



RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD BASED ON THE CONSULTATIONS ORGANIZED BY IOM

BACKGROUND

IOM organized multiple consultations with migrant workers, government, diasporas, civil society organizations, UN, academicians and researchers on the issues ranging from socio-economic impact of COVID-19, vulnerabilities, reintegration, points of entries and quarantine centers, UN socio-economic recovery framework and steps as way forward. Key findings and challenges from the consultations recommendations highlighted by the experts and participants are listed in this document.

Key findings and challenges

Protection

- Notions of purity and ideals around women's body and mobility that makes them prone to violence.
- Challenges of access to protection in lockdown and stigmatization by staffs during quarantine.
- Health screening is prioritized at the holding centers. However, there are gaps in information dissemination on other services such as: procedure on PSS, GBV-hotlines and toll free numbers.
- Media reports of increased cases of suicide, gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual assault.
- Special needs and dignity are not taken into consideration such as of menstruation, lactating mothers, person with disability at the quarantine centers.
- Returnee Migrants at NGO run shelter homes seem visibly disturbed and require intervention on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS).
- Returnee migrants have utilized their savings and many have even taken loans to buy return tickets.
- Regular Migrant Workers did not benefit from the social security scheme from the employers in destination in relation to medical/health insurance, compensations on loss of employment, and return tickets.
- Media reports on returnee migrants who are pregnant or have come back with children calling all such cases as result of sexual assault without verification has further stigmatized the status of returnee women migrants and may severely impact women's mobility on labour migration in the future.
- Lack of access to correct and reliable information on repatriation process and COVID-19 has pushed the migrant workers into vulnerability in country of destination.
- Assessment conducted among Returnee Migrant Workers reported mixed feelings to return home due to:
 - Fear and stigma attached to migrants and COVID-19
 - Families threatened not to bring migrants to home districts
 - Fear of unacceptance from the community
 - Fear and shame on unsuccessful migration
 - Fear of loans/debts
 - Fear of lack of economic opportunities & livelihood alternatives in home districts



- Fear of how the migrants' children and families will react on sudden unplanned return
- No other source of income to support for younger children's education, health, basic necessities
- Lack of funding to Shelters as currently the Nepal Government is not funding any shelters managed by the CSOs/NGOs until the Shelter Guidelines are endorsed.
- Child Protection Concern, rights of child, child's legal identity of returnee women migrants concerns were frequently raised.
- Negligence from hospitals and clinics towards pregnant women and lactating mothers in absence of PCR tests.

Recovery and Reintegration

- Unemployment, declining GDP and declining remittance will increase the number of people below the poverty line and poverty gap.
- Decrease in remittances, decrease in FDI, low investment demand, tourism income decline, increased credit default risk and deficit financing from government will add pressure in national reserves.
- Sectors such as: Agriculture are untidy, low value and not able to absorb many returnees; Industry has low job demands, already occupied and less new job opportunity; Tourism sector is largely affected and are in close situation and will have major cut down.
- Many returnee migrants were reported as being jobless for past two -three months, hence, lack of immediate cash to go back to their home district and meet immediate livelihood.
- Challenges in connecting to and obtaining loans schemes at the local level for setting up micro-enterprises and business whereas it is readily available for foreign employment through informal money lenders at high interest rates.
- No access to supply-chain and market to link up with produce in particular vegetable and milk products that do not last long.
- Lack of government plans to utilize skills of the returnee migrant workers and Diasporas.

Recommendations and Way Forward

Protection

- Trained previous social mobilizers of WDO and local level trained human resources (WCF, CAC, Kishor-Kishori samuha, youth clubs, trained disaster response team at community leaders, religious leaders, men role models) to be mobilized for awareness raising and in managing the QCs.
- Strict measures to prevent human trafficking and violence against women and a robust monitoring mechanism is required.
- Prioritize safety and security of women and girls in quarantine centers.



- Urgent need to orient staff and volunteers on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in particular at the QCs.
- Prioritize raising awareness on GBV and sexual assault among community members and people living in the QCs.
- Advocate for separate QCs/ home quarantine for women, girls and children.
- Longer term shelter and other support to Victims of Trafficking (VoTs), especially for pregnant women.
- Continued MHPSS to the most vulnerable ones including counselling to migrants' families.
- Need of continued support to widow, separated, divorced, pregnant and vulnerable returnee migrants with GoN's Social Protection scheme for allowances for single parents.
- Access to remedy – legal counselling/compensations on deceptive job conditions.
- Need to expedite the repatriation efforts so that the situation does not worsen in terms of both physical and mental health, longer the process, more vulnerable the migrants will be.
- Provision of self-pay in quarantine centers should not be applicable for vulnerable returnee migrants.
- Community level interventions on raising awareness on stigmatization on migrants and COVID-19. Government, Civil Society, NGOs, Community leaders and media all should work together to creating a respective environment for returnee migrants' reintegration in the community.

Recovery and Reintegration

- Amend Investments overseas restrictions ACT BS 2021 (1964 AD). Partial or full tax waiver for withholding tax on dividend repatriations so that Foreign Investors will retain their profits and reinvest them back into the Nepalese economy.
- Allow Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) into Fintech ventures especially in Data Centre, Big Data, Payment Systems where existing firms in Nepal lack both capital and technical know-how.
- Invite and create a conducive environment for Diaspora to invest in knowledge, know how, technology in addition to finance.
- Diaspora Bonds and securitization of such savings to get loans. Example of not so successful initiative of foreign employment bond.
- Lowering interest rate, liquidity support and temporary regulatory relaxation to financial institutions including cooperatives to provide soft loans to returnee migrant for business setup and startup.
- Invest in agriculture to diversify it and make it professional.
- Expansion of health services and infrastructures – universalizing the health services.
- Expansion of PM Employment Program from 100 days of employment to make it more effective and inclusive to address returnee migrants.
- Invest in pandemic preparedness – raising awareness, shift of human behavior and promotion of preventive approaches.



International Organization for Migration (IOM)
The UN Migration Agency

- Aware returnee migrants of Government's relief packages, initiatives, and plans to help them return back home.
- Local government should provide essential support to their most vulnerable returnee migrants in economic reintegration and recovery.
- Required support for re-skilling, upscaling of skills of women returnees to integrate into local labour economy or for re-migration in future.
- Need for socio-economic reintegration assistance support for sustainable rehabilitation and empowerment at the individual level, community and structural level (long term plan intervention)
- Provision of separate funds in Government's regular budget for recovery and reintegration of migrants.
- Increase supply chain of skilled workers and linking the labour force and produces with the market.
- Support and promote entrepreneurship and self – employment in the spirit of Leave No One Behind.

Annex: List of Consultations

Description	Date
• Initiatives of the Government of Nepal and the stakeholders (private sector & CSOs) to respond to the protect rights of migrant workers and their families affected by COVID19	29 April 2020
• Challenges and way forward on protection for returnee migrants and aspiring migrants and their families	15 May 2020
• Migrant's protection concerns and gaps at the point of entries, holding centers and migrants stranded around the border as well as ongoing efforts, services and situation at the provincial level	5 June 2020
• Webinar: Remittances and its impact on livelihoods and economy of Nepal on the occasion of the International Day of Family Remittances	16 June 2020
• Protection and vulnerabilities of returnee women migrants	17 June 2020
• Socio-economic vulnerabilities, recovery and reintegration of migrants	8 July 2020