

Migrant Workers from Nepal

A FACTSHEET

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign employment is one of the major sources of livelihood for many households in Nepal. With an increasing number of youths opting for foreign employment, Nepal has become one of the important labour sending countries in the South-Asian region. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Malaysia are popular migration destinations for the Nepali migrant workers. Though many households depend on remittances for their livelihood, migrant workers continue to face numerous challenges during migration.

This paper attempts to give an overview of labour migration from Nepal, including the population size of migrant workers, migration destinations, nature of employment, recruitment practices, working conditions abroad and social security provisions for migrant workers. The paper also presents the context of employment and unemployment within Nepal, the size of the working population and minimum wage and benefits received by the labourers within the country.

Migration and migrants

Total out-migration

Between the period of 2008 to 2017, the Nepal government issued over 3.5 million labour permits to workers migrating mainly to the GCC countries and Malaysia.¹ In the fiscal year (FY) 2017/18, 183,542 labour permits were issued for Qatar and the total labour permits (both new entry and re-entry) issued between FY 1993/94 and 2017/18 were 1,554,110, with 1,331,842 issued to male migrants.² In 2017 alone, the number of Nepali migrants in Qatar was 154,340, about 9 per cent of the total migrants from the country.³

1 Baruah, Nandita and Nischala Arjal. 2018. 'Nepalese Labor Migration- A Status Report.' Accessed 20 December 2019. <https://asiafoundation.org/2018/06/06/nepalese-labor-migration-a-status-report/>; This excludes a significant number of Nepalis who migrate to India for employment.

2 Jha, Swarna Kumar. 2019a. *Labour Migration from Nepal-Factsheet: Qatar*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) and Foreign Employment Board. https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/Qatar_2019.pdf

3 Jha 2019a.

Similarly, 137,311 labour permits were issued for Malaysia in 2017/18, and the total labour permits (both new entry and re-entry) issued between 1997/98 and 2017/18 were 1,505,486, with 1,283,747 permits issued to male migrants.⁴ In 2017, there were 209,121 Nepali migrants in Malaysia, which accounted for 7.7 per cent of the total migrant population from the country.⁵ In Malaysia, there is a high demand for Nepali workers with a military background to work as a security guard. Manufacturing, construction, plantation, agriculture and service industries are some other major employment sectors for Nepali workers in Malaysia.⁶

In the FY 2017/18, 114,941 labour permits were issued for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the total labour permits (both new entry and re-entry) issued between 1997/98 and 2017/18 were 760,420, with 617,787 permits issued to men.⁷ In 2017 alone, there were 26,595 migrants in the UAE, about 0.32 per cent of the total migrant population from Nepal; some of the popular sectors of work for Nepali migrants in the UAE include security, driving, sales, hospitality, construction and cleaning.⁸

Similarly, 108,414 labour permits were issued for Saudi Arabia in 2017/18, and the total labour permits (both new entry and re-entry) issued for Saudi Arabia between 1993/94 and 2017/18 were 1,154,185, of which, 999,531 were issued to male migrants.⁹ In 2017, the number of Nepalis in Saudi Arabia was 455,905, about 3.7 per cent of the total migrant population from the country.¹⁰

In the FY 2017/18, 8,454 labour permits were issued for Bahrain in the FY 2017/18, and the total labour permits (both new entry and re-entry) issued between 1993/94 and 2017/18 were 64,922, 54,576 of which were issued to male migrant workers.¹¹ In 2017 alone, 3,888 Nepali migrants were working in Bahrain.¹² Similarly, 27,149 labour permits were issued for Kuwait and the total labour permits (both new entry and re-entry) issued between 1993/94 and 2017/18 were 173,685, 118,581 of which were issued to male migrants.¹³ In 2017 alone, there were 15,514 Nepalis in Kuwait.¹⁴

In 2017/18, a total of 5,713 labour permits were issued for Oman and the total labour permits (both new entry and re-entry) issued between 1993/94 and 2017/18 were 40,954, 34,413 of which were issued to male migrants.¹⁵ There were 17,057 Nepalis in Oman in 2017, which accounted for 0.95 per cent of the total migrant population from the country in the same year.¹⁶

4 Kambang, Ratna and Arjun Kharel. 2019. *Labour Migration from Nepal-Factsheet: Malaysia*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) and Foreign Employment Board. https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/Malaysia_2019.pdf

5 Kambang and Kharel 2019.

6 Kambang and Kharel 2019.

7 Ansari, Sabir, Arjun Kharel, and Sudeshna Thapa. 2019a. *Labour Migration from Nepal-Factsheet: United Arab Emirates*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) and Foreign Employment Board. <https://www.ceslam.org/fact-sheets/factsheet-UAE>

8 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019a.

9 Gurung, Amrita. 2019. *Labour Migration from Nepal-Factsheet: Saudi Arabia*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) and Foreign Employment Board. https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/Saudi_Arabia.pdf

10 Gurung 2019.

11 Ansari, Sabir, Arjun Kharel, and Sudeshna Thapa. 2019b. *Labour Migration from Nepal-Factsheet: Bahrain*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) and Foreign Employment Board. <https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/Bahrain.pdf>

12 Ansari, Sabir, Arjun Kharel, and Sudeshna Thapa 2019b.

13 Ansari, Sabir, Arjun Kharel, and Sudeshna Thapa. 2019c. *Labour Migration from Nepal-Factsheet: Kuwait*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) and Foreign Employment Board. https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/Kuwait_2019.pdf

14 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019c.

15 Jha, Swarna Kumar. 2019b. *Labour Migration from Nepal-Factsheet: Oman*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility (CESLAM) and Foreign Employment Board. https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/Oman_2019.pdf

16 Jha 2019b.

Process and cost of recruitment

In Nepal, labour migration to the GCC countries and Malaysia is facilitated by the recruitment agencies or arranged independently on a personal basis.¹⁷ The Foreign Employment Act (2007) and the Foreign Employment Rules (2008) are the fundamental legal instruments governing labour migration and they have set rules, for both migrants and recruitment agencies, to be followed during the process of migration. According to the Act, minors under the age of 18 are not permitted to go for foreign employment.¹⁸ Similarly, the Directives for Sending Domestic Workers for Foreign Employment (2015) prohibits women below the age of 24 from migrating to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon and Malaysia as domestic workers.¹⁹ In 2016, the Parliamentary Committee further imposed a complete ban on the migration of women as domestic workers for until the governments of the respective destination countries sign bilateral labour agreements with the government of Nepal.²⁰ The government also mandated two-day pre-departure orientation training for all migrant workers going for labour migration and a 30-day skill development training for women migrants going to the GCC countries and Malaysia for domestic work.²¹

The government introduced the scheme of 'free-visa, free-ticket' in 2015 to regulate recruitment practices in Nepal. The scheme required migrant workers to pay a maximum of NPR 20,000 while going for employment to the GCC countries and Malaysia.²² Before the introduction of 'free-visa, free-ticket,' the workers had to pay a hefty sum of money for their migration. However, there are many loopholes in the 2015 move of the government and the workers continue to pay huge sums of money, in practice.²³

Wages of Nepali workers in GCC and Malaysia

The wages of the workers heavily depend on the skills they possess and the sectors of work they are involved in. The minimum wage/salary of the Nepali migrants working in Qatar²⁴ is 900 Qatari Riyal (QAR) in addition to a food allowance of 300 QAR for unskilled workers;²⁵ 1100-1400 QAR in addition to a food allowance of 300 QAR for semi-skilled workers;²⁶ 1500-3600 QAR in addition to a food allowance of 300 QAR for skilled workers;²⁷ and 4200-11000 QAR in addition to a food allowance of 500 QAR for professional workers.²⁸

Similarly, the minimum wage for the Nepali migrants in Oman²⁹ is 100 OMR in addition to a food allowance of 20 OMR for unskilled workers;³⁰ 120-140 OMR in addition to a food allowance of 20-30 OMR for semi-skilled workers;³¹ 150-360 OMR in addition to a food allowance of 30 OMR for

17 Sijapati, Bandita and Amrita Limbu. 2012. *Governing Labour Migration in Nepal: An Analysis of Existing Policies and Institutional Mechanisms*. Kathmandu: Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility, Updated ed 2017. <https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/Governing%20Labour%20Updated%20edition%202017.pdf>

18 Government of Nepal. 2007. *Foreign Employment Act 2007*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

19 Government of Nepal. 2015. *Directives for Sending Domestic Workers for Foreign Employment 2015*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

20 Karki, Hom. 2019. 'Khadika gharelu kaamdaarko gunaso – "Pariwarbata alaggyaiyo."' *Kantipur*, 8 July 2019. <https://ekantipur.com/news/2019/07/08/156254900351337682.html?author=1>

21 Jha 2019a.

22 Mandal, Chandan Kumar. 2017. "'Free visa free ticket' scheme a dud: Panel.' *The Kathmandu Post*, 10 August 2017. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2017/08/10/free-visa-free-ticket-scheme-a-dud-panel>

23 Mandal 2017.

24 Jha 2019a.

25 Labourer, cleaner, helper, sweeper etc.

26 Mason, carpenter, cashier, waiter etc.

27 Cook, security guard, clerk, accountant etc.

28 Nurse, civil engineer, manager, surgeon etc.

29 Jha 2019b.

30 Labourer, cleaner, helper, sweeper etc.

31 Mason, carpenter, cashier, waiter etc.

skilled workers;³² and 420-1100 OMR in addition to a food allowance of 50 OMR for professional³³ workers.

In the case of Saudi Arabia,³⁴ the minimum wage for the Nepali migrant workers is 1000 SAR in addition to a food allowance of 300 SAR and other basic allowances for unskilled workers;³⁵ 1200-2500 SAR in addition to an allowance of 300 SAR and other basic allowances for semi-skilled,³⁶ 1200-3000 SAR and a food allowance of 500 SAR and other basic allowances for skilled workers;³⁷ and 5000-11000 SAR in addition to a food allowance of 500 SAR and other basic allowances for professional³⁸ workers.

The current minimum wage in Malaysia is Malaysian Ringgit (RM) 1,000 per month in the Peninsula, and RM 920 in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan.³⁹ The Malaysian government proposed to raise this amount to RM 1,100 per month for all workers throughout Malaysia starting 1 January 2019.⁴⁰

Remittance to Nepal

The migrant workers' remittance inflow to Nepal was USD 8,064 million in 2018, which represented 28 per cent share of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2018.⁴¹ The remittance received from the GCC countries and Malaysia in 2017 is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Remittance received by Nepal in 2017

Destination countries	Remittance received by Nepal (in billion USD)	Remittance to Nepal as a percentage of the total outflow	Total remittances received by Nepal	Remittances as % of total remittances received by Nepal
Bahrain*	0.002	0.1	7.0	0.03
Kuwait†	0.25	2.1	7.0	3.6
Oman‡	-	-	-	-
Qatar§	2.0	18.4	7.0	28.3
Saudi Arabia¶	1.8	3.9	7.0	25.7
UAE#	0.84	2.6	7.0	12.0
Malaysia**	0.19	3.1	7.0	2.7

* Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019b.

† Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019c.

‡ A little over USD 4 billion has been remitted out of Oman every year since 2012 (Jha 2019b).

§ Jha 2019a.

¶ Gurung 2019.

Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019a.

** Kambang and Kharel 2019.

Injuries and deaths of migrant workers

The data of Nepal through the FYs 2008/09-2017/18 show that 1,323 migrant workers lost their lives in Qatar, and 202 workers were seriously ill or injured in the same period. In the FY 2017/18 alone,

32 Cook, security guard, clerk, accountant etc.

33 Nurse, civil engineer, manager, surgeon etc.

34 Gurung 2019.

35 Labourer, cleaner, helper, sweeper etc.

36 Block makers, plasterers, carpenter, mechanical helper, steel fixture, tile fixture, plumber, cook, bakers, scaffolding supervisor, etc.

37 Computer operator, pharmacist, medical assistant, accountant, nurse, overseer, etc.

38 Human Resource executive, computer engineer, safety engineer, electronic engineer, etc.

39 Kambang and Kharel 2019.

40 Kambang and Kharel 2019.

41 Ezemenari, Kenechukwu Maria and Krishna Nayan Joshi. 2019. *Nepal Development Update: Envisioning a Future Data Ecosystem in Federal Nepal*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/485591576101383264/Nepal-Development-Update-Envisioning-a-Future-Data-Ecosystem-in-Federal-Nepal>

123 migrant workers (122 men) lost their lives in Qatar.⁴² According to the data received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), 159 Nepali migrants lost their lives in Qatar in 2017.⁴³ A total of 517 migrant workers lost their lives in the UAE between the period of 2008/09 to 2017/18. In the FY 2017/18, 94 migrant workers lost their lives in the UAE, out of which 85 were male workers. Similarly, 1820 migrant workers lost their lives in Saudi Arabia in the decade of 2008/09 to 2017/18. Another 262 workers were seriously ill or injured in Saudi Arabia in the same period. In 2017/18, 204 male migrant workers lost their lives in Saudi Arabia.⁴⁴ Another data available from the MoFA suggested that 437 Nepali migrants lost their lives in Saudi Arabia in 2017 and three of them lost their lives in 2018.⁴⁵

The records for Kuwait show that 211 migrant workers lost their lives between the FYs 2008/09 to 2017/18. Another 46 workers were seriously ill or injured in that period. In 2017/18, 26 migrants, of which 23 were men, lost their lives in Kuwait.⁴⁶ According to the data available from the MoFA, 49 Nepali migrants lost their lives in Kuwait in 2017.⁴⁷ Likewise, in Bahrain, 121 migrant workers lost their lives between the FYs 2008/09 to 2017/18. Another 12 Nepali migrant workers fell seriously ill or were injured badly in the same period. In FY 2017/18, nine male migrant workers lost their lives in Bahrain.⁴⁸ Similarly, the data for Oman suggests that 52 migrant workers lost their lives in the decade of 2008/09 to 2017/18. There were five Nepali migrant workers seriously ill or badly injured in the same period. There were deaths of five migrant workers, of which three were male, in Oman in the FY 2017/18.⁴⁹ The data from the MoFA suggests that seven Nepali migrants lost their lives in Oman in 2017.⁵⁰

Likewise, 2,408 migrant workers lost their lives in Malaysia in the decade of 2008/09 to 2017/18. Another 484 workers were seriously ill or injured in Malaysia in the same period. In total, 289 migrant workers, including four women, lost their lives in Malaysia in the FY 2017/18.⁵¹ According to the data from the MoFA, 287 Nepali migrants lost their lives in Malaysia in 2017.⁵² (See Table 2 for the causes of deaths of Nepali migrant workers in different destination countries along with the number of deaths of male (M) and female (F) migrant workers.)

Compensation received by migrant workers

In Nepal, every worker going for foreign employment is required to contribute NPR 1,500 (in case of three-year work contracts) or NPR 2,500 (for work contracts extending over three years) to the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund managed by the Foreign Employment Board (FEB) before their departure. If a migrant worker dies within the contract period, the FEB provides compensation of NPR 700,000 to his/her family up to one year of receiving the dead body in Nepal. Ill or injured workers receive up to NPR 700,000 upon the evaluation of their injuries and illnesses by a team of experts.⁵³ The Foreign Employment Act 2007 and Foreign the Employment Rules 2008 have made insurance mandatory for workers going for foreign employment. If a migrant worker dies or falls ill or gets injured within the contract period, the FEB provides compensation of up to NPR 700,000. In case of death, serious illness or mutilation of a body part in destination countries during the contract period,

42 Jha 2019a.

43 Jha 2019a.

44 Gurung 2019.

45 Gurung 2019.

46 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019c.

47 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019c.

48 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019b.

49 Jha 2019b.

50 For more, see Jha 2019b.

51 Kambang and Kharel 2019.

52 Kambang and Kharel 2019.

53 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019a.

Table 2: Causes of deaths of Nepali migrant workers

Causes of death	Bahrain*	Kuwait†	Oman‡	Qatar§	Saudi Arabia¶	UAE#	Malaysia**
Natural causes death	-	2 (M)	1 (M)	17 (16M, 1F)	38 (M)	15 (14M, 1F)	46 (45M, 1F)
Traffic accidents	-	1 (M)	1 (F)	27 (M)	64 (M)	12 (11M, 1F)	14 (M)
Workplace accidents	1 (M)	1 (M)	-	17 (M)	8 (M)	25 (21M, 4F)	27 (M)
Cardiac arrest	3 (M)	-	-	13 (M)	19 (M)	14 (13M, 1F)	22 (M)
Heart attack	-	14 (12M, 2F)	-	25 (M)	28 (M)	4 (3M, 1F)	30 (M)
Murder	-	1 (M)	-	-	-	-	-
Suicide	1 (M)	1 (M)	2 (M)	13 (M)	24 (M)	12 (11M, 1F)	57 (55M, 2F)
Disease	3 (M)	1 (M)	-	5 (M)	4 (M)	4 (F)	30 (M)
Other/ unidentified causes	8 (M)	3 (2M, 1F)	1(F)	6 (M)	19 (M)	8 (M)	23 (22M, 1F)
Pending investigation	-	2 (M)	-	-	-	-	40 (M)

* Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019b.

† Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019c.

‡ A little over USD 4 billion has been remitted out of Oman every year since 2012 (Jha 2019b).

§ Jha 2019a.

¶ Gurung 2019.

Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019a.

** Kambang and Kharel 2019.

members of the migrant workers' immediate family can claim for compensation (minimum of NPR 40,000 to maximum 1,500,000 depending on the case) upon the fulfilment of document requirements specified by the FEB, within a year of receiving the dead body in Nepal.⁵⁴

Status of bilateral agreements with destination countries

The Nepal government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UAE in July 2007, and subsequently in June 2019.⁵⁵ Nepal and Bahrain signed an MoU relating to the employment of Nepali migrant workers in Bahrain on 29 April 2008.⁵⁶ 'Agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Government of the State of Qatar Concerning Nepalese Manpower Employment in the State of Qatar' was signed in March 2005. An Additional Protocol to the agreement was signed between the two countries on 20 January 2008. Similarly, an MOU was also signed between the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal and the National Human Rights Committee of Qatar in November 2015 to streamline the exchange of information relating to complaints about the protection of the rights of migrant workers.⁵⁷ Nepal and Saudi Arabia have not signed a bilateral agreement. Apart from the Embassy of Nepal in Saudi Arabia, the only diaspora organisation working on behalf of Nepali migrant workers is the General Federation of Nepali Trade Unions (GEFONT) Support Group. Nepal has also not signed bilateral agreements with Kuwait and Oman, although there have been some discussions recently about a possible labour pact with Oman. The government of Nepal and Malaysia signed an MoU in October 2018.⁵⁸

54 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019a.

55 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019a.

56 Ansari, Kharel and Thapa 2019b.

57 Jha 2019a.

58 Kambang and Kharel 2019.

Employment and workers

Economic growth rate in the country

Nepal expected economic growth of 7.1 per cent in FY 2019.⁵⁹ In December 2019, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank placed Nepal's economic growth at around 6 per cent.⁶⁰ The 15th Plan (2019/20–2023/24) has targeted economic growth of 9.4 per cent per annum on an average, and has expected to increase the per capita income from USD 1,047 to USD 1,595 in the five coming years.⁶¹ It has projected economic growth of 10.3 per cent by the end of the 15th periodic plan.⁶²

Employment and unemployment

In Nepal, the national Labour Force Participation Rate in 2017/18 was 38.5 per cent, and the male and female labour force participation rates were 53.8 per cent and 26.3 per cent respectively.⁶³ Nepal has 20.7 million people of working age (15 years and older), of whom, more than 40 per cent are between the age of 15–34, and 55.6 per cent of them are females. Of the total job-seeking population of 908,000, 69.1 per cent are people aged 15 to 34. In FY 2017/18, the unemployment rate of Nepal was 11.4 per cent, and it was higher among females (13.1 per cent) compared to that of males (10.3 per cent). The prevalence of unemployment is much higher in urban areas than in the rural, with 70.5 per cent of the total unemployed persons being urban dwellers.⁶⁴

Status of informal and formal employment and the future of work

According to the Labour Force Survey 2017/18 (NLFS III) report, the informal sector accounted for 62.2 per cent (41 per cent for the informal non-agriculture sector, 20.2 per cent for the informal agricultural sector and 1 per cent for private households) of the total employment (7.1 million) in the country. The unemployment rate is the highest among young people aged 15 to 34 years. The report has included informal sector-related information as 'other forms of work' including 'production of goods and services for final own use' (for example, 'subsistence food production; manufacturing of household goods, fetching of water, collection of firewood and construction of or major repairs to own dwelling'), 'provision of services for final own use' (for example 'household chores, help or assistance provided to adults, elderly or disabled, looking after own of family children') and volunteer work.⁶⁵ The report highlighted that approximately 12.3 million people have been involved in the production of goods for final own use, 14.8 million people involved in the provision of services for final own use and approximately 369 thousand Nepalis were involved in volunteer work, all of who were aged 15 years and above.

The review and analysis of the government's policies and programme following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are elucidated below. The Ministry of Agriculture Development developed a collection of Nepal Agriculture Policies which includes 20 policies from the agriculture sector, including the National Agriculture Policy 2061 (2004), the Agri-Business Promotion Policy 2063 (2006), the Agriculture Biodiversity Policy 2063 (2006), the National Tea Policy 2057 (2000), the National Coffee Policy 2060 (2003), the Dairy Development Policy 2064 (2007), the National Seeds Policy 2056 (1999), the National Fertilizer Policy 2058 (2001), the

59 Ezemenari and Joshi 2019.

60 Ezemenari and Joshi 2019.

61 National Planning Commission. 2019. *15th Plan Approach Paper (2019/20–2023/24)*. Kathmandu: National Planning Commission. https://www.npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_Plan_Approach_Paper2.pdf

62 National Planning Commission 2019.

63 Central Bureau of Statistics. 2019. *Report on the Nepal labour force survey 2017/18*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal and International Labour Organization. https://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Nepal-Labour-Force-Survey-2017_18-Report.pdf

64 Central Bureau of Statistics 2019.

65 Central Bureau of Statistics 2019.

Irrigation Policy 2060 (2003), the Poultry Policy 2068 (2011), the Pasture Policy 2068 (2011), Floral Promotion Policy 2069 (2012), the National Land Use Policy 2069 (2012), the National Cooperatives Policy 2069 (2012), the Commerce Policy 2065 (2008), the Climate Change Policy 2067 (2010), the Industrial Policy 2067 (2010), the Supply Policy 2069 (2012), the Science and Technology Policy 2069 (2012), and the Biotechnology Policy 2063 (2006).⁶⁶

The National Agriculture Policy 2061 (2004) aims at achieving sustainable economic growth through a commercial agricultural system to improve food security and reduce poverty. Both small and big farmers can apply to receive government assistance to increase their productivity as well as train educated unemployed young people to involve them in agriculture employment. The Agri-business Promotion Policy 2063 (2006) was prepared in the spirit of National Agriculture Policy 2061 to emphasise agriculture production as agri-business or an enterprise to improve the living standard of the farmers from their current situation. Likewise, the Agriculture Bio-diversity Policy 2063 (2007) intends to protect, promote and utilize genetic resources for food security and to prioritise employment and income-generating activities that benefit the farming community. The Commercial Agriculture Policy 2064 (2007) plans to provide a lease of government-owned barren land to the landless and/or backward people including *kamaiyas*⁶⁷ to promote the 'one village one product' programme of fruits, fish, herbs and livestock to generate income for underprivileged people. The National Tea Policy 2057 (2000) intends to reduce poverty by enhancing income-generating and employment opportunities with the promotion of private sector involvement in tea production, processing and trade. The National Coffee Policy 2060 also envisages reducing poverty by increasing income-generating and employment opportunities with the involvement of the private sector's in the production, processing and commercial transaction of coffee with the sustainable and systematic utilization of available resources and opportunities in the country. Similarly, the Trade Policy 2065 (2009) aims at minimising trade deficits as well as generating more income and employment opportunities for poverty reduction.

Although the remaining policies (i.e. National Seed Policy 2056, National Fertilizer Policy, Irrigation Policy 2060, Biotechnology Policy 2063, Dairy Development Policy 2064, and National Dairy Development Board 2048 etc.) aim at increasing agricultural production and reduction of poverty, they do not specifically incorporate an approach to reduce decent work deficits in agriculture sectors.

In addition, the Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC) has developed a Strategic Vision for Agricultural Research for 2011–2030 to support the national campaign on poverty alleviation, food security, export promotion and environmental sustainability through the development and utilisation of scientific knowledge, technology and skills in agriculture and natural resources.⁶⁸ Similarly, the Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS) 2014⁶⁹ is supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), European Union (EU), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It aims to increase economic growth and contributes to improved livelihoods and food and nutrition security and ensured farmer's rights.

The elderly allowance is NPR 3000 per month for citizens aged 70 years and above; the allowance

66 Ministry of Agriculture Development. 2013. *Collection of Nepal agriculture policies 2070 (2013)*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal. <http://nnfsp.gov.np/PublicationFiles/ac96544e-f499-4d5b-a678-dcce99366205.pdf>

67 Traditional bonded labour system practiced in southern Nepal until formally abolished by the government in 2000.

68 Nepal Agricultural Research Council. 2011. *NARC's Strategic Vision for Agricultural Research (2011-2030): Meeting Nepal's Food and Nutrition Security Goals through Agricultural Science and Technology*. Kathmandu: Nepal Agricultural Research Council. <http://www.nnfsp.gov.np/PublicationFiles/84644a1a-c9d6-40f4-802f-af9b33c1088d.pdf>

69 Ministry of Agriculture Development. 2014. *Agricultural development strategy (ADS) of Nepal, 2014*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal. <http://www.nnfsp.gov.np/PublicationFiles/bf53f040-32cb-4407-a611-d891935d2e97.pdf>

provided to differently-abled people and single women is NPR 2000 per month. The government will also provide health insurance coverage of up to NPR 100 thousand for citizens who live below the poverty line and are age 70 years and above. NPR 34.80 billion has been allocated to the agriculture and livestock sector, with NPR 8.10 billion allocated to the Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Programme to encourage returnee migrant workers to enter into organic agriculture business. The government has also introduced grants for the purchase of agricultural products and technology and fertilizers as well as schemes for gaining self-sufficiency in dairy, fresh vegetables, and poultry.⁷⁰

Likewise, the budget speech of the FY 2019/20 allocated NPR 5.1 billion to the Prime Minister Employment Programme (PMEP) for the specialised employment programmes which have been listed under the Employment Service Centres (ESCs).⁷¹ PMEP is targeted at creating more employment opportunities in the economy and thereby reducing forced migration and foreign employment rate in general. The programme also promised to provide seed capital for self-employed and entrepreneurs. The PMEP was introduced in the FY 2018/19 in line with Article 33 of the Constitution of Nepal, which guarantees the right to employment as a fundamental right for every Nepali. The programme is also in line with the Employment Right Act 2017 aimed at ending unemployment in the country. The programme aims to create 500,000 new job opportunities in Nepal in five years in collaboration with the private and cooperative sectors at the federal, provincial and local levels. All the registered unemployed citizens should get employment opportunity for at least 100 days in a year and if the government fails to provide employment to those registered with the ESCs, the government must pay them 50 per cent of the minimum wage as unemployment allowance.⁷²

Likewise, the Nepal Health Sector Strategy 2015–2020 (NHSS),⁷³ which is the primary instrument to guide the health sector, is developed based on the Health Policy 2014 and the constitutional provision to guide Nepal's commitment towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and achieving SDGs targets and indicators as envisaged in the national and sector plans. NHSS complements the vision and mission set forth by the National Health Policy as enshrined in the constitution of Nepal 2015 to guarantee access to basic health services as a fundamental right of every citizen in the country. The strategy adopted four principles: equitable access to health services, quality health services, health systems reform and multi-sectorial approach.

The government is committed to achieving the vision and objectives of the Health Policy as evidenced by an increase in the budget. The government has allocated NPR 68.78 billion to the health sector to provide primary health service free of cost from all local-level medical service provider institutions, including NPR 3000 travel allowance for 52,000 female volunteers, emergency medical facilities in all VDCs, upgrade of various hospitals, and to bring all citizens under health insurance. However, there are several key challenges to the health sector, also identified in the policy. First, health services had yet to reach to all citizens from all regions, strata, class and community as envisaged in the constitution. Second, the emergence of new communicable diseases and an increase in non-communicable diseases are posing a threat to public health and the productivity of citizens. Third, growing incidents of natural disasters and road accidents pose a challenge to the health sector. And, unplanned urbanization, urban lifestyle and pollution create a challenge for the government to expand health services focusing on poor and marginalised communities in urban areas. The strategies and plan revealed in the National Health Policy 2019 are ambitious as there is a long way to go in order to meet the targets.⁷⁴ There is a lack of

70 Ministry of Finance. 2019. *Budget speech of fiscal year 2019/20*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

71 Ministry of Finance 2019.

72 Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. n.d. 'Pradhanmantri rojgaar karyakram: Karyakram parichaya.' Accessed 10 December 2019. <http://pmep.gov.np/pmep-introduction>

73 Ministry of Health and Population. 2015. *Nepal Health Sector Strategy 2015-2020*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

74 Volunteers Initiative Nepal. n.d. 'National health policy 2019.' Accessed 20 January 2020. <https://www.volunteersinitiativenepal.org/news-updates/national-health-policy-2019/>

inter-sectoral coordination, poor management of the health workforce and a significant level of inequity in health outcomes.

Working conditions in Nepal

In Nepal, the monthly minimum wage of the workers is NPR 13,450 (approximately USD 120), the daily minimum wage is NPR 517 (about USD 5) and the minimum hourly salary is NPR 69 (62 cents).⁷⁵ The basic working hours are eight per day, and 48 per week. An employee who has worked for at least one year is entitled to a half-day wage incremental every year.⁷⁶ Employees who have worked for at least one year are entitled to one month's basic remuneration once a year; those who have worked for less than a year are entitled to festival expenses on a proportional basis.⁷⁷ In terms of gender, females especially those who have a child under 3 years of age, work additional half-hour if the time for breastfeeding is accounted for.⁷⁸ Every employee shall receive equal pay for the equal value of work, as mandated by the law.⁷⁹ The Constitution of Nepal prohibits all forms of forced labour, including child labour. Employers are liable to a punishment of imprisonment for up to two years or a fine of up to 500,000 rupees or both, for engaging in forced labour. Nepal has also enforced a National Master Plan for Elimination of all Forms of Child Labour (2018–2028.) The Contribution-based Social Security Act 2017 comprises of provisions designed to improve the welfare of employees, including specific programmes for health and medical services, maternity protection, accident protection, old-age protection, dependent family protection and unemployment protection, in addition to the benefits listed below:

- Every employee can accumulate up to 90 days of annual leave and up to 45 days of sick leave, which can be cashed out at the time of discontinuation of service or at the end of each year.
- Employees who have worked for at least one year are entitled to 12 days of annual sick leave, and those who have worked for less than a year are entitled to sick leave on a proportional basis.
- All employees are entitled to one day off per week, 13 public holidays (including May Day) and one additional public holiday for women workers on International Women's Day.
- All employees are entitled to annual leave as one day for every 20 days worked.
- Every worker is entitled to celebrate festivals as per their culture, religion and tradition.
- In the case of death of immediate family members, each employee is entitled to 13 days of mourning leave.
- Every worker is entitled to medical insurance worth at least NPR 100,000 (about USD 895) per year and at least NPR 700,000 (about USD 6,365) in accident insurance.
- Women workers are entitled to 98 days of maternity leave, subject to some conditions. Only 60 of the 98 days, however, is paid leave
- Male workers are granted 15 days of paid paternity leave.

Ratification of ILO conventions

Nepal has ratified 11 out of 190 ILO conventions,⁸⁰ which have been listed below:

- The Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14)

⁷⁵ Government of Nepal. 2018a. *Response of the Government of Nepal to the list of issues and questions in relation to the sixth periodic report of Nepal: Adopted by the committee on the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Government of Nepal.

⁷⁶ Government of Nepal. 2017. *Labour Act 2074 (2017)*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

⁷⁷ Government of Nepal 2017.

⁷⁸ Government of Nepal. 2018b. *Labour Rules 2075 (2018)*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

⁷⁹ Government of Nepal 2018b.

⁸⁰ International Labour Organization. n.d. 'Ratifications for Nepal.' Accessed 10 January 2020. https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11200:0::NO::P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103197

- The Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- The Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
- The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- The Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- The Minimum wage fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131)
- The Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
- The Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)
- The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

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