

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

For decades, Nepalis have sought opportunities abroad. Each year, over **750,000** labour approvals are issued, with most workers returning home after two to three years.

Coming home brings both opportunity and uncertainty which is why reintegration support becomes essential to help returnees rebuild stability, dignity, and direction.



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

A Glimpse Into Nepal's Returning Workforce

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

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

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

Drivers of Re-Migration

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

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

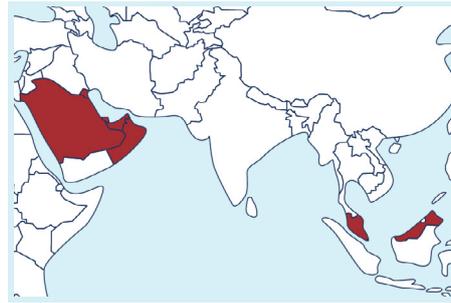


Fig: A map illustrating where most Nepali migrant workers go abroad

The average age

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

Marital Status

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

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

- Contract Completion
- Deportation
- Layoffs

Many have completed **2-3 Migration Cycles**, for a period of 4-6 years in abroad.

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

Cookie cutter approach to reintegration support is not possible.

Reintegration Matters

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

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

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



Economic Reintegration

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

- Minimum monthly household income of NPR 57,000 (~CHF 322)
- Earning opportunities initiated within 6 months of return
- Minimum monthly income sustained for at least 3 years

The current official minimum wage for a full-time worker in Nepal is NPR 19,550 per month (effective July 2025). While many returnees earn more than this amount when working abroad, successful economic reintegration depends on matching or exceeding the average cost of living back home.

Due to inflation, and based on 2016 Nepal Rastra Bank estimates, the estimated average monthly income required for a household to meet the cost of living is approximately NPR 57,749 in 2024 and is projected to rise to NPR 89,124 by 2030.

For successful economic reintegration, returnees will require access to significantly increased income earning opportunities in Nepal, diversify their income sources and have multiple family members generating income; otherwise, the household will likely struggle to keep up with rising national living costs

Remittances account for **nearly 27% of Nepal's GDP**

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

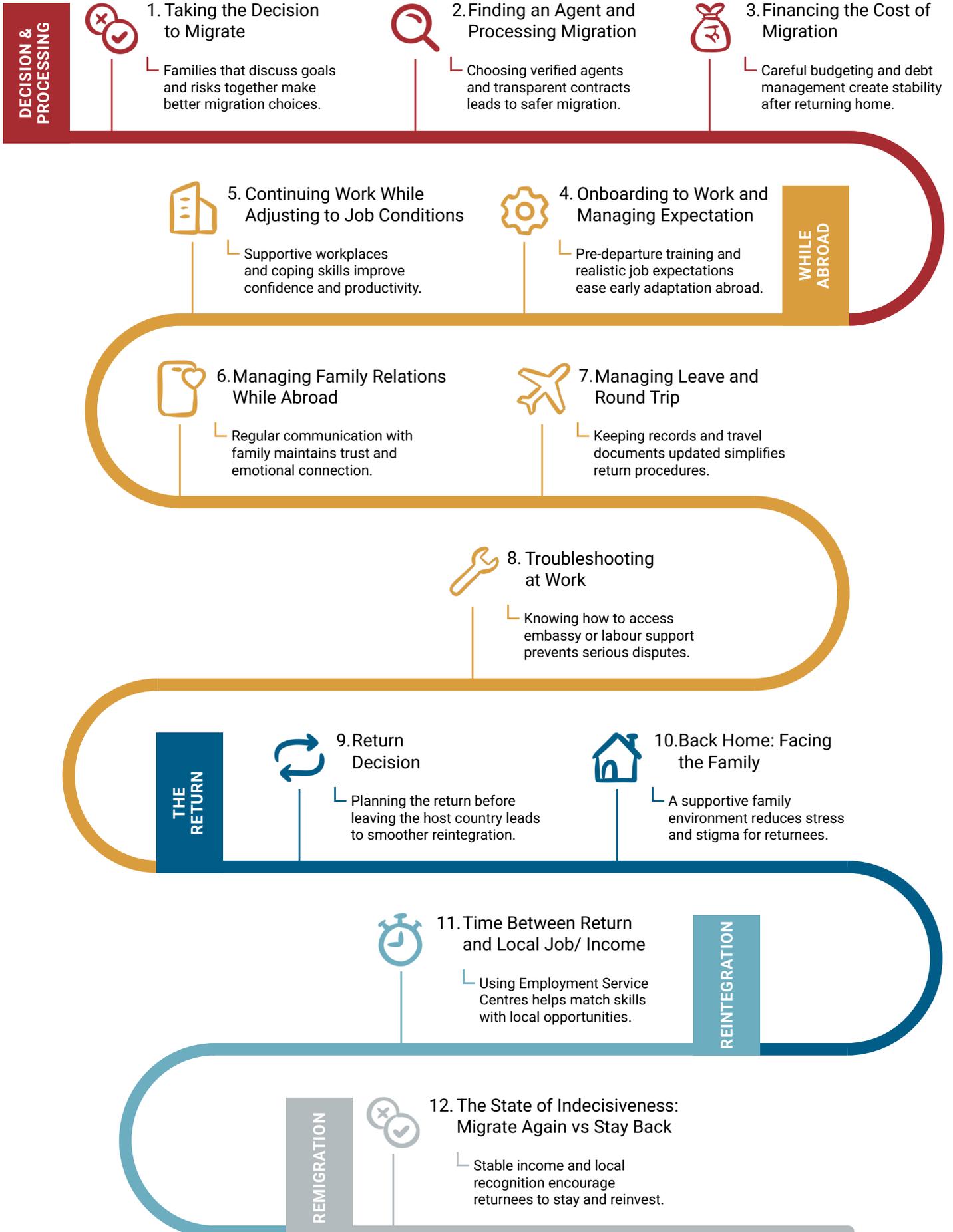
World Bank, 2023



Social Reintegration

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

The 12 Moments that Matter



The Way Forward

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



Provide holistic support across all 12 moments of the migration cycle



Strengthen local Employment Service Centres (ESCs) as reintegration hubs



Recognize and certify skills gained abroad for domestic employment



Design gender-responsive programmes for women returnees



Expand financial access for reintegration and entrepreneurship



Enhance coordination between federal, provincial, and local governments



Targeted interventions for personal with chronic illness or disabilities



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



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

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

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

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