

WORK PACKAGE SUMMARY FINDINGS: HIGHLIGHTED ISSUES*



Issues related to Nepali female migration in Malaysia

Interviews revealed that the most apparent and debilitating forms of exploitation for female Nepali migrants occur during their employment.

- Interviewees often cited a lack of information related to the types of work offered, lack of training, and no itemised breakdown of deductions in salary, benefits, and work hours.
- The most common issue is discrepancies in salary deductions due to sick leave, housing and visa renewals. They also expressed dissatisfaction about salary deductions due to mandatory COVID tests that can reach RM400 per person.
- The severity of exploitation increases when female migrants are specifically hired through human resource outsourcing companies that place them in manufacturing companies.
- The lack of information about proper employment terms and conditions is compounded by the lower numbers of female Nepali migrants to Malaysia compared to their male counterparts. Their small numbers open up more opportunities of exploitation.
- Legislation and policies safeguarding Nepali migrant workers currently do not include clauses that are gender sensitive and specifically address the informational needs of aspiring and current Nepali migrant women.



Issues related to Migrant Knowledge Production and Decision-Making

Interviews with Nepali migrant workers reveal that unlike high-waged migrants, the labour migrants who migrate to Malaysia are not highly educated. Subsequently, there are gaps in their knowledge and understanding of information provided by their social networks and the recruitment agencies.

- The majority of Nepali migrants possess an average Grade 10 level of education, with an elementary or introductory level comprehension of English. As employment contracts are written either in English or Nepali, most migrants are unable to fully digest and understand the technical terms related to their employment as migrant workers.
- Some interviewees shared that they did not attend any language class, cultural training or any sort of pre-departure orientation about Malaysia. Most interviewees arrived in Malaysia without any proper skills training to prepare them for the jobs they were going to undertake.
- Interviewees disclosed that they knew almost nothing about Malaysia prior to their arrival. Their knowledge of Malaysia is limited to what their families and friends tell them – that Malaysia is a land of employment opportunities and that the weather is favourable.



Issues related to Migrant Recruitment Channels and Cost of Migration

Like other foreign migrant workers coming to Malaysia, Nepali migrant workers are initially employed through the usual formal channels. However, interviews with Nepali migrant workers have revealed that several intermediaries and informal actors are also involved in the recruitment process before they reach out to legal intermediaries such as manpower companies in Nepal and Malaysian employers. This has repercussions on migration cost and their employment status.

- Most of the interviewees were still able to provide the names of the manpower companies based in Nepal that helped them to process their official paperwork. However, only a small number could identify their manpower companies in Nepal or recruitment agencies in Malaysia.
- Most of the interviewees were unclear about the details of their employment contracts as well as procedures on complaints, compensation and termination or repatriation. Some interviewees revealed their current employment status as “rented worker” under Malaysia recruitment agencies, which outsourced them to other companies and employers.
- Malaysia was the favoured destination country for employment because of its comparatively cheaper recruitment costs to other countries like the Gulf states, Japan, Korea, Australia, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom.
- However, the interviewees still needed to take out loans to get to Malaysia. On average, the processing of documents, like visas to get to Malaysia only took about two months, in comparison to Gulf countries which would take five to six months.
- All interviewees needed to pay for recruitment fees, passports, air tickets, work visas and other documentation to secure employment in Malaysia. Most interviewees said that they had to take out loans from local creditors, banks, relatives, family members and friends to pay for these fees.
- On average, they took between 6 months to 5 years to pay back their debts.