, with over 1.8 million renewals of labor permits recorded (MoLESS, 2023). A 2022 IOM report found that while economic reintegration services were provided sporadically, psychological and social reintegration services were often overlooked. Furthermore, gender norms continued to restrict the economic potential of women returnees, despite their increased skills and confidence post-migration (UN Women, 2017).

Nepal's policy environment lacks structured support for returnees, leading to fragmented reintegration efforts at the local and national levels (IOM, 2022). The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2019) stresses that reintegration programs should be evidence-based, inclusive, and gender-sensitive, with coordinated support between origin and destination countries. Addressing these challenges through improved reintegration policies could enable migrants to make significant contributions to Nepal's economy and society. However, as Lohani (2021) notes, entrepreneurship among returnees may be more a product of necessity than opportunity, emphasizing the need for targeted policy interventions to foster sustainable reintegration.

Nepal's reliance on remittances has grown substantially, with remittance inflows contributing to more than 25% of the country's GDP. Recent data from the World Bank highlights a nine-year peak in remittances during FY23, driven by a surge in labor migration despite pandemic disruptions. The economic impact of these remittances has been significant, supporting over 80% of private consumption, helping the country maintain a current account surplus for the first time in eight years. However, the positive economic effects are juxtaposed with social challenges and the struggle to reintegrate returnees upon their return to Nepal.

The government has initiated reintegration programs for return migrants, supported by the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund. These programs aim to provide financial support, skills training, and entrepreneurial opportunities to address the social and economic challenges faced by returnees. Yet, there are concerns about their effectiveness, particularly regarding whether the skills acquired abroad align with local job markets. Migration researchers argue for more dynamic reintegration strategies, including investments in reskilling, that could allow returnees to reintegrate better or pursue circular migration opportunities as needed.

Looking ahead, while remittances continue to bolster Nepal's economy, experts emphasize that over-reliance on them creates vulnerabilities. The focus needs to shift toward sustainable domestic economic opportunities, ensuring that returning migrants can find viable employment options locally rather than being compelled to re-migrate due to limited prospects at home (World Bank, 2024; Kathmandu Post, 2024).

Appendix 2. Reintegration Policies Nepal

Nepal's policies on labour migration primarily focus on overseas employment, leaving reintegration efforts for returnee migrant workers (RMWs) underdeveloped. Although the **Foreign Employment Act (2007)** allows the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund (FEWF) to support employment programs for returnees, reintegration remains largely unaddressed within its framework. However, complementary policies such as the **Human Trafficking and Transportation Control Act (2007)** and **Foreign Employment Policy (2012)** aim to provide psychosocial services, entrepreneurship training, and remittance mobilization to foster the reintegration of migrant workers. These policies reflect an emerging recognition of the economic and social needs of RMWs.

Recent Government Initiatives

In 2022, the Government of Nepal (GoN) introduced the **Reintegration Programme Directives** and launched the **Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers (ReMi)** project. These initiatives offer targeted support across three areas: social reintegration, employment, and entrepreneurial development. However, the effectiveness of these programs is still in question, with many efforts in their nascent stage. The challenges are particularly

acute for workers returning under distressful conditions, such as exploitation or abuse in countries of destination (CoDs), who require more structured reintegration efforts.

Strategic Plans and Institutional Coordination

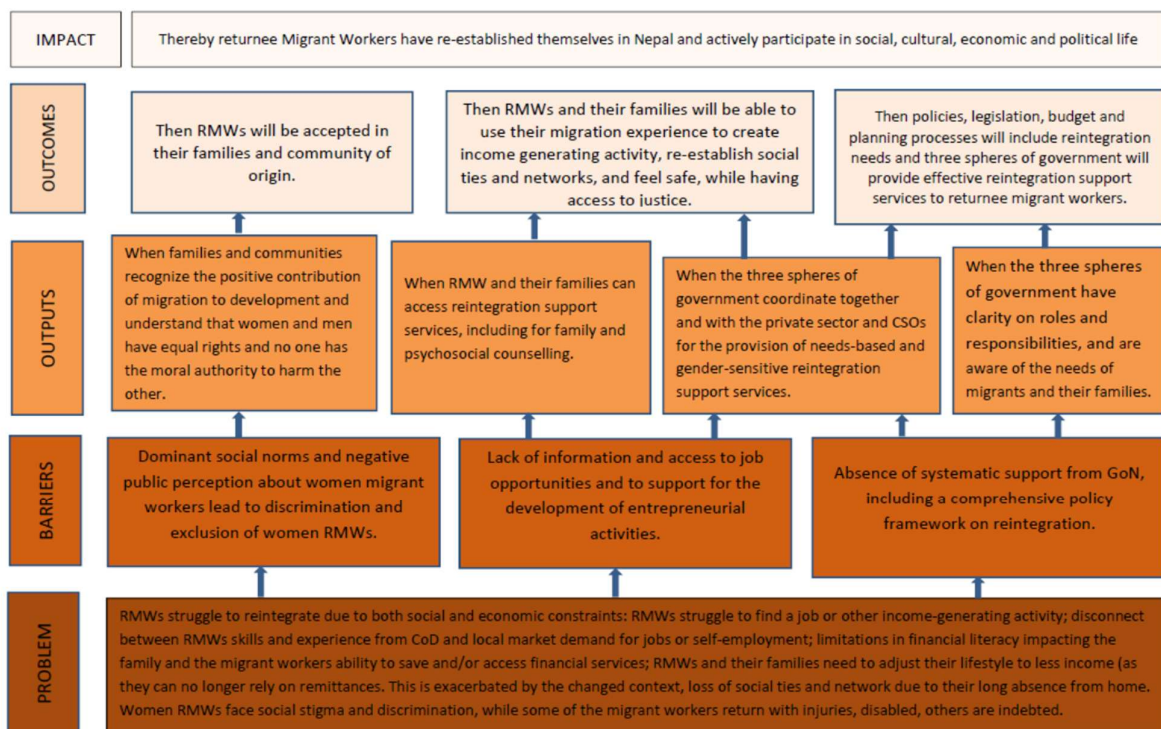
The **Strategic Plan (2022–2027)** by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, and Social Security (MoLESS) places greater emphasis on both financial and social reintegration. To streamline the reintegration process, the government plans to utilize the **Foreign Employment Information Management System (FEIMS)** to track returnees’ skills, expertise, and financial resources. Additionally, the Ministry aims to partner with provincial and local governments to offer employment and entrepreneurship programs, particularly for **returnee women migrant workers (RMMWs)**. Recent reforms have also introduced the **Social Security Fund (SSF)**, offering accident, disability, and retirement benefits for migrant workers to support their long-term reintegration.

Regional and Global Cooperation

Beyond national policies, Nepal participates in global and regional frameworks like the **Colombo Process**, **Abu Dhabi Dialogue**, and the **Global Compact for Migration (GCM)**. These platforms emphasize sustainable reintegration by ensuring that returnees receive access to social protection, psychosocial assistance, and decent work opportunities. Although Nepal’s reintegration policies are evolving, further efforts are required to align them with international best practices to ensure the smooth economic and social reintegration of its large migrant workforce.

Appendix 3. Project’s Theory of Change

Annex 3: Theory of Change



Appendix 4. Qualitative tools

4.1 Focus group discussion

We will utilize focus group discussions to collect data from various groups of RMWs, and families of RMWs. FGD will also explore reintegration challenges related to economic, social, harassment, gender ideals and stigma related vulnerability/experience of women and men to understand potential differential support women from different background would need.

Guidelines for focus group discussion with the Returnee Migrant Workers

Information

In each sites one FGDs with returnees will be carried out except for 2 sites where there will be 2 FGDs. Total of 10 FGDs with returnee migrants (5 with men and 5 with women to the extent possible. As much as possible, include DAG groups and ensure at least 50% of FGD participant are DAG group.

- Separate FGDs will be held with women and men
- Separate FGDs will be held with family members of returnee migrants. For this, there will be 1 FGD per site with 4 FGDs with male family members and 4 with female family members.

Instructions for interviewer

- This is a guide for a focus group discussion. There should be between 6-8 respondents per discussion. Some questions might be asked directly, but it is desirable for the interviewer to prompt discussion amongst the respondents, this might cover additional issues that stem from the responses to some of these questions.
- As the discussion is a group one, please ensure you use the facilitation tools indicated to promote a good engagement with the respondents, and ensure that all respondents have the opportunity to speak
- Estimated duration of the FGD: Around 1.5-2 hours (also due to increased time needed to allow for translation)

Please fill the following:

- Name of Interviewer:
- Note taker:
- FGD with:
- Location:
- Date:
- Number of participant at the start:
- Number of participant at the end:

Any other information about how the FGD went:

| S.N | Name/ Caste | Age | Education | Returned from (last country) | When returned | Any other comments |
|-----|-------------|-----|-----------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | | |

Other remarks (if any)

Consent

Namaste!

My name is I am from RIDA, a research based organization. Currently, on behalf of Helvetas Nepal, we are conducting a study among the returnee migrant workers in Nepal and people willing to go abroad for the foreign labour work. This study also includes their families and colleagues as well as representatives of the local government and all those organizations and companies who have been assisting them, in assessing their opinions and their perceptions on

foreign and their own country. In this study, we will discuss your social, family and economic aspects.

You all have just returned from abroad. We will discuss your experience you had abroad and your situation after your return. We are having such discussion with groups of returnees from 8 municipalities/rural municipalities in two districts- Morang and Dhanusha. This discussion will take around 2 hours.

First, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you all for agreeing to take part in this discussion. This is an absolute voluntary participation. Upon your consent, we will also record the audio of this discussion and we will conceal your identity and the data will solely be utilized for this study only. After the use of this data for a research report, we will exterminate this audio recording. This discussion may not bring you a direct benefit, however the information that you provide will be a valuable reference for those people who are willing to travel abroad as a foreign migrant workers or those who have returned back in making constructive decisions for their betterment.

- Do you agree to participate in this discussion?
- Do you have any questions or concerns before I start this discussion?

General information about the community

1. Tell us about your community. How long have people been migrating from here? What is the ratio of male to female migration? What are the most common destination? Has the destinations changed over time? What are the key attractions for migrating?
2. How much do people usually pay for migration? Do they face any challenges in the migration process? If yes, what are usually those challenges?
3. Which sector do they migrate to? What works do they do in the destination? Do they take skill trainings for foreign employment? If yes, probe- from where? How

About return

4. How about return? Who usually returns back? Who does not return back? What do they usually do after return? Do they re-migrate again? Largely, is it the same or a different destination?
5. Does migration change people's economic wellbeing? In what ways? Are there families where things do not change much economically? Why, what happens?
6. Do you think migration brings social changes? What are the social implications of migration? How do you think migration affects families, children, parents, communities- any other areas that are affected? For each, probe for positive and negative impacts.
7. Can we discuss about how migration affects health and working capacity of migrants- what are your general experiences
8. How are returnees usually perceived in your community? What are some positive ways returnees are seen? Are there any negative perspectives towards returnees? In what case does it usually happen (probe how this varies across gender, age, gender and age(for example difference for young women), marital status, caste and ethnicity groups, destination country, type of work in destination, duration of migration, any other aspects)
9. What works do returnees usually do upon return? what kind of income generating activities are they usually engaged in? Do you think returnees do things differently- for example from skills they have learnt abroad/things they have seen? If yes, can we think what they usually do differently? If not, why do you think they do not use the new ideas they might have seen abroad?
10. What are the biggest challenges that returnees face once they return? How does it vary across different groups (probe: age, gender, caste and ethnicity, education, destination, number of years spent abroad, others)? Probe for the following- with community, with family, getting work/starting entrepreneurs, making an income- ask about different groups above? Other challenges?
11. What do you think is a successful return? What do you think would support returnees to be successful upon return?

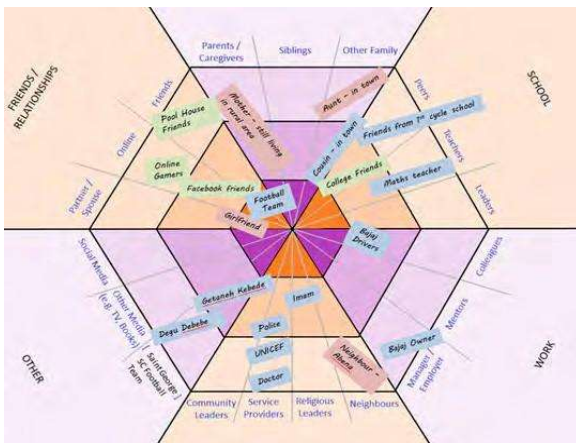
Now we will do two group exercises. Let join together to build a story about the social networks of migrants. I will start the story and I expect all of us to add to the story and we will complete the story together. There could be various versions of the story. All of us do not need to align on a plot- it is very fine and quite helpful to have different opinions.

Would you give me an imaginary name of someone who returned back from foreign labor migration (e.g., Krishna, Hari, Geeta). Imagine that XX is one of those people who has returned home from a foreign land. Now let us explore whom she interacts with for different purpose- his/her friends his/her circle. We will use the following tools to discuss it.

1. Tool : Social network hexagon

Social network analysis (SNA) consists of the following elements:

- Figure: Social network hexagon



There are seven key segments – family, friends (in the community and in the destination), work, community and online community, I/NGOs programme people, Government. Each segment is sub-divided into types of people with whom returnees may have a social relationship. Closest relationships are those at the centre (closest to the heart of the returnees). Potentially powerful in terms of resources, support are in red colors, moderate in blue and weakest in black. More distant/less influential relationships are closer to the outer ring.

Who: Returnee migrants

Objectives:

- To understand the social networks with whom returnees interact and how these differ by location, gender, for returnees from different countries, for in-school and out-of-school children.
- To understand how these social networks differ over time as returnees transition through different phase of their integration and to explore the relative importance of different networks for the returnee migrants
- To learn who provides different types of support to returnees/whom returnees look for different types of support and where entry points could be for strengthening support.
- To explore what are the most common virtual modes of engagement and understand what communication strategies would work best for working with returnees
- To explore how returnees relate to their community, their social networks in destination and other networks over time
- **Materials:** A2 printouts of the social network hexagon, coloured post-it notes

2. Interview steps:

Core questions to ask per segment

Start with the family segment or NGO/INGO and work clockwise (online community is discussed last).

Discuss each of the following segment by segment.

- › Which people within your family (family/school/work/ friends/online/community) do you interact with?
- › Pick an appropriate sticker write the person's name and relationship (e.g. spouse, friend, sisters, ReMi officer, ward chairman) and ask the returnees to identify if they are/can be potential strong resources/support (use red colour for this) or moderate (use blue colour for this) or weak support (use green colour for this). Now ask where on the hexagon they want to place them – with closest relationships at the centre and those least close furthest away.
- › What, if anything, would they change about the relationship and why?
- › If you look at this segment, do you think that returnees and non-returnees would interact with those people in the same way? Have same expectations? If not, Why is that? (explore specific examples if possible)

3. Thematic probes to ask around the SNH in general

Once you identify the relations in all segments, you move to explore support networks.

For each of the relationship now explore the following-

- How (face to face, over the phone, missed etc) and how regularly do they interact with the persons they have identified?
- When do they interact? What do they usually seek in that relationship- and what do they get? Is the relationship positive, negative, mixed, neutral? and why?

Use the following probes if information is not coming free-flow:

Of the people on the social network hexagon, to whom would a returnee turn to discuss and seek support from in the case of the following and why?

- To find about employment/ work opportunities
- To get loans, financial support
- To get help in skill building opportunities
- To start a new entrepreneurship (ask for different sector- agriculture, business, others based on the previous discussion on what returnees do upon return)
- » Problems/disputes in family at home after return
- Disputes between spouses after return
- Tensions/ anxiety related to adjusting at home/
- Tensions/ anxiety related to adjusting in the community/neighborhood
- Financial tensions
- Other Psychosocial distress/something that is upsetting
- Other health problems (including sexual and reproductive health if it is easy to ask)

Information or advice if they face violence upon return (can be physical violence, threat, coercion, intimidation, corporeal or psychosocial violence, causing distress)

- Violence from or related to the work and out of work life in the destination which is still continuing (can be from agents, previous employers or supervisors, corporal violence, from peers in the destination)
- Risk or experience of violence that was there before migration (community, family, peer or others)
- Risk or experience of violence after return (from family, GBV, sexual violence, from community, family, peer bullying or others)

4. Final sections for programme recommendation:

Say now we are at the end of the session and would like to have some advice from you about what kind of programme and what modality would be most useful for returnees. Please feel free to suggest as widely as possible as this will be important for the programme.

- Are there things you would like to talk about but don't have someone to talk with ?
- Are there relationships with any individual or a type of person that you wish you had but currently don't? Why
- Who comes to you to talk when they need advice/ support? About what?
- Among people from whom you take advice, who tends to give the best advice – what makes it 'best'?
- If we were to have a programme that would give information or advice related service, what are the different kind of information advice service would be most useful? How should the programme give that service- when you go to the office, through phone calls, others? Where should the office be located?
- What other kinds of service would be most useful for returnee migrants? (ask about financial, soft loans, what kind of service related to employment, health, any others)?
- What do you typically do with advice – follow it closely, follow it with adaptation, ignore it but let it inform your decisions?

Guidelines for focus group discussion with the families of returnee migrant workers

Information

In each sites one FGDs with returnees will be carried out except for 2 sites where there will be 2 FGDs. Total of 10 FGDs with returnee migrants (5 with men and 5 with women to the extent possible. As much as possible, include DAG groups and ensure at least 50% of FGD participant are DAG group. Participants will be informed a day prior so they have enough time for participation and do not walk out during the FGD.

- ☑ Separate FGDs will be held with women and men
- ☑ Separate FGDs will be held with family members of returnee migrants. For this, there will be 1 FGD per site with 4 FGDs with male family members and 4 with female family members.

Instructions for interviewer

- ☑ This is a guide for a focus group discussion. There should be between 6-8 respondents per discussion. Some questions might be asked directly, but it is desirable for the interviewer to prompt discussion amongst the respondents, this might cover additional issues that stem from the responses to some of these questions.
- ☑ As the discussion is a group one, please ensure you use the facilitation tools indicated to promote a good engagement with the respondents, and ensure that all respondents have the opportunity to speak
- ☑ Estimated duration of the FGD: Around 1.5-2 hours (also due to increased time needed to allow for translation)

Please fill the following:

- ☑ Name of Interviewer:
- ☑ Note taker:
- ☑ FGD with:
- ☑ Location:
- ☑ Date:
- ☑ Number of participant at the start:
- ☑ Number of participant at the end:

Any other information about how the FGD went:

| S.N | Name/ Caste | Age | Education | Returned from (last country) | When returned | Any other comments |
|-----|-------------|-----|-----------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | | |

Other remarks (if any)

Consent taking
Namaste!

My name is I am from RIDA, a research based organization. Currently, on behalf of Helvetas Nepal, we are conducting a study among the returnee migrant workers in Nepal and people willing to go abroad for the foreign labour work. This study also includes their families and colleagues as well as representatives of the local government and all those organizations and companies who have been assisting them, in assessing their opinions and their perceptions on foreign and their own country. In this study, we will discuss your social, family and economic aspects.

You all have just returned from abroad. We will discuss your experience you had abroad and your situation after your return. We are having such discussion with groups of returnees from 8 municipalities/rural municipalities in two districts- Morang and Dhanusha. This discussion will take around 2 hours.

First, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you all for agreeing to take part in this discussion. This is an absolute voluntary participation. Upon your consent, we will also record the audio of this discussion and we will conceal your identity and the data will solely be utilized for this study only. After the use of this data for a research report, we will exterminate this audio recording. This discussion may not bring you a direct benefit, however the information that you provide will be a valuable reference for those people who are willing to travel abroad as a foreign migrant workers or those who have.

- Do you agree to participate in this discussion?
- Do you have any questions or concerns before I start this discussion?

General information about the community

1. Tell us about your community. How long have people been migrating from here? What are the most common destination? Has the destinations changed over time? What are the key attractions for migrating?
2. How much do people usually pay for migration? Do they face any challenges in the migration process? If yes, what are usually those challenges?
3. Do they take skill trainings for foreign employment? If yes, probe- from where? How?

About return

4. How about return? Who usually returns back? Who does not return back? What do they usually do after return? Do they re-migrate again? Largely, is it the same or a different destination?
5. What do family members expect from their migrant family member? Do you think the migrant can meet the expectations? What happens if the expectations are not met? If/How does it affect return? If/How does it affect when the migrants starts to settle in the household?
6. Does migration change people's economic wellbeing? In what ways? Are there families where things do not change much economically? Why, what happens/when do things not change much- positively?
7. Do you think migration brings social changes? What are the social implications of migration? How do you think migration affects families, children, parents, communities- any other areas that are affected? For each, probe for positive and negative impacts.
8. Can we discuss about how migration affects health and working capacity of migrants- what are your general experiences/observations as a family member? Probe for both physical and mental/psychosocial wellbeing?(eg anxiety, stresses, irritability, coping strategies they use,)
9. How are returnees usually perceived in your community? What are some positive ways returnees are seen? Are there any negative perspectives towards returnees? In what case does it usually happen (probe how this varies across gender, age, and age(for example difference for young women), marital status, caste and ethnicity groups, destination country, type of work in destination, duration of migration, any other aspects)
10. What works do returnees usually do upon return? What kind of income generating activities are they usually engaged in? Do you think returnees do things differently- for example from skills they have learnt abroad/things they have seen? If yes, can we think what they usually do differently? If not, why do you think they do not use the new ideas they might have seen abroad?
11. What are the biggest challenges that returnees face once they return? How does it vary across different groups (probe: age, gender, caste and ethnicity, education, destination, social status at community, number of years spent abroad, others)? Probe for the following- with community, with family, getting work/starting entrepreneurship, making an income- ask about different groups above? Other challenges?
12. What do you think is a successful migration/ reintegration/return? What is an unsuccessful migration/return/reintegration?
13. Is there a difference between returnees who have been beneficiaries of some programme upon return and those who have not? If yes, what kind of? If not, can we discuss what could have made a positive impact? What do you think would support returnees to be successful upon return?
14. How does unsuccessful migration/return/ reintegration affect families? How does the family cope in this case?

About migration, return, reintegration and family

We spoke about migrants and returnees. Now we would like to speak about being a migrant family member.

15. How much do family members know about the migrants' life while they are abroad?
 - a. What are the impressions?

- b. How do you know if things are going well?
- c. or going bad?
- d. What family members check on a day-to-day basis? and what they suggest to the migrant?
- 16. What do families usually spend the remittances on? Does this affect how long a migrant is required to work abroad? Do families ask migrants to increase/shorten their stay in the destination based on remittances? In what cases? How?
- 17. Are there other reasons families ask their migrant family members to shorten their stay? Ask same for making the stay longer?
 - When a migrant decides to return what are some of the concerns of the family members: What was going on in the mind of the family?
 - Who family members discussed that with?
 - Family? Friends?
 - What were the discussion points? How helpful were those conversations?
- 18. Do families have future plans when a migrant decides to migrate? When s/he decides to return? (Probe for by gender, level of earning, physical or mental health issues inc. disability, and other factors that applies)
- 19. Kind of future plans do families generally have? What are the issues they would include on this plan- e.g. children's marriage, education, what else?
- a. Do things generally go as expected? In what case? If not, why?
 - i. What are the key challenges? Can you explain a bit?
- 20. In your community, how confident is the family about XX settling well? What made you think that?
 - a. What are the opportunities?
 - b. What do you think would help in making this better?
- 21. What impact does return of the migrant family member (permanent return) have on families? (positive and negative)
- 22. What leads families to ask or give consent to family members for remigration? What is the role of family members in remigration of a migrant?
- 23. What support would families need to support successful reintegration of returnees? To make return of a migrant family member successful for the family? (probe also about non-economic aspects of reintegration such as tensions due to role reversals, migrant coming back with ailments – physical or otherwise, dealing with potential changes in relationships, dealing with potential changes in attitudes, perception, habits of migrants and so on)
- 24. What do you think is the current rehabilitation situation of people who have returned in your community?
 - Is the family satisfied with the current situation? If yes, what makes them feel satisfied?
 - If not, what are they generally not very satisfied with? What might have made the family dissatisfied? What are the plans of the family?
 - What are the top priorities of the family after return of family member? (educating children, building a house, buying land, living with the family) What makes those a top priority?

4.2 Mini Workshop

Guidelines for Mini Workshop with the Returnee Migrant WorkerS

Mini workshop will be used to explore the daily experience, programme recommendations, key moments of decisionmaking and life of returne migrants related to their migration, return and reintegration. This is a comprehensive activity comibining a set of four tools to understand in-depth about return and reintegration challenges of migrants without exhausting migrants with questionnaires. It consists of the following tools.

a. Rivers of life

This includes the return migration pathways informed by the 'W' model provided by Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) to inform identification of key phases. Participants will be asked to draw a river of their life and talk us through the phases. This will be done to bring out the key phases from migration to reintegration from the emic perspective of migrants. In each of the phases, we will probe participants about the moments that mattered the most, the decision that was very crucial, and the reintegration decisions, experience and outcomes.

b. Imaginative canvas

This is an open ended exercise. In this exercise, we ask returnee to draw pictures of anything that captures the sentiments related to integration with focus on challenges they are facing and opportunities they foresee in the future.

c. Perceptual mapping

This mapping is conducted to support RMWs to compare and rate various sources of information that are available to them. The perceptual mapping tool will be administered to returnee migrants. The following will be the items to be included in the perceptual mapping:

Sources: (1) digital sources- Messenger, SMS, IMO, Facebook, Viber, Whatsapp, ringtone (2) Non-digital sources: flyers, community miking, social mobilisers, Migrant resource centers at DAO Employment Service Centers, Ward offices, Returnee migrant networks(6) Others. It will also include mapping desirable timeframe for receipt of information- Before migration, in the destination, after return (within 3 months, 3-6 months) and mapping desirable content: Short slogans, multiple information in table, song snippets, witty dialogue, videos, pictorial

d. Body mapping

A body map helps us understand the day to day living and experience of the participants in-depth as well as understanding tangible and intangible challenges in their daily lives. We ask participants to draw a returnee migrant and discuss the experience of returnees pointing at different body parts and discuss experience from their ecology as well as their own perception towards their surroundings.

Background

In each site 1 Mini Workshops with returnees will be carried out. In total there will be 4 Mini workshop with male and 4 with Female returnee migrants. Mini Workshops will be held separately with women and men

Instructions for interviewer

☑ This is a guide for a Mini Workshop. There should be between 8-10 respondents per discussion. Some questions might be asked directly, but it is desirable for the interviewer to prompt discussion amongst the respondents, this might cover additional issues that stem from the responses to some of these questions.

☑ As the discussion is a group one, please ensure you use the facilitation tools indicated to promote a good engagement with the respondents, and ensure that all respondents have the opportunity to speak

☑ Estimated duration of the Mini Workshop: Around 2.5-3 hours (also due to increased time needed to allow for translation)

Please fill the following:

☑ Name of Interviewer:

☑ Note taker:

☑ Type of participants (e.g. women returnees or men returnees):

☑ Location:

☑ Date:

☑ Number of participant at the start:

☑ Number of participant at the end:

Any other information about how the FGD went:

| S.N | Name/ Caste | Age | Education | Returned from (last country) | When returned | Any other comments |
|-----|-------------|-----|-----------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
|-----|-------------|-----|-----------|------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

Other remarks (if any)

Materials

- Colored pens (sharpies)
- Flip chart paper (5 pieces)
- Sticky notes in different colours

Consent taking

Namaste!

My name is I am from RIDA, a research based organization. Currently, on behalf of Helvetas Nepal, we are conducting a study among the returnee migrant workers in Nepal and people willing to go abroad for the foreign labour work. This study also includes their families and colleagues as well as representatives of the local government and all those organizations and companies who have been assisting them, in assessing their opinions and their perceptions on foreign and their own country. In this study, we will discuss your social, family and economic aspects.

You all have just returned from abroad. We will discuss your experience you had abroad and your situation after your return. We are having such discussion with groups of returnees from 8 municipalities/rural municipalities in two districts- Morang and Dhanusha. This is a Mini Workshop. We will be doing different exercises in a group here. We will need around 2.5-3 hours of your time.

First, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you all for agreeing to take part in this discussion. This is an absolute voluntary participation. Upon your consent, we will also record the audio of this discussion and we will conceal your identity and the data will solely be utilized for this study only. After the use of this data for a research report, we will exterminate this audio recording. This discussion may not bring you a direct benefit, however the information that you provide will be a valuable reference for those people who are willing to travel abroad as a foreign migrant workers or those who have returned back in making constructive decisions for their betterment.

- Do you agree to participate in this discussion?
- Do you have any questions or concerns before I start this discussion?

General information about the community

Tell us about your community. How long have people been migrating from here? What are the most common destination? What are the key attractions for migrating?

How much do people usually pay for migration? Do they face any challenges in the migration process? If yes, what usually are those challenges?

How about return? How often do people return for staying back permanently? Who usually returns? Who does not return? What work do they usually do after return? How common is re-migration? Largely, is it the same or a different destination?

What are the biggest challenges that returnees face once they return? How does it vary across different groups (probe: age, gender, caste and ethnicity, education, destination, number of years spent abroad, others)? Probe for the following- with community, with family, getting work/starting entrepreneurs, making an income- ask about different groups above? Other challenges?

Now, we will do four group exercises. It needs drawing and your active participation. Please feel free to derive not only from your own experience but also about any other incidences you have seen/heard that is relevant.

a. *River of Life*

First, let us play a game called river of life. This is a game where we will together draw a river and compare that with our life. Like a river, our life has twists and turns, and those drove us to where we are right now.

Can you all make a river together using the markers and paper available here? Feel free to make a long river with tides and curves.

[Let them work to build a river.]

Where do we want to begin the river? Which age? 10,12,18???

Now, this river is the life of a returning migrant. And, the river has flowed till today. We want to map out all the key twists and turns in the life of a migrant in this drawing.

What in this river are positive turns? Can you draw something to mark what was positive about those turns? You can have as many positive turns as you like?

- Can you explain each picture?
- Which are the positive turns? When they arrived?
 - Why is that positive?
 - What factors or individuals helped to get to that turn?
 - What decisions were taken during that turn? Who decided?
 - What factors were influential in the decision-making process?
 - Who were consulted? How did they impact the decision?
 - How that turn impacted the situation of the individual today, if any? Can you share the connections between that particular decision and your current status?
- What in these rivers are negative turns?
 - When did these turns arrive?
 - What factors triggered that turn? How are other factors/individuals impacted?
 - How that turn impacted the situation of the individual today, if any?
 - What decisions were taken during that turn? Who decided?
 - What factors were influential in the decision-making process?
 - Who were consulted? How did they impact the decision?
 - How that turn impacted the situation of the individual today, if any? Can you share the connections between that decision and your current status?
- Which external factors played part in shaping those turns?
 - Positive
 - Negative
 - Which factors helped the migrant to sail safely back to the shore during the negative turns?
 - Which actors were most influential in determining the occurrence of positive as well as negative turns?
 - Government
 - Non-governmental agencies
 - Friends/network
 - Family members
- How would you name the picture? Why?
 - What is the overall learning from the river?
 - What works?
 - What does not work?
 - What should a returning migrant learn from the journey?
 - What external support would help? When?

- What are the likely positive turns in the future?
- What are the likely negative turns in the future?

Perceptual mapping

Now, I am going to show you some pictures and would like to ask you about those pictures.

[Display 10 items one after the another and ask these questions]

What do you see in the picture?

What experiences are attached with that particular picture?

Positives

Negatives

Any stories connected to the picture?

Now, together try to add those items in the rivers of life above at different stages? Can you explain why you added them to those stages?

[Individual exercise]

Now, let's take all the pictures. Which one of these items are related? (categorize them in 3 groups)

Can you share why you put them together?

In the order of importance (how big each of these impacted your migration journey), can you try to arrange the pictures and explain it to us?

Imaginative canvas

Now, let's play with another tool called imaginative canvas. Try to draw a picture of success for returning migrants. There could be more than one picture. And, also try to draw a picture of failure.

Let's look at the picture of success

- Can you explain what success is in the picture?
- Why do you consider that a success?
- Have you seen anyone achieving that success? What percent of returning migrants are likely to meet success?
- What would enable a returning migrant to achieve that success? personal characteristics? efforts?
- Which decisions? Which moments? Which support might have been pivotal?
- What support is needed from family, community, and government?
- What can other returning migrants learn from the path to success?

Let's look at the picture of failure

- Can you explain what success is in the picture?
- Why do you consider that a failure?
- Have you seen anyone failing to the extent in the picture? What percent of returning migrants are likely to reach that failure?
- What factors led to the failure? Situations? Family? Personal Characteristics?
- Which decisions? Which moments? Which support might have been pivotal to that failure?
- What are the lessons learned?
- What would be the path to turnaround? What support is needed?

Body mapping

Now the final exercise is body mapping. You will have to draw a returnee migrant and give him/her an age, name, where she returned from, how long s/he stayed in the destination and what work she did there.

PARTICIPANTS MIGHT NEED A BREAK HERE –THIS IS A GOOD TIME TO GIVE THEM THEIR TEA AND SNACKS. GIVE IT IN THE SAME PLACE WITHOUT THEM HAVING TO MOVE OUT OF THE SPACE.

Task: The group has a big piece of paper and colorful pens. The facilitator should be with the group asking the questions and guiding the discussion as described below. For returnees that have lower literacy levels, the researcher should help with writing.

Process:

- Explain you'd like them to bring to life a 'typical' returnee from their area.
- Ask them to draw a returnee whose returned from foreign employment in the Gulf Countries or Malaysia (typical cases from their community derived from FGDs or IDIs). Bring this returnee to life (one participant can do the drawing, but the others should be encouraged to say what the hair looks like, what clothes s/he is wearing, what accessories would a returnee wear, what gadgets/objects he would carry etc.). Explain that they are not being judged on their drawing, and a simple drawing is fine!
- Then ask what the name of the returnee might be. Let the participants decide this together.
- Suggest an age that is the same as most of the participant in the group. Explain that this returnee (use his/her name), is "just like them".

We then ask the participants to draw the head, mouth, arms, feet, body, and heart and then ask questions such as what do returnees think about their community? What are the activities that returnee do with each of their body parts, what is the difference between a returnee and a person who has never migrated?

Part 1: Please ask the participants to reflect on each part of the body and activities and experiences it has for them as returnees? Ensure for each theme to probe for differences based on age, destination, type of work involved after return and in the destination, gender, disability, education level among others.

Some of the questions we might use to probe are as follows

Main body

- Does X (remember this is about the person that was drawn- so use the name of the person) know about any programmes for returnees? Do you know about the "ReMi" programme? What do you know about it? [Probe what they do, who they target, etc.]
- Is there any other programme in your community which might not specifically be for returnees but which returnees take services from? [Probe what, run by whom, since when, what do, why returnees go there etc.] Are we involved in it?
- How do you (remember this is about the person that was drawn- so use the name of the person) think the person found out about the programme? If they are not involved in any programme, including ReMi, do have any friends or know anyone who is involved in the ReMi programme? Do your friends share about the learning of the programme with you? What do they share / say about it? Do they like it / not like it, what do they like best / least, etc.- If they are involved, you can ask directly what they like and what they think can be improved about the programme? Ask also for other programmes.
- What are the most common services (can be both formal and informal- such as advice from friends, chatting with friends to share their anxieties, problems etc.) that returnees use when they start settling in the community (AGAIN KINDLY NOTE THAT this is both about economic and non-economic services and can be both formal and informal? Is there anything that is different they seek than those who have not migrated? Or is there difference in how they seek those services or information about the services than those who have not migrated?

NOW WE WILL TALK ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES OF XXX (PERSONS NAME). For each probe how it changes over time- eg when just coming, after a few months, after a year, and probe for age, gender, caste, destination, people with language barriers, people who returned with disability status- or health challenges or other problems (eg deported, people who were not given salary and have filed lawsuits etc.)

Heart

- What would this returnee (use name of the person they drew) have strong feelings about? (What are they mostly concerned about? What do they care about the most? What is the most important thing to them at this age? What can be the difference between the returnees regarding the way of thinking for those who have participated in the programme and who have not participated?)
- How do they express their feelings? Is there the difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in term of expressing their feelings?
- What happens when returnees express their feelings in the community?

- Do they have close friendships? With whom? Does it change after migration/return? (if appropriate also ask if with opposite gender and what communities think if they have so?)
- What kind of work would they like to do? Can they do it? If not, what are the barriers?
- How would they like to use the remittances? Can they use it in the way they like? If not, why?
- How returnees are usually perceived in your community? What are some positive ways returnees are seen? Are there any negative perspectives towards returnees? In what circumstances are returnees usually perceived negatively? (probe how this varies across gender, age, gender and age (for example difference for young women), marital status, caste and ethnicity groups, destination country, type of work in destination, duration of migration, any other aspects)

Arms + hands

What works do returnees usually do upon return? What kind of income generating activities are they usually engaged in? What kinds of other activities are returnees mostly involved in including in continuation with the destination? probe for economic activities, social activities, online/digital activities etc.

Are there things they would like to do but cannot? If so, what are they? What helps or stops them from doing those things?

Is there any help that can be provided to support them do these things?

Do you think returnees do things differently- for example from skills they have learnt abroad/things they have seen? If yes, can we think what they usually do differently? If not, why do you think they do not use the new ideas they might have seen abroad?

Legs and feet

How do returnees mostly use their time? Does/How does it change as they start settling in? (this is related to their movement)

Do returnees need to travel around more than non-migrants? Probe for different kind of returnees and different phase of return. If yes, why?

Do returnees move out from their community? Why? (Probe for gender, failed returnees, or returnees who face any kind of stigmatisation, have cases ongoing? Are there any challenges for certain groups of returnees on how they use their time or move around (outside the home)? For example, for work, keeping networks with friends in destination, getting income? Do you think they face some have a limited boundary comparing to other people in the community? E.g. likely to face more scrutiny, challenges?

Is it the same for all groups of returnees? If different, how is it different? Why is that?

Head

What are the main things that the person might be thinking about? What is going on in his head? (probe across different phase of settling down in the community) Is this different for different groups?

How do they learn about changes in the community/ changes in the community perspective towards them? Who do they learn from?

Do you think there are differences between different kinds of returnees? At different phases of reintegration/settling in the community?

Do they disagree with communities about anything- could be existing way of work, governance, local services, families, friends and could be over anything? Are their ways of thinking somewhat different/ or perspective towards things different than that of the community? If yes, what do they most disagree about? What reactions do they give- what reactions do they get from the community? Does this differ between people who have participated in the programme and those who have not?

Eyes

How does the community view returnees? How do extended family members view returnees? (ask for different types of returnees)? How do these perceptions affect returnees? Ask also for extended networks? Other returnees? Friends in the origin who did not migrate? Friends in the destination?

How do returnees find community people's behaviour towards them? How do they see community people (see as in view/perspective)? Neighbours? Extended networks? Other returnees? Friends in the origin who did not migrate? Friends in the destination? Other networks in destination- eg supervisors, employers- do they keep network with them? Is it beneficial for returnees? If so how? If not, what do they usually communicate about with their networks in the destination?

Ears

Do community members listen to / ignore returnees? How does it affect the returnees?

Does being in programme affect this?

Do returnees listen to (or ignore) community members/ families/other social relationships? Why? How does it affect returnees? (ask for both positive and negative if applicable?)

What do returnees listen from friends who have participated in the programme?

Mouth

How do community people talk about what is successful return/reintegration and migration and what is unsuccessful return/migration, reintegration?

How do returnees talk about successful return/reintegration/migration and unsuccessful return/reintegration and migration? How does this affect returnees?

How can program support in successful return and re-integration?

How do returnees talk to each other? Do the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries have the same issues of conversation?

Is there any difference in how community people/neighbors talk to returnees and non-migrants or current migrants? Ask same about friends and extended family members?

Is there any difference in how returnees talk to community people/neighbors, friends in origin compared to those who are still in the destination? If yes, what kind of? How would this affect returnee's reintegration?

Part 2: After having mapped out all the different body parts, discuss the following issues about reintegration

- Which stages do returnees go through to be integrated successfully in the community?
- What are the characteristics of these different stages? How does it affect returnees?
- What are the things that help returnees move easily through these times/stages / periods/ through this process? What makes it easy for them to reintegrate?

Thank you so much for your time. Is there anything that you would like to ask us? If not, we will close the discussion. Thank you very much for participating.

4.3 Case studies

Outlier case studies will be conducted with returnee migrants. We will select returnees with successful reintegration experience (positive outlier) and less- successful/challenging reintegration experience (such as those that are thinking of re-migrating, those who re-migrated after trying re-integration, planning to leave /left the place of residence)

Guidelines for case study interviews with the Returnee Migrant Workers

Information

In each sites one positive and one negative outlier case studies will be carried out with returnees and their family member/person who are important to returnees.

It is important that we have at least 1 caste/ethnic minority (and to the extent possible, 1 hill/Terai Dalit and 1 indigenous) and at least 4 with women (2 positive outlier and 2 negative outlier)

The interviews will be done separately with the returnee and with the focal family member.

Instructions for interviewer

☑ This is a guide for case study.

Some questions might be asked directly, but it is desirable for the interviewer to prompt discussion and reflection, this might cover additional issues that stem from the responses to some of these questions.

☑ Please let the participant reflect on questions, no need to cover all questions if they already come in discussions but ensure all the themes are covered. Also be attentive to any new themes that come out during the discussion and probe around.

☑ Estimated duration of the interview is around an hour with each participant (might take longer if you need a translator) for translation)

Please fill the following:

- ☐ Name of Interviewer:
- ☐ Name of the respondent
- ☐ Age
- ☐ Education level
- ☐ Location:

Namaste!

My name is I am from RIDA, a research based organization. Currently, on behalf of Helvetas Nepal, we are conducting a study among the returnee migrant workers in Nepal and people willing to go abroad for the foreign labour work. This study also includes their families and colleagues as well as representatives of the local government and all those organizations and companies who have been assisting them, in assessing their opinions and their perceptions on foreign and their own country. In this study, we will discuss your social, family and economic aspects.

You have just returned from abroad. We will discuss your experience you had abroad and your situation after your return. We are having one-to-one talks with over ... returnee migrant workers from ...districts during this study. This discussion will take around 60-90 minutes.

First, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you for agreeing to take part in this discussion. This is an absolute voluntary participation. Upon your consent, we will also record the audio of this discussion and we will conceal your identity and the data will solely be utilized for this study only. After the use of this data for a research report, we will exterminate this audio recording. This discussion may not bring you a direct benefit, however the information that you provide will be a valuable reference for those people who are willing to travel abroad as a foreign migrant workers or those who have returned back in making constructive decisions for their betterment.

- Do you agree to participate in this discussion?
- Do you have any questions or concerns before I start this discussion?

Individual In-depth interview

1. Can you tell me what your typical day looks like?
 - Waking up till the night walkthrough, what are the activities you do?
 - How are those activities connected to other family members?
 - How are those activities connected with other community members, if any?
 - Which part of the day is encouraging?
 - Which part is not so encouraging?
2. Now, can you tell me something about your migration journey? We want to learn about your overall migration experience?
 - Where did you return from? How long did you stay abroad? For multiple destinations, probe for each country?
 - What type of work were you engaged in?
 - Please elaborate on the following:
 - What are the good memories or highlights of working there?
 - What are the bad memories or low lights of working there?
 - Do you think that work experience would be useful in Nepal and why?
3. Let's **go back to the day you made a final decision to return back.**
 - What made you decide to return home? Any pull factors - factors from Nepal? Any push factors - factors from the country of the work?
 - a. Probe for each reason: can you expand more?
 - b. Who are the key actors in the decision process? With whom you consulted? What was their opinion? Partner? Friends? Other family members? Employer?
4. Now, let's remember the day you **arrived in the village/home.** How was the experience?

5. What did you feel after stepping on his village? Excited? Intimidated? Shy? Relieved? Can you share some of your experience?
6. How did you feel after reaching home? Did you notice any change in your house? How was your house before and now?
 - a. How was it like meeting with your family after a long time?
 - b. How would you describe those moments? Exciting? Encouraging? Intimidating? Mixed?
7. How was the transition from that day to now? Can you walk us through what happened? What decisions were made? Why?
8. How did you connect back to the family and community? What were the key barriers?
9. Did things go as expected? If yes, what did you and your family did? If not, why?
10. What were key enablers in the process?
 - a. Skills learned? How valuable were those skills?
 - b. Support from family, friends, government, NGO
11. What were the key barriers? How did you overcome those?
12. Have you been a part of any return or reintegration programme after return? If yes, ask about which, since when, how did they find out? what do they do related to the programme? If not a part of any return programme, ask if they have taken any services, support from any other programmes in general?
 - Do you think being in the programme has helped? If yes, what difference has it made?
 - If not, what are different kinds of programmes that can be brought to support the returnees? (probe for both financial and non-financial schemes)
 - Who should implement it? –government, NGOs,
 - Do you think linkages with destination country or employer would help in transition to reintegration? If yes, how? If not, why?
13. Are you satisfied with your current situation? If yes, what makes you feel satisfied?
14. If or if not, what makes you dissatisfied? What are your future plans?
15. What are the top priorities of your life right now? (educating children, building a house, buying land, living with the family) What makes those a top priority?
16. Overall, how do you rate the overall return migration experience?
17. Was it a success or a failure? Maybe on a scale of 1 to 10? What makes you feel that?
 - a. What makes it a success? Which decisions were crucial to make it a success? At what moments those decisions were taken?
 - b. What makes it a failure? Which decisions were crucial to make it a failure? At what moments those decisions were taken?
18. What did you learn from the overall process? How have you tried to apply that in your life?
19. If you were to pick a moment that had a big effect on the current situation of the returning migrant, what would that be? Why?
 - a. What would have helped those moments to drive positive developments?
 - b. What were your critical decisions? How were those decisions made? Which one turned out to be good/bad?
 - c. What is the overall learning that you would like to share with other returning migrants?
20. Do you think of going abroad again? If Yes, why? If not, why not? What advice do you give to aspiring migrants?

Thank you so much for your time. Is there anything that you would like to ask us? If not, we will close the discussion. Thank you very much for participating.

In-depth interview with family

1. What does your usual day look like?
 - Waking up till the night walkthrough, what are the activities you do?
 - How are those activities connected to other family members and the returning migrant?

- Which part of the day is encouraging?
 - Which part is not so encouraging?
2. Now, can you tell me something about the migration journey of <XX>? We want to learn about the overall migration experience.
 - a. Where did XX return from? How long did XX stay abroad?
 - b. What type of work XX was engaged in?
 - c. How was the situation back home when he was away?
 - i. What was going well?
 - ii. What was not going well?
 3. Now remember XX making the decision to return. What was the role of family here in XX's decision? What did you want XX to do?
 - What were the immediate reasons for the return?
 - How do you describe that moment/decision? Exciting? Fearful? Not sure?
 - What was going on in your mind?
 - What were the future plans?
 - How confident were you about XX settling well? What made you think that?
 - Did things go as expected? If not, why?
 4. Now remember the moment, XX entered the village and returned home.
 - How did you approach that moment?
 - What were you thinking?
 - What were the plans made during that time?
 - From the time of arrival to now, how have things developed? What has happened? Was it expected?
 - What were the enablers? Friends? Family? Community?
 - What were the key barriers? How did XX overcome those barriers?
 - What critical decisions were made by the family during the period?
 - What made you take those decisions?
 - How have those decisions impacted your life onwards?
 5. Are you satisfied with your current situation of XX and the family? If yes, what makes you feel satisfied?
 - d. If or if not, what makes you dissatisfied? What are your future plans?
 - e. What are the top priorities of your family right now? (Educating children, building a house, buying land, living with the family) What makes those a top priority?
 6. Overall, how do you rate the overall return migration experience?
 - f. Was it a success or a failure? Maybe on a scale of 1 to 10? What makes you feel that?
 - g. What makes it a success? Which decisions were crucial to make it a success? At what moments those decisions were taken?
 - h. What makes it a failure? Which decisions were crucial to make it a failure? At what moments those decisions were taken?
 - i. What did you learn from the overall process? How have you tried to apply that in your life?
 7. Do you want XX to go abroad again? If yes, why? If not, why not? What advice do you give to aspiring migrants?

Thank you so much for your time. Is there anything that you would like to ask us? If not, we will close the discussion. Thank you very much for participating.

4.4 Key informant interviews (KIIs)

Key informant interviews will be done with stakeholders who play an important role in migration, and in the social and economic reintegration of RMWs at national, provincial, local and community level will be interviewed. Such stakeholders include national government and UN stakeholders, INGOs working on migration and reintegration or

livelihoods, municipality and ward level government representatives, local and community based organizations, employers/business partners among others.

Guidelines for key informant interviews

Namaste!

My name is I am from RIDA, a research based organization. Currently, on behalf of Helvetas Nepal, we are conducting a study among the returnee migrant workers in Nepal. This study also includes their families and colleagues as well as representatives of the local government and all those organizations and companies who have been assisting them, in assessing their opinions and their perceptions on foreign and their own country. We have brought you together here because you have recently returned from abroad. And, we would like to hear and learn from your experiences. In this study, we will speak to more than 100 returning migrants from four districts. This discussion will be between 60 to 90 minutes.

First, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you for agreeing to speak with us. This is an absolute voluntary participation. Upon your consent, we will also record the audio of this discussion and we will conceal your identity and the data will solely be utilized for this study only. After the use of this data for a research report, we will exterminate this audio recording. This discussion may not bring you a direct benefit, however the information that you provide will be a valuable reference for those people who are willing to travel abroad as a foreign migrant workers or those who have returned back in making constructive decisions for their betterment.

- Do you agree to participate in this discussion?
- Do you have any questions or concerns before I start this discussion?

Warm up

- Would you please tell us about your work including your work with/ related to aspiring and returnee migrants? (where, since how long have you had this work, what are your core responsibilities)
- Tell us about your community. What are the key attractions? What is the primary occupation of people living in this area? How are their lifestyles? What are their key sources of income? How is the trend of going abroad and coming back?
- How is the current migration trend from this place (who migrates, where do they go to, how long do they stay, any changes after migration, what are the common challenges of migrants here)
- How is the trend of return and remigration here (who returns, who does not, what are some of the causes of return, what are causes of remigration, who is more likely to remigrate, do they go to the same destination, how long do they stay in between re-migration)
- What do returnees generally do after return? (in terms of employment)
- Do you feel that returnees face any problems once they come back- ask for social and economic reintegration, employment/self-employment? (how does it vary by age, gender, caste and ethnicity, other factors)
- Are there any support systems for returnees in your area? What do they usually do? Is it popular with returnees? If yes, what aspect do returnees find beneficial? If not popular, what do you think are the reasons?
- What is the general perception of people who do not migrate towards those who return? If/how does it vary by age, gender, caste and ethnicity?
- Do you find returnees satisfied with their stay here? What do you think are reasons for this? If not, in your experience, what are they usually dissatisfied with?
- What kind of programmes for aspiring and returnee migrants do you think are needed in this community?
- Do people use the Employment Service Centres much here? What services do they usually seek there? If not, why do you think they do not use the service centres? Who are more likely to use and who are less likely to use it?
- What recommendations do you have for a good return and reintegration for Nepali migrants?
 - for different actors- local government, NGOs, Nepali embassy, other stakeholders
 - Based on phase- pre-employment, during work in destination, pre-return and post- return
 - Based on content- economic reintegration, social reintegration, family reintegration, others (ask by age, gender, multiple and single migration, education level, ethnic and religious groups related social norms and values)
- When do you think is a good time to orient migrants about return and reintegration?

4.5 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews will be conducted with a selected group of returnee migrant workers. In addition to standard questions, we will also include social network and mobility mapping within in-depth interviews. In the mapping we will ask respondents to identify key groups/individuals they meet and interact with, and/or reach out for support. With each social network, we will discuss how such networks have supported or not supported their reintegration. The mobility mapping will help us track the social networks that often get lost in a general mapping of social agencies.

Guidelines for in-depth interviews with the Returnee Migrant Workers

Namaste!

My name is I am from RIDA, a research based organization. Currently, on behalf of Helvetas Nepal, we are conducting a study among the returnee migrant workers in Nepal and people willing to go abroad for the foreign labour work. This study also includes their families and colleagues as well as representatives of the local government and all those organizations and companies who have been assisting them, in assessing their opinions and their perceptions on foreign and their own country. In this study, we will discuss your social, family and economic aspects.

We understand that you have returned from abroad. We will discuss your experience you had abroad and your situation after your return. We are having one-to-one talks with over ... returnee migrant workers from ...districts during this study. This discussion will take around 60-90 minutes.

First, I would like to express my sincere thanks to you for agreeing to take part in this discussion. This is an absolute voluntary participation. Upon your consent, we will also record the audio of this discussion and we will delete all identifiers related to your identity. The data will be kept confidential and only team members of the study will have access to it. After the use of this data for a research report, we will exterminate this audio recording. This discussion may not bring you a direct benefit, however the information that you provide will be a valuable reference for those people who are willing to travel abroad as a foreign migrant workers or those who have returned back in making constructive decisions for their betterment.

- Do you agree to participate in this discussion?
 - Do you have any questions or concerns before I start this discussion?
1. General information- Name, caste, age, marital status, education level, how many family members, are they from same area or have moved here from elsewhere, if moved, from where. How many family members are abroad? How many returned? What is the current main income source of the family?
 2. Can you tell me something about your migration journey? We want to learn about your overall migration experience?
 - Where did you return from (this is about the last destination in case of multiple migration)? Did you migrate to any other country/countries before that? At what age did you migrate for the first time?
 - How long did you stay abroad? If multiple countries, ask for each countries.
 - What made you stay long/short?
 - What type of work were you engaged in while there? Did you change jobs? If so, would you elaborate?
 - Did you take any skill training before going? If yes, what? How long? Was it useful in your work in the destination? Did you have a certificate? If had a skill training certificate, did the certificate help you in getting better work?
 - Would you please share about the following:
 - What are the good memories of working there? If multiple countries- ask about working environment, treatment from supervisors, employers, other Nepali friends, non-Nepali friends, natives of the place, living conditions, leisure time for each.

- What are the bad memories from working there- probe about challenges in work, what did they not like so much about the working environment, about treatment to workers, treatment to Nepalis, out of work life-? If multiple countries- ask for each
- Do you think that work experience would be useful in Nepal and why?
- What was your earning? How much money did you manage to send back home? Were you able to pay back his loan?
- What were you doing here in Nepal before migration? How much was the income before migration? What made you decide to go for foreign employment?
- How much did you spend when going for foreign employment? Did you go through a local agent or the manpower? Did you face any challenge in the migration process here in Nepal or immediately upon arrival in the destination?
- Did you take any support from government, NGO or INGO during your migration process- can be here or in the transit or destination country- anytime between migrating and before return?
- Overall, do you think foreign employment made your and your family's life better? If so, in what ways? If not, what happened? Was there something that did not go as expected? Would you share with us?

Now, let's think about the returning process. We want to capture all key moments that possibly mattered in shaping your journey back home.

Why did you return home? Were you thinking of migrating again when you returned?

3. Let's **go back to the day you made a final decision to return back**. Think about the day and moment you decided that you will return back. How was that moment? What happened? What made you take that decision (for completion of contract, this question might not apply)?
 - Who were around you? With whom did you share about the return decision?
 - What feedback did these people provide? Did they support or oppose your decision? What did they say?
 - When you were thinking of returning were there any factors from Nepal that wanted you to come back to Nepal? Any factors that did not want you to come back to Nepal? Any pull/push factors - factors from the country of the work?
 - Probe for each reason: can you expand more?
 - Who were the key actors in the decision process? With whom did you consult? What was their opinion?
 - Partner?
 - Friends
 - Other family members?
 - Employer?
 - Did you make a decision on single sitting or you took a long time to reflect on it?

Back then, how did you perceive the situation in Nepal? What were the things you were considering about? How did these perceptions towards Nepal matter?

4. Let's think about the time between your final decision and the actual departure. How long was that period? Can you share some of the discussions you had about return and starting over in Nepal during that time?
 - Did you think about not returning at that time? Did you discuss this with anyone? Who did you consult with? What was their advice?
 - Were you excited about returning back at this stage? What was in your mind? Fears? Expectations from Nepal and family? Hopes? Were there any challenges you faced during this time at work and in living /out of work?
 - Did your plans about what you would do after return change at this stage? Was this plan made based on discussion with anyone? If so who? Did you look for any background information about what would be good to do when you returned? If so, with whom (probe for formal sources such as organizations and informal sources such as personal networks? If not, why do you think you did not do it?

- What were you doing in the meantime? Buying gifts? Meeting with friends? Connecting more with people in Nepal?
5. Let's **go back to the day of returning home from abroad**. You had to catch a flight or train or bus. What was going on in your mind? What were things that made you happy about return and things that made you sad/worry about return?
- Did anyone come to see you off? Who? What did you talk about with your colleagues before your departure?
 - Did you have any luggage? What was in that luggage?
 - What did you purchase anything for the family/ in the airport? For whom?
 - While boarding the airplane, what thoughts came to your mind? What were your plans? Fears? Hope? Wishes?
 - How was the journey? Was there anything specific that you remember? Did you meet and share your experience with anyone?
 - Did anyone ask you about your experience and/or future plan? How did you respond?
 - How did that shape or change your future plan, if any?
 - How confident were you about settling back in the country? What do you think were things that would help you- your strengths? What do you think would be a challenge/your weakness?
6. Now, let's think about the moment you landed in the Tribhuvan International Airport or arrived at a border in Nepal. How was your experience of the landing or arrival process?
- How did you feel when the plane touched the Nepali land? What were you excited about? What were you not sure about?
 - How did the people in the airport terminal treat you? Who did you meet? Any other returning migrants? aspiring migrants?
 - Did you receive any encouraging remarks? Any discouraging remarks?
 - How was the interaction with the immigration officer, if any?
 - How was that exit out of the airport? Collecting luggage? Clearing customs? Anything worth noting?
 - After entering and exiting the terminal building, what was your perception about Nepal? What were your reintegration hopes
 - Did anyone come to receive you at the airport? Where did you go from the airport? Why did you pick that location/place?
 - Did you make any long-term decisions/or any kind of decision about starting fresh in Nepal on that day? If so, what was the decision?
 - What factors triggered those decisions?
 - Did you implement the decision later? Why? Why not?
 - If implemented, what were the results?
7. Now, **let's talk about the transit in Kathmandu or the city of arrival to the country**. How long did you stay in Kathmandu/or elsewhere before departing for your village or hometown? Why was it long or short?
- During his time in Kathmandu, who did you meet? What did you do (Probe if they were looking for any information about reintegration)?
 - Other returning migrants? Aspiring migrants? Manpower companies? Friends? Families?
 - What did they share with you? If/how did that affect your perceptions and plans, if any?
 - Were you eager to get back to your village? What was the reason? If not, what were your hesitations about?
 - How much of your previous plans/ideas remain intact while you were in Kathmandu or that transit city?
 - If anything changed in Kathmandu, why?
 - Any changes in the perception about what can be done in Nepal upon return? Why?
 - Did you seek any support or guidance from anyone or any org working with returning migrants? If yes, were you satisfied with the response?
 - Did you make any long-term decisions during the period of your transit in Kathmandu? If so, what were the decisions?
 - What factors triggered those decisions?
 - Did you implement the decision? Why? Why not?
 - If implemented, what were the results?
8. Now, let's think about the day you took a bus or other forms of transportation to travel to your village and/or **arrived in the village/home**. How was the experience?

- What were you thinking during the trip?
 - What did you see or hear or chat with other people? Did anything from this trip change your perception or thinking about the future?
 - What were your plans? What did you want to do immediately after arriving in the village?
 - Remember the time you stepped back to the village after a long time. What did those moments look like?
 - What did you feel after stepping on his village? Excited? Intimidated? Shy? Relieved? Can you share some of your experience?
 - Who did you meet after entering the village? How did they greet you?
 - Did you talk to them? If so, what was that about and how did that go?
 - Did your friends come to see you? How did that go? What did you chat with them about?
 - What changes did you see in your village? What changes were positive? What changes were negative?
 - How did you feel after reaching home? Did you notice any change in your house? How was your house before and now?
 - How was it like meeting with your family after a long time?
 - What was the initial communication with your family members? parents? partners? children?
 - How would you describe those moments? Exciting? Encouraging? Intimidating? Mixed?
 - What did you bring for your family and friends? How were those received?
 - What perception family and friends had about you? success? failure? How did that affect your feeling, confidence, and reaction?
 - What perception community members hold about you? success? failure? How did that affect your feeling, confidence, and reaction?
 - Did you make any long-term decisions on the day you entered home/village? If so, what was the decision? What factors triggered those decisions?
 - Did you implement the decision? Why? Why not?
 - If implemented, what were the results?
9. Now that you have arrived at home and spent a few days there. How might have been the first few days back to the village.
- What changes did you notice in the family and the community
 - Were things as expected? In your family? In the community?
 - What were as expected? What was not as expected?
 - If something was not as expected, how did that difference in reality impact you or your future plans?
 - How did you find their behavior towards you?
 - What questions people in the community asked you during your initial days of return?
 - How did you react to those?
 - Which questions did you like?
 - Which questions you didn't like?
 - How did that impact you, your plans, and your decisions?
 - What were the key questions you asked to the community members?
 - Why were those questions important to you?
 - What was the response?
 - How did that affect your plans?
 - Did you get a chance to get together with your friends and other circle? If yes, how did that go? What were the initial conversations?
 - Were they encouraging or discouraging? Any share any experience?
 - Overall, what factors/news/observations in the community were encouraging? Why? How did these encouragement help you?
 - What factors/news/observations were discouraging? Why? How did these discouragements impact you?
 - Did you make any long-term decisions during the first month of return? If so, what was the decision? How did you arrive at that decision?
 - What factors triggered those decisions?
 - Did you implement the decision? Why? Why not?
 - If implemented, what were the results?

10. Remember the time after a month or more since you returned back to the village.
 - What was going on?
 - After a month, what was the family situation?
 - Did you need to take some initiatives to make things moving/better? If so, what was going on in your mind? What were your plans?
 - Finding a work, pros and cons, key decision parameters
 - Starting a person business, pros and cons, key decision parameters
 - Returning back abroad, pros and cons, key decision parameters
 - If you had a plan earlier, was that plan feasible? Why or why not? What were the enablers? What were the disablers?
 - What were your challenges/barriers? How did you plan to overcome those challenges?
 - How did your perception change if any from the time you arrived back to the village to till after the first month of return?
 - Now, let's think about what you are doing right now?
 - What are you doing now?
 - How did you end up where you are right now?
 - What were your key decisions that you made? What helped or urged you to make those decisions?
 - Are you doing what you wanted to do? If not, why?
 - What would have happened had you taken other decisions?
 - What challenges have you faced? What opportunities have you found?
 - What would have changed to ease things if you could?
11. Overall, how do you rate the overall return migration experience?
 - Was it a success or a failure? Maybe on a scale of 1 to 10? What makes you feel that?
 - What makes it a success? Which decisions were crucial to make it a success? At what moments those decisions were taken?
 - What makes it a failure? Which decisions were crucial to make it a failure? At what moments those decisions were taken?
 - What do you think are the perceptions of your community and family towards you now?
 - Does that match with your expectations? In what ways do you differ? Why?
 -

Support

12. Did you know about the existing programmes such as the PMEP, provision of soft loans, reintegration programmes offered by the government or other I/NGOs in your area? If no, did you try to find out? If yes, how did you know about it? What are some of the services you know? Have you used them? If yes, what is your experience of it? What can be made better? If not, why did you not use them?
13. .What do you think hinders returnee migrants access government services / non-government services?
14. Did you take any service regarding your integration from private firms/private sector actors? If yes, who? What kind of service? What is your experience? What is positive about them? What can be improved?
 - a. If you have not received any support, would you let us know what would be useful for you? – probe for economic, non-economic and any other kind of support, ask detail about how much, what conditions, how often and so on.
 - In order to live a dignified life, what do you think could be the challenges for returning migrants? How could those be resolved?
 - In order to implement any plan targeting these returnee migrant workers, how do you bring them on the same platform? What can be the strategic ways to bring them back to the same place? What can be the medium of communication?
 - What do you think the following actors should have to support returning migrants?
 - Local government
 - Family members
 - Community
 - Is there anything that you would like to share with us?
 - To help and support returning migrants, what should be the activities that one should focus on?

Thank you so much for your time. Is there anything that you would like to ask us? If not, we will close the discussion. Thank you very much for participating.

Appendix 5. Suggested Communication messages per MTMs

| Moment that Matters | Key Message to RMW (prospective, in-service or returnee) | Key message to Family of MW | Channel | Purpose / Objective of the message |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 1. Decision to Migrate | “Prepare well by setting clear goals and gathering all the information you need for a safe migration journey.” | “Support your family member by helping them plan and gather reliable information before they leave.” | Pre-migration workshops, community meetings | To ensure RMWs and families make informed migration decisions. |
| 2. Agent & Migration Process | “Verify agents and agencies to avoid fraudulent practices. Always check official registration.” | “Encourage your family to work only with verified agents.” | Social media, local government centers | To reduce risk of exploitation by unverified agents. |
| 3. Financing Migration | “Plan your finances wisely, and avoid high-interest loans. Seek assistance if needed.” | “Help manage finances effectively and discourage high-interest debt.” | Financial literacy sessions, community centers | To promote smart financial planning for migration expenses. |
| 4. Onboarding at Work Abroad | “Adjusting will take time; stay patient and reach out if you need help.” | “Keep connected and provide moral support, especially during the early days abroad.” | Online support groups, embassy contacts | To ease adjustment and ensure mental well-being. |
| 5. Adapting to Job Conditions | “Build a support network with other RMWs to share tips and adjust to work demands.” | “Encourage open communication to understand the challenges abroad.” | Social networking platforms, phone calls | To enhance workplace adaptation and well-being. |
| 6. Managing Family Relations | “Regular communication with family is key to maintaining close ties.” | “Stay understanding and supportive through regular check-ins.” | Messaging apps, community meetings | To strengthen family ties despite long-distance. |
| 7. Taking Leave and Short Visits | “Plan visits carefully to manage work expectations and family needs.” | “Coordinate with your family member to make the most of their visits home.” | Messaging apps, family meetings | To ensure smooth work-family balance during visits. |
| 8. Troubleshooting at Work | “If faced with challenges, connect with your embassy or trusted colleagues.” | “Offer encouragement and seek assistance for them if needed.” | Embassy support lines, peer networks | To promote effective solutions for work-related issues. |
| 9. Return Decision | “Assess both family and work conditions carefully before deciding to return.” | “Support the RMW in weighing their options for an informed decision.” | Family meetings, local government offices | To make well-informed return decisions. |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Facing Family Upon Return | "Take time to reintegrate and be open with family about experiences." | "Be patient and understanding during the reintegration process." | Community reintegration programs, family meetings | To ease the emotional and practical transition back home. |
| 11. Finding Local Employment | "Explore job options and support programs available to RMWs locally." | "Encourage and assist in finding sustainable employment at home." | Local job fairs, government offices | To support smooth economic reintegration and stability. |