

EMPLOYMENT RECOVERY STRATEGIES AND PLAN OF ACTION

**A Study Report:
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The COVID-19 pandemic has led to job losses and severely aggravated the situation of unemployment and underemployment in Nepal. It has necessitated immediate and effective action from the Government of Nepal to remedy the situation. This study has listed out various initiatives of the Government of Nepal for job promotion and employment recovery and stressed the need to mobilize the private sector's resources, ease access to financial resources, tap raw materials and resources at the local level, and improve collaboration between the Government, civil society and private sectors for the creation of new jobs. The document has outlined various survival and recovery strategies and stressed on public-private partnership in employment generation. This can provide guidelines for recovery from the employment crisis brought on by the pandemic. In this regard, the strategies and action plans recommended by this study report are relevant to the policy makers, private sectors, development partners and non-government organizations in the design of recovery programs and activities.

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Acronyms

BDS	Business Development Support
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CNI	Confederation of Nepalese Industries
COVID-19	Corona Virus Diseases-2019
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
DCC	District Coordination Committee
ESCs	Employment Service Centers
FET	Foreign Employment Tribunal
FNCCI	Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry
FY	Fiscal Year
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GoN	Government of Nepal
HRD	Human Resource Development
I/NGOs	International/Non-Government Organizations
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
LMIMS	Labor Market Information Management System
MEDPA	Micro Enterprise Development Programme
MoALD	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development.
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoFAGA	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration
MoICS	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Supplies
MoLESS	Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
MoPIT	Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport
MoTCA	Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Civil Aviation
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NEPA	National Employment Promotion Authority
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations

NLFS	Nepal Labour Force Survey
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPR	Nepali Rupees
PMEP	Prime Minister Employment Programme
PPP	Public Private Partnership
RFP	Request for Proposal
SaMi	Safe Migration
TOT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

This paper aims to recommend employment recovery strategy and plan of action after COVID-19 in Nepal. The methodological approach includes a review of the recovery strategies and an inquires the local contexts. This recovery strategy focuses on five priorities for the short term: *reflect, recommit, re-engage, rethink, and reboot*. This strategy includes activities such as mapping of labour market opportunities to engage youth and returnee migrants in employment, providing financial incentives for startup entrepreneurs and training for skill enhancement. The rebound and revival strategy includes the establishment of a National Employment Promotion Authority, formulation of Human Resource Development Plan, incorporation of vocational trainings in school curricula, conducting joint skill training initiatives to involve migrants in professional careers and the initiation of a program for the formalization of informal female domestic workers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed several difficulties for global communities. In addition to formulating public health related pandemic response and recovery strategies, governments are trying to solve the issues of halted economic development and the loss of employment by formulating strategies for economic recovery and revival. In order to achieve economic growth targets, mobilization of resources from the government and private sectors is very important. This is the right time for governments to join hands with the private sector and community level institutions, especially to support Small and Medium Enterprises. Public-private partnership will ease the mobilization of human and natural resources to create self-employment at the optimum level and facilitate the creation of employment opportunities in the agriculture, industry and service sectors.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the lack of adequate health infrastructures, services and human resources. Moreover, almost no economic and business activities have been operational during the lockdown period, and there is a dire need of employment recovery and relief packages with the modality of public private partnership. Investments from the public and private sectors can boost economic activities and create new job opportunities. Activities that inject more capital resources into the economy can produce higher factor mobility and support the creation of additional job opportunities in the Nepali economy. A fiscal stimulus package in addition to employment recovery policy, strategies and programs initiated by various tiers of the government

can positively stimulate the economy and create employment and foster social security. Capital shortage, external market competition, and topographical and infrastructural barriers pose difficulties for Nepali citizens who wish to create and sustain new enterprises. However, effective public-private cooperation can mitigate some of these difficulties and support enterprising individuals including returnee migrants, and cooperatives.

With adequate support, returnee migrant workers can utilize their skills and experiences gained from foreign employment to develop businesses and create self-employment opportunities. Such enterprises can be the key to the generation of livelihoods and income at the local level. During this COVID-19 period, a feasible blueprint for the creation of employment opportunities for the unemployed, displaced and returnee migrant workers needs to be designed as a way forward. The goal of such a blueprint should be the invigoration of the agricultural sector through the identification of key high value products and the development of strategies that can capture a large number of farm workers.

The current context of employability of returnee migrant workers and the youth labor force is a challenging one. Major investments are necessary in skill development activities which can enhance the employability of youths working in both the national and international arenas. From the review of the employment recovery strategy reports produced by various research-based organizations, specific employment recovery strategies and plan of action were compiled. The proposed strategies and action plans outline pathways to create more jobs through skill development trainings and livelihood programs.

The suggestions are to mobilize local resources in a public-private partnership model in the long term and to sustain the business recovery model for the creation of new jobs in the short term. In addition, it is suggested that Nepal should develop a database on labor and employment to address the information gap in the country's labor market. Information of job markets, development of services for business enterprises, business continuity plan and conduction of activities based on preparedness of the local levels as well as the organizations at the national level are the specific recommendations of this paper. In fact, activities such as the engagement of the state with non-state actors, skill development training programs, implementation of the reintegration program, subsidies for business development, financial and insurance literacy for advancing loan and insurance policies in agricultural enterprises will generate more income and safeguard vulnerable

communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. A government-formed task force led by honorable member of the National Planning Commission has suggested restructuring and expanding various government initiatives and activating new proposed agriculture-based extensive self-employment program, among other initiatives for the creation of over 2.5 million jobs in the next four to five years. The federal and local level governments can advance a partnership model with various private sectors: I/NGOs, social institutions, and cooperatives to create employment opportunities by sustainably utilizing locally available resources. The Government of Nepal (GoN) can shift to a new roadmap of improving informal economies with a focus on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) development. At the policy level, the employment recovery strategy can be successfully implemented to achieve set national goals and targets.

CHAPTER ONE

EMPLOYABILITY CONTEXT OF NEPAL

1.1. Nepal's target to become high income country and status of job creation

Nepal is on the path to becoming a middle-income country¹ and has been tracking progress of several indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be fulfilled by 2030. With the vision of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali', the current Fifteenth Plan (2019-2024) set targets to become a high-income country by 2043.² As per an estimation of the Nepali context, investing 2 percent of the GDP could create 66,000-80,000 new jobs in the market pertaining to four vital sectors, namely, agriculture, construction, energy, and water. The agriculture, tourism, industry and construction sectors of the economy rely largely on Nepal's immense natural resources that are highly vulnerable to the hazards of climate change that has resulted in the deterioration of the ecosystem, on which rural households are largely dependent, and these could pose major hindrances in the achievement of sustainable development.³ It is a sign of hope that Nepal has secured the top spot in job creation in South Asia, with the employment rate hovering around 68 percent according to the latest World Bank report. It is reported that there were 3.8 million wage jobs in Nepal, and another 2.8 million Nepalese were employed in wage jobs in other countries by the end of 2018. Of the total jobs added to the economy since 2008, nearly half were wage jobs. Bagmati Province itself added nearly One million new jobs in the last decade; over half of these were in the Kathmandu valley and nearly 300,000 were wage jobs.

In terms of the industrial distribution of workers, 20 percent workers are involved in agriculture, forestry and fishing. 18 percent of the workers are engaged in wholesale and retail trade, motor vehicle repair sectors, followed by 15 percent in manufacturing and 14 percent in construction sectors. As per the National Labor Force Survey (NLFS), the national unemployment rate is 11.4 percent, with male and female unemployment rates are at 10.1 percent and 13.8 percent

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

² NPC. (2019). *Nepal: Assessment of Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020*. Singhadurbar, Kathmandu: National Planning Commission. Retrieved from http://unohrrls.org/custom-content/uploads/2019/12/IPOA_review-report_final_NPC_Nepal.pdf

³ http://apgreenjobs.ilo.org/resources/meeting-resources/green-jobs-in-asia-regional-conference-flyer/conference-documents/green-jobs-projects-background-documents/green-jobs-in-asia-gja-project/nepal/best-practices-on-green-jobs-gefont/at_download/file

respectively. Unemployment is predominantly an urban phenomenon with 70.5 percent of the unemployed residing in urban areas. The unemployment rate is especially high among the younger population, at 38.1 percent for the 15-24 age group and 31.1 percent for the 25-34 age group. Moreover, over 500,000 young people are estimated to enter the labor force every year.

The labor market is characterized by disequilibrium in the demand and supply of labor force. Supply, at this huge figure of new entrants annually, exceeds demand which has contributed to an increase in migration over the last decade. Approximately 5.7 million or 80.8 percent of workers have informal jobs. The majority of workers in all industries are in informal employment, including the sectors expected to face the highest degree of disruption in the face of disaster: construction, trade, and manufacturing. Informal workers do not receive the basic benefits usually provided by a formal job, including social protection coverage. If they stop working due to economic downturn, sickness, or quarantine, they have economic problems in the short run. As per the NLFS 2017/18, their share of the working age population is 40 percent out of which the highest percent of informal workers are from the ages between 15 to 34, indicating the dominance of the young population in the informal sector among a total population of 29 million, where labor force participation is only 38.5 percent. In terms of the characteristics of the employed population, almost a quarter of the labor force is engaged in service and sales. This is followed by craft and related trade workers and elementary occupations, and skilled agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. Managerial and professional occupational categories account for only 9.4 percent of the total employment. The NLFS and other sources portray the context of informal workers, female workers, and urban workers as follows:

Table 1: Informal workers, female workers, and urban workers in Nepal

Sectors	% informal	% female	% urban
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	99.7	58.6	5.7
Mining and quarrying	99.7	29.4	11.1
Manufacturing	93.2	40.7	27.7
Electricity gas and water	91.2	66.0	29.4
Construction	96.0	10.6	20.4
Wholesale and retail trade	98.9	34.8	38.2
Hotels and restaurants	96.7	49.1	47.2
Transport, storage and	83.8	3.9	32.8
Financial intermediation	47.9	31.7	62.5
Education	94.4	16.2	30.9
Health and social work	21.9	11.6	39.0

Public administration and defense	51.6	32.4	49.5
Real estate, business and	51.3	40.4	50.7
Other community, social and personal service activities	88.1	29.6	44.4
Average (unweighted)	79.6	32.5	35.0

*Sources: National Labor Force Survey and other sources. Sectors classified based on national accounts.*⁴

According to the third NLFS, employment opportunities are highly concentrated in the informal sector and the formal sector provides only 37.76 per cent of the total employments. The employment in agriculture occupies 32.51 per cent, of which formal agriculture comprises only 6 per cent. Construction and trade are the second and third largest employment generating sectors occupying 19.95 per cent and 16.84 per cent respectively. By region, employment in the Bagmati Province provides seven times more employment than the employment in Karnali, four times more than the employment in Sudurpaschim, and double that of Province 1, Province 2 and Lumbini Province.

1.2. Government initiatives for job promotion

The Government of Nepal has adopted a series policies, programs, and activities for employment generation. Some of the employment related policy initiatives led by the Government include: (a) openness of the economy, (b) private sector development, (c) policies for financial access and poverty reduction, (d) openness in foreign employment, (e) foreign investment promotion in the country, (f) direct employment generating programs among others.

Active labor market policies for employment generation have been classified according to their intended functions in influencing labor demand and supply, and the intermediation of their works. The demand-side measures are used to preserve or support employment during crisis and recovery, and to provide incentives to create new jobs. These measures, which are of limited duration, cover wage subsidies, reductions in non-wage labor costs and short-term worker support. On the other hand, supply-side measures are used to enhance workforce adaptability, including on-the-job and classroom training, typically with effects on medium to long-term job

⁴ ODI. (2017). Pathways To Prosperity And Inclusive Job Creation In Nepal. London: SET Programme, ODI. Retrieved from https://set.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/1.-Nepal-Sectoral-Growth-Paths_Oct-2017.pdf

prospects. These policies also provide incentives to seek and keep employment, often target low-skilled and vulnerable workers through in-work benefits in the form of wage payments and subsidies, for example in temporary public employment programs. Incentives are also provided to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship. Labor market intermediation measures help bridge the gap between supply and demand in the labor market by promoting more efficient and improved matching of jobseekers and vacancies. With regards to domestic employment generation from the government sectors, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development comprises almost a quarter of the employment, followed by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Moreover, the private, community, and cooperative sectors provide a large portion of the employment.

The most potential initiatives of the government for adequate employment generation in different sectors are national skills development and entrepreneurship, diversification of agriculture, cheap credit, provision of basic facilities, promotion of local industries, improvement in education and health, which generate positive results by focusing on public projects. This report recognizes the potential impact of the international presence on economic distortions, agricultural rehabilitation, and encourages the avoidance of negative consequences such as the possible disincentives that relief operations can have on local farming.. It pays special attention to women in micro-enterprises or vocational training, tourism or regional craft industries and new services like IT, which require proper planning and support from the government to increase production and create diverse manufacturing and service-oriented industries with the involvement of private sectors, multinational companies, and donors. In the agricultural sector, various government and private sector interventions and solutions are required in the provision of seeds, tools and livestock, repair of infrastructure including processing and transport equipment, irrigation and drainage facilities, construction of water supplies, and improvement of roads and local market facilities, development of trade relations to increase linkages among producers, processors, and markets, improvement of access to credit, provision of training in livestock management, crop productivity and land reform.

By reforming existing policies, drafting an effective recovery strategy for employment generation, and by creating the required financial resources to increase capital expenditure and reduce recurrent expenditure in the biggest job creating sectors of the Ministries of the

Government as indicated above, we can harness the huge potential of Nepal not only to create new employment opportunities in the country but also to prepare the workforce for the global labor/employment market as well. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government prepared schemes to promote a nationwide program to create new employment opportunities for its youths as a priority by incentivizing entrepreneurs and enterprises essential to the generation of employment and resuscitation of the economy.

An effective road map to cope with the challenge of disequilibrium in the labor demand and supply is yet to be developed. Program implementation mechanisms as well as regular monitoring and evaluation strategies have to be developed in close coordination with the three tiers of government including sectorial ministries, and regulatory bodies. However, there are on going employment programs from the Government and other stakeholders. The GoN has a challenging responsibility to create an environment for self-employment in commercial agriculture and improve the existing large infrastructure projects and other employment programs to improve the livelihoods of millions of people. The GoN has a few direct and focused employment related programs and activities as listed below:

- (a) Activities of the Youth Self-employment Fund
- (b) Prime Minister Employment Program
- (c) Activities of the Poverty Alleviation Fund
- (d) Tarai Madhesh Sambridhi Program
- (e) Program of Bishweshor with Poor People
- (f) Small holder farmers / peasants Program
- (g) Employment Partnership Programs
- (h) Projects of National Pride and Priority
- (i) Chief Minister Employment Program
- (j) Local level Employment Program
- (k) Target Programs and others

1.3. Opportunities for the private sectors' contribution

As the private sector consumes a huge portion of the labor supply, development of the private sector could be a door to generate large scale employment in least developed countries.

Enhancement of the private sector and remedy of low job creation capacity can be achieved by both: (a) a restricted monetary policy, which results in a low inflation rate and (b) a contracting fiscal policy, which reduces government expenditures. Investing in the private sector creates more jobs in the short term as well as improves capital investments, which implies a multiplier effect and long-term growth simultaneously. Nevertheless, close attention has to be paid to developing technological competency, dynamic organization structures, and remuneration facilities.⁵ Nepal has very few collaborative practices among the public and private sectors. Budgetary practices have a formal dialogue session with the private sector but include very few agendas. The activities initiated by the Government of Nepal (GoN) do not seem to be highly effective in attracting the private sectors' investment and mobilizing resources for the national needs of achieving desired development outcomes, generating employment and improving livelihoods. In such a context, effective public private partnership could aid job creation.

A variety of factors such as demographic shifts, structural transformation of the economy, cycles of political instability, poverty and economic stagnation, and problems of unemployment and underemployment have led to a high degree of outmigration of the country's productive labor⁶ implying that remittance makes a significant contribution to the national economy. In discussions with several stakeholders, it was found that most of the government's activities are poorly aligned to collaborate with large private sectors including cooperatives and NGOs. Moreover, there is a dearth of sustainable interconnection between educational background, job market and production. There is a dire need of huge investment to develop cutting-edge skills in important sectors such as infrastructure, tourism, forestry, cottage and handicraft industry, which have futuristic job creating prospects.⁷

⁵ UNCTAD. (2013). *The Least Developed Countries Report 2013*. New York and Geneva: United Nations. Retrieved from https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2013_en.pdf

⁶ ILO. (2014). *Enhancing Employment-Centric Growth in Nepal: Situational Analysis for the Proposed Employment Policy, Government of Nepal*. Nepal: International Labour Organization. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-kathmandu/documents/publication/wcms_245672.pdf

⁷ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-kathmandu/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_541336.pdf

1.4. Workers' migration, investment for skill enhancement, and reintegration opportunities

Alongside a large informal agriculture sector, the service sector, is increasing rapidly in Nepal. Against the grim backdrop of domestic employment opportunities, the global phenomenon of migration has some positive impacts for Nepal's socio-economic transformation process. There is a century long history of Nepali migrant workers working in India in regions that have similar cultural practices as well as free movement of people for an alternative and often complementary source of income. Skill enhancement for labor has received increasing attention around the globe.⁸ Returnee migrant youths in Nepal have been residing mainly in urban areas and are looking for possible reintegration opportunities. In addition, youths seeking better jobs are also wandering around urban areas to identify pathways to enter the international arena for secure foreign employment and/or international higher education.

The reintegration of returnee migrant workers has received unprecedented attention for the utilization of their remitted financial resources and their experiences, skills, technological know-how, entrepreneurial and managerial exposure, and networks. Nepali workers' skills learned abroad are largely concentrated in the elementary occupations with most migrants acquiring skills in manufacturing (73.39%), followed by service (20.59%) and others (6.02%).⁹ The vision of the National employment policy is to involve the labor force in productive, decent and safe employment through the means of a capable labor market that can make them competitive. However, the labor laws and policies adopted by Nepal have some serious pitfalls and have poorly influenced the labor decisions of the youths or older individuals and reduced their engagement in the country. The GoN and private sectors need to coordinate and conduct reintegration initiatives for returnees, and design recovery strategies to meet the target of new employment generation for the next 5 years based on the following:

- Employment to be created by government institutions through national pride projects, game-changer projects and first priorities programs/projects, and others
- Foreign employment opportunities in new destination countries

⁸ Kifle, A. P. (2007). *Workforce Development in Nepal: Policies and Practices*. Japan; Asian Development Bank Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/159355/adbi-nepalese-education-system.pdf>

⁹ <https://moless.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Migration-Report-2020-English.pdf>

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- Employment to be created from private, community and cooperative sectors

A return of overseas migrant workers also means that the Nepali economy will lose out on its most significant source of income.¹⁰ The context of foreign employment status in various destination countries and size of employment are portrayed in the following Table 2.

Table 2: Nepali citizens in foreign employment

Country	Nepali citizens living abroad in 2020	Possible Returnees of Nepali Citizens in 2020	Possible Re-migrant Nepali Citizens in 2020	Nepali Migrant Workers in Foreign employment	Possible Returns of the Nepali Migrant Workers in Foreign
India	976,625	280,000	250,000		
Qatar	360,000	100,000	50,000	341,000	90,000
Malaysia	325,000	30,000	7,000	325,000	4,000
Saudi Arabia	320,000	100,000	20,000	305,854	40,000
United Arab	275,000	55,000	12,000		
Other countries	954,223	53,700	21,621		
Total	32,10,848	618,700	360,621		

Source: National Planning Commission

¹⁰ Nepal received NPR 879 billion in remittance in 2019, which was equivalent to 26 percent of the country's GDP.

CHAPTER TWO

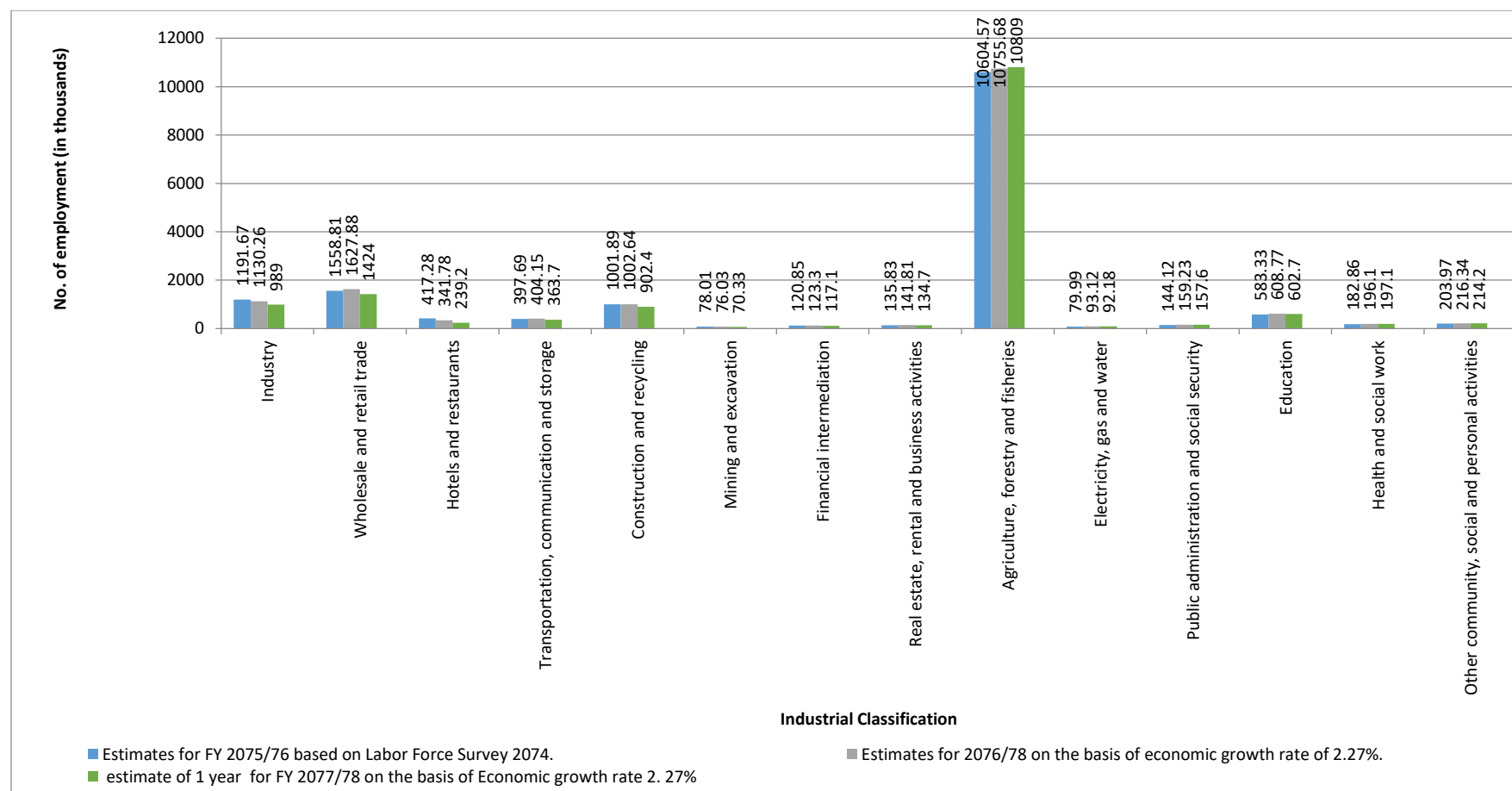
EFFECTS OF COVID-19 AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECOVERY

2.1. Effects of COVID -19 on employment

The impact of COVID-19 on labor differs by the nature of contract- permanent workers face either pay cuts or unpaid hiatus, backed by strong labor laws that discourage layoffs while seasonal and informal workers, who represent 60 percent of the labor force, face job cuts and losses. Temporary workers, internal migrants, day laborers were amongst the most vulnerable based on income, and their ability to sustain through the slowdown. The inability to pursue an alternative source of income is judged to be the main impact of the crisis on those already vulnerable or engaged in precarious work. The impact of COVID-19 on labor and employment has been estimated by an internal study of the National Planning Commission. Based on the economic growth of 2.27 percent (in FY 2076/77 B.S.) and estimated scenarios of gradual improvement in health issues, employment size of FY 2077/78 B.S. is projected to reach 16.3 million 14 thousand. In FY 2077/78, employment in the Agriculture sector is estimated to be 66.26 per cent, followed by Wholesale and Trade (8.73 percent), Manufacturing sector (6.1 per cent), Construction sector (5.53 per cent), and Transport, Communication and Storage sector (2.23 per cent).

A study conducted by the NPC on COVID-19 outlines that educational products, training designs and human resource development practices are poorly correlated to and are unable to meet the skill requirements of national and international labor markets. As a result, three-fourth of the employees remained unskilled, and government programs have not appropriately addressed the issue. In addition, the high poverty rates, poorly developed infrastructures, poor access to finances, inequity in distribution, poor safety nets and poor growth of micro and small enterprises aggravated the employment challenges. The following figure shows an estimation of job loss at an estimated economic growth of 2.27 percent:

Figure 1: Estimation of employment in FY 2077/78 as per the estimated economic growth of 2.27 per cent



Source: National Planning Commission, 2077/78

The following table shows the estimated internal employment, foreign employment, unemployment and active labor force status in the COVID-19 period:

Table 3: An estimate of internal employment, foreign employment, unemployment, and active labor force (in thousands)

Status of employment	Status of FY 2074/75	Status of FY 2075/76	Status before the end of Falgun, FY 2076/77
New entrants	418	400	255 ¹¹
Under employment	663	- -	-
Total Internal employment	15,906	16,701	17,277
Total foreign employment	3,210 ¹²	3,450 ¹³	3,603 ¹⁴
Total Unemployment	908	961 ¹⁵	994
Active Labour Force	20,744	21,144	21,399

Source: National Planning Commission

Based on the projections of the changed employment situation, the status of foreign employment can be observed as:

Table 4: Employment conditions for FY 2074/75, 2075/76, 2076/77 & 2077/78 (in thousands)

Overall employment status	2074/75	2075/76	2076/77	2077/78 Estimate
New entrants	418	400	382	366
Low employment	663	- -	- -	- -
Total internal employment	15,906	16,701	16,691	16,314
Total foreign employment	3,210	3,450	3,603	2,803
Former unemployment	926	961	994	
Added unemployment	- -	- -	- -	1,177
Total unemployment	- -	- -	- -	2171
Active manpower	20,744	21,144	21,526	21,893

Source: National Planning Commission, Central Statistics Department, Kathmandu.

2.2. Government Initiatives

With an unprecedented increase in the number of returnee migrants as well as a potential shrinkage in future labor demands, the domestic labor market is under pressure to absorb additional workers as the country attempts to combat the economic repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic. So, the

¹¹ 2/3 of the new entrants of 382 (based on the population projection)

¹² The absent number of Nepali citizens in the labor force survey of 2074

¹³ Earlier 3210 and new entrants 240 (Out of 400, an assumption that 60 per cent of new entrants go abroad)

¹⁴ Earlier 3450 and new entrants 153 (Out of 382, an assumption that 60 per cent of new entrants go abroad and it is the calculation of the first 8 months of the year)

¹⁵ Out of 400 new entrants, unemployed calculated at rate of 13.1 per cent

annual policies and programs for FY 2020/21 AD, recognizing that the pandemic will further worsen unemployment in Nepal, emphasize offering seed funding to aspiring entrepreneurs including returnee migrant workers to start new ventures. Considering the major challenges in access to wage employment (lack of skills, training and experience; lack of information on available opportunities; and lack of networks), and in self-employment (lack of finance, lack of short-term skills, business development services, information on potential business opportunities) in the country, the Government has put job creation and employment at the center of the budget of the fiscal year 2020/21. It has heavily focused on providing Nepalese youth with wage- and self-employment opportunities. It has allocated a budget of NPR 11.60 billion to the Prime Minister Employment Program (PMEP) to generate an additional 200,000 employment opportunities. Similarly, NPR 1 billion has been allocated to facilitate employment for 50,000 individuals through skills-based training. Finally, NPR 4.34 billion has been allocated to strengthen organizations providing technical, vocational and skills training to enhance the employability of 75,000 individuals including returnee migrant workers. In addition, the budget has also emphasized job creation for 40,000 people through small farmers' credit, for 179,000 individuals through Youth and Small Entrepreneur Self Employment Fund, and for 50,000 individuals in the private sector. These initiatives rightly recognize that amidst the global economic fallout due to the pandemic, the domestic labor market is facing enormous pressure to absorb additional returnee migrant workers who have experienced job losses as well as aspiring migrants who are unable to migrate due to reduced foreign employment opportunities.

The local context of employment generation demonstrates a lot of disintegrated efforts and institutional fragmentation. Coordinators under the Prime Minister's Employment Program (PMEP) have been appointed in all 753 municipalities and placed in Employment Service Centers (ESCs) but employment is not usually a priority of local governments for various reasons. The PMEP is seen as the federal program and there is a lack of ownership from the local governments. Therefore, federal and local governments need to develop a partnership model including other local stakeholders such as I/NGOs, social institutions, and cooperatives. With the constitutional mandates, local governments have a proximity to workers aspiring to go abroad and to work at home where they will be near their families. I/NGOs have also practiced several models for livelihood improvement in pro-poor contexts.

The initial strategy should therefore be on the capacity development for job creation followed by strategies to improve job quality. In discussions with some municipalities, it was found that the application request for employment opportunities is five to ten times greater than the actual availability at the local level. *“Jobs are being created in development related activities such as road, building and wall construction and repair, water supply and river embankment projects, playground development and tourism promotion. Without dividing the skilled and unskilled workers, we have made a roster for reference but the private sectors have not used it for their needs. A fixed amount of NPR. 517 per day is delivered at the hands of employees. The number of days of employment provided by the municipality depends on job” (Premsingh Dhami, Naugadh Municipality, Darchula)*

Above 4 million Nepali, especially youths, are working out of the country. It is unfortunate that COVID-19 has severely affected employment and livelihoods globally. To design employment recovery strategies and plan of action appropriate for this time, this report primarily outlines some ways forward appropriate to the context and local practices. In a tumultuous COVID-19 world, a feasible blueprint for the unemployed, displaced and returnee migrant workers could be to revive the agriculture sector with key high value products where a large number of workers can be engaged. The Government of Nepal (GoN) can shift to a new roadmap of transforming informal economies with a focus on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME). It can adopt immediate policies to address unemployment in the short term and provide employability skills for long term transformation. However, the local contexts and institutional arrangements will play vital roles in the reintegration of returnee migrant workers and mobilization of youths. In addition, key strategies and action plan of best practices, program, models of (self-) employment generation that have been developed in similar contexts should be taken into consideration.

The recovery strategies require workforce strategies that focus on these five short-term priorities- reflect, recommit, re-engage, rethink, and reboot. Given the workforce challenges and uncertainties, potential organizations can lead, prepare and support their workforce planning the recovery phase.¹⁶ The Nepal Government has placed a high importance on the agriculture sector

¹⁶ <https://hbr.org/sponsored/2020/05/workforce-strategies-for-post-covid-19-recovery>

with a slogan ‘consume and promote domestic product’ to fulfill the immediate consumption needs. The realization of this priority requires a large number of workers and an effective plan. This program can engage unemployed, displaced and overseas returnee youths.¹⁷

2.3. Employment recovery strategies and plan of action

A government-formed task force led by a member of the NPC has suggested creating over 2.5 million jobs in the next four to five years by restructuring and expanding various government programs that are ongoing and by initiating new employment generation programs. According to the Government’s budget for the fiscal year 2021/22, it is under pressure to create more jobs at home as over one million jobs in the tourism sector are already at stake as the tourism sector is the sector most negatively impacted by the pandemic. According to the report, the largest number of employments could be created in “agriculture-based extensive self-employment programs”.

Two million employment opportunities can be created in the agriculture sector through the combination of the Prime Minister Agricultural Modernization Program and other employment programs, according to the report. “Self-employment should be promoted by increasing access of people to the seed capital through a combination of various funds,” the report says, “For this, there should be an investment of Rs100 billion every year in the agriculture sector.”

Similarly, as many as 315,000 jobs can be created in the envisioned industrial villages in the next four to five years provided 40 out of 45 such industrial villages are brought into operation. There are currently 37 industrial villages and nine more are being planned, according to the report. As many as 80,000 jobs can be created through the Macro-Enterprises Development for Poverty Alleviation, a project run by the Industry Ministry in almost all local levels. The program should be run by injecting resources into the budget of the local government, the report suggests. As many as 40,000 jobs can be created under the proposed new projects—Employment Creation for Migrant Workers and Improving Livelihood that target the Karnali and Sudurpaschim Provinces. Likewise, the ongoing Rural Enterprise and Remittance Project (Samriddhi) can contribute 30,000 new jobs provided its implementation modality is amended

¹⁷ <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/JER/article/view/32717>

and resources are added. As many as 30,000 jobs can be created through the development of proposed 12 special economic zones. As many as 15,000 new jobs can be created through the full utilization of existing spaces in industrial estates. Another 10,000 jobs can be created through a new project— Growth Enterprise Development Model—which has come into implementation. Remaining jobs are expected to be created from the Cottage and Small Industry Promotion Centre, rehabilitation of sick industries and construction of dry ports. Likewise, self-employment can be promoted through partnerships between start-ups and Youth and Small Entrepreneurs Self-Employment Program. In order to promote self-employment, the government has announced that it will offer seed money to innovative youths, entrepreneurs and returnee migrant workers to start new ventures.

2.4. Recommendations from various study

The following table shows Long- term Recovery Strategies and Plan of Action of various studies:

Table 5: Recommendations of the various study reports

Name of the Report	(Long- term) Recovery Strategies and Plan of Actions
<p><i>COVID-19 AND NEPALI LABOUR MIGRANTS: Impacts and Responses (Center for the Study of Labor and Mobility)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of jobs through enterprise development and self-employment for all working-age individuals including the returnees for more livelihood options. • Targeted livelihood programs such as ‘cash for work’ or ‘food for work’ in the interim period for creating a conducive environment to encourage skilled migrants • Provision of soft loans • Opportunities for training, upskilling existing knowledge as well as retraining for a different career, cognizant of the needs specific to women migrants who may not have the skills readily transferable to the Nepali context. • Identification of potential sectors at the sub-national level in conjunction with local governments • Collaboration with the private sector by crafting job creating policies that take advantage of a large number of working-age people; partnership with the PMEP. • Development of migrant workers’ database to effectively address their needs • Formulation of evidence-informed policies and plans grounded on updated and disaggregated data on migrants and returnees
<p><i>Rapid Assessment on Impacts of COVID- 19 on Returnee Migrants and</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of national-level plans and policies for reintegration of migrants, support to local level from federal-provincial governments, other organizations through grants and soft loans for human resources development (training), agriculture and infrastructure development

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<p><i>Responses of the Local Governments of Nepal</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a database on returnee migrants to assist local stakeholders in preparing, planning, managing and allocating resources. Prioritization of the reintegration of returnee migrants through the alignment of the strategies of the Government of Nepal. • Design of a suitable plan that focuses on the utilization of available resources and enhancement of skills • Unlocking the scope of the agricultural sector, • Development of entrepreneurship programs with needs-based skill enhancing trainings for reintegration of returnee migrants. • Design of a context-based preparedness plan in each municipality. • Coordination and strengthening of the collaborative partnership among non-government agencies including the private sector and development agencies. • Local level government to plan and implement reintegration programs: assess available resources, identify skills and abilities of individuals, prepare a snapshot of context, challenges and possible opportunities, plan and implement with active engagement of stakeholders.
<p><i>Rapid Assessment of Nepali Migrant Workers' Situation in Major Destination Countries During the COVID – 19 Pandemic</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rescue of vulnerable groups: undocumented migrant workers including women through the reintegration process and programs. Inclusion of the irregular travelers, laborers without approvals, laborers who overstayed abroad without renewing labor approvals, and those who require support. • Plan for a successful reintegration program with a good database and objective analysis of social and capital remittances, acquired skills, experiences, work ethics, networks and know-how, mobilized productively by matching with appropriate employment opportunities. Ensure the participation of the target beneficiaries from planning stage to encourage ownership of communities and thereby success of initiatives. • Design and implement innovative sets of policies, strategies and programs that recognize migrants' social remittances and reflect their interests and aspirations.

<i>(Nepal Policy Institute and Migration Lab)</i>	
<p><i>STATUS OF NEPALI MIGRANT WORKERS IN RELATION TO COVID-19 (IOM UN Migration and Nepal Institute of Development Studies)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loan easement, needs-based production and income generation activities and programs like farming- support with loans, improved seeds, fertilizers, insurance, and marketing to increase livelihood options so that migration becomes a choice not compulsion. • Migrant skills-mapping, collateral-free loans with low-interest rates, loans and support for upskilling, support in income generation, support in agriculture, livestock, and industrial areas • Special income-generation programs for retaining the returnees from India in Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces coordinated by local authorities. Provision of need-based trainings for modern farming and new enterprise development. • Make an investment in skills and job creation at the local level, skill enhancement of returnees to meet the demand for skilled human resources.
<p><i>RAPID ASSESSMENT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN NEPAL</i></p>	<p><u>Guard against vulnerabilities by strengthening the options of social protection and livelihoods.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guard against worsening of the vulnerabilities of poor and marginalized people by (i) revamping social protection schemes including employment guarantee programs; (ii) instituting skill academies across the country to absorb a large group of migrant returnees and informal workers; and (iii) resuscitating rural agriculture by forging linkages with agri- and manufacturing businesses and fostering labor-intensive, low-carbon and resilient physical infrastructure. • The Prime Minister’s Employment Program (PMEP) can aid capital formation and help revive rural agriculture.

<p><i>(Prepared by IIDS for the UNDP)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The borders between Nepal and India are anticipated to remain shut for a significant period. the void created by a lack of skilled migrant workers from India provides opportunity for Nepali returnees to fill the gap via two mechanisms: i) employment guarantee schemes (like PMEP or the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund); and ii) concessional lending to returnees with proven skills to launch start-ups and MSMEs, and mapping of the skills. • The government should help enroll workers in the formal, organized sectors by subsidizing contributions via the Social Protection Fund. Provisions in the Contributions-based Social Protection Act 2074 (2017/2018) also need to be availed, including benefits to those enrolled that have now been laid off. • Should the threat from COVID-19 decline over time, construct and maintain roads and highways, ensure the infrastructure do not damage natural environment and are resilient enough to absorb the shocks from floods, landslides and other hazards. The Gautam Buddha airport, Upper Tamakoshi hydro- electric project, and the Melamchi drinking water project can be expedited. Infrastructure projects such as solar grids and solar water pumps for agro-processing and irrigation, and herb farm and agroforestry plantations, which are green, labor intensive and can produce returns in a short time, should be promoted. <p><u>Reorient public finance to augment human capabilities.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the need for a proper economic stimulus package becomes more evident, Nepal can look for additional funding by: (i) redirecting existing allocations; (ii) freeing resources through efficiency and austerity; and (iii) exploring new borrowing and partnerships. By cutting wasteful expenditures, and reorienting existing allocations towards human development priorities such as health, education, climate, energy, water and sanitation, decent employment and livelihoods, the country's economic choices can be given a human face. <p><u>Introduce measures to save bankruptcies and create new sources of job-creating green growth.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorient to revive the economy. Steer towards new sources of growth and job creation. A priority is to keep the thousands of firms afloat so that jobs can be retained and revenue streams can be preserved. Through a bold
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	<p>exercise of monetary policies and financial measures aimed at expanding concessional working capital and subsidizing interest obligations, Nepal must start planning for a post-COVID-19 roadmap where reforms lead to reduced costs, higher savings and investments (domestic and foreign). New sectors of dynamism within high-value agriculture, niche manufacturing, clean energy adoption, and digitalization which show promise should be prioritized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monetary policy should be oriented towards easing access to credit and preventing avoidable bankruptcies, and towards facilitating exit and restructuring. Firms, households and individuals should be allowed to defer payment of income tax, indirect taxes, fees and utilities until the end of the financial year. Conditional concessional loans of up to 24 months can be offered to MSEs, including start-ups, to help them avoid closure.• As more monetary stimulus will be directed at the agricultural sector to absorb people displaced in the non-farm informal sector, to rehabilitate returnees from foreign employment, and to reverse migration from urban to rural areas, the fiscal stimulus must ease the infrastructural bottleneck and provide necessary incentives to set up enterprises. The government should provide in-kind incentives to start agri-businesses and livestock farming by providing seeds, fertilizers, materials required for farming and livestock farming, for instance, tunnel farming, technical assistance, and new breeds of animals.
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CHAPTER THREE

EMPLOYMENT RECOVERY STRATEGIES AND PLAN OF ACTION

The GoN and the private sectors are the two fundamental stakeholders to be engaged in the employment recovery strategies and plan of action. They can maintain and manage independent as well as collaborative strategies while designing programs and activities. The prime objective of these stakeholders should be to create enterprises for the development of economically feasible products and business products with comparative advantages. Besides the activities supported by the federal and province governments, local governments should identify their own strategic opportunities in collaboration with the private sectors and the institutions they create, for instance, the local level user groups created in the implementation of projects and activities. They can design approaches to mobilize local level resources for local level institutional development. Collaborative partnerships for business development like those of MEDPA, Youth and Small Entrepreneur Fund, and public private partnerships should also be developed. Development Partners, UN agencies, and I/NGOs can enhance the capacity of local level actors.

3.1. Survival and Recovery Strategy

Table 6: Survival and Recovery Strategy (3 to 12 months)

Policy Response	Action Points	Lead Ministry /Agency	Supporting Ministry/ Agency/Partners	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5
1. Comprehensive analysis of the labor demand and supply aspects to inform wage-employment and self-employment programs.	<p>1) Conduct a comprehensive mapping of available labor market opportunities at local level, potential areas for employment creation and available skills to inform the Government's employment and skills related policies and programs.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Mapping the following information: ❖ Opportunities (to be) created by the federal government / ministries / departments / district chapters ❖ Opportunities (to be) created by the province government/ / ministries / departments / district chapters ❖ Opportunities (to be) created by the local government from their budget and programs ❖ Opportunities (to be) created by the private sectors ❖ Opportunities (to be) created by the development partners and others <p>2) The local Employment Service Centers (ESCs) need to be significantly strengthened for information dissemination regarding employment opportunities both in the local and foreign labor markets, available training schemes and self-employment related support programs.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide a regular and stable internet connection at the local levels ❖ Establish, update and display information through a common and central labor market information management system platform (a concept of the common national portal for labor supply information) with support and access of local ESCs ❖ Collect, display, and update the information on available labor supply with particular areas of job interests, key skills, knowledge and experiences. 	MoLESS in close coordination with local government units.	MoFAGA, and provincial governments, MoF and other line ministries, federation of cooperatives, FNCCI and CNI.	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Strengthen and enhance the capacity of ESC coordinators with the information, knowledge, ability, and the best practices of labor market information management system (LMIMS) and ICT practices ❖ Directly link and match the job demand to foreign employment opportunities/ information (board and departments) through the national web portal and the ESCs at the local level ❖ Coordination with the private sectors and job market information providers / centers for the development of a partnership model for sharing job market information ❖ Information dissemination on the job and creation of self-employment opportunities 			
2. Wage Employment: Emphasis on employment creation (e.g., cash for work, food for work program in each municipality).	<p>1) Design livelihood programs such as cash for work and food for employment to provide immediate relief to the unemployed.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Design of programs like ‘cash for work, food for employment’ led by the federal to provincial governments for the construction of local projects, for examples, road upgrade, maintenance, and irrigation canals, (note: extra caution should be given to ensure the infrastructure does not damage natural environment and is resilient enough to absorb the shocks from foods, landslides and other hazards) ❖ List out the development projects to be implemented under the leadership of province governments / local municipalities and inform each ward in advance about the people to be engaged in the projects. ❖ Facilitation support to be provided by the Province Ministry, ESC- Municipality and Ward Office ❖ Ward Office to provide the name list of available workers and their bank account details in advance to the respective municipality and province government ❖ Plan to complete work in time through the mobilization of user groups and youths of vulnerable communities ❖ Allocate sufficient budget to each ward for employment opportunities that target vulnerable populations and provide a form of social security ❖ Increase the amount of daily wage to NPR. 800.00 and deposit the salary directly in the bank account of employees <p>2) Expand the Prime Minister Employment Program (PMEP) by creating links with the federal, provincial, and local-level public development programs</p>	MoLESS in coordination with provincial and local governments.	Various sectorial ministries to create related local infrastructure, so that community level users’ groups can engage in the construction and low skill work. Private sector industries and transportation sectors also to be coordinated properly by	

	<p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ List out the development projects to be implemented under the federal and local governments and inform each ward in advance about the human resource engagement requirements of the projects. ❖ Facilitation support to be provided by the Ministry, ESC- Municipality and Ward Office ❖ Ward Office to provide the name list of available and their bank account details in advance to the respective ESCs of the municipality ❖ Plan to complete work in time through the mobilization of user groups and youths of marginalized communities ❖ Allocate sufficient budget to each ward for such employment opportunities that target vulnerable populations and can provide a form of social security ❖ Increase the amount of daily wage to NPR. 800.00 and deposit the salary directly in the bank account of employees for transparency <p>3) Integrate all local infrastructure development and local development programs and projects at the local level for effective utilization of available labor force.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ List out the infrastructure development and local development projects to be implemented under the federal, province and local governments and inform each ward in advance about the people to be engaged in the projects. ❖ Overall facilitation support to be provided by the Ministry, ESC- Municipality and Ward Office ❖ Ward Office to provide the list of available workers and their bank account details in advance to the respective municipality's ESC. ❖ Plan to complete work in time through the mobilization of user groups and youths of marginalized communities listed in the roster of ESC- municipalities ❖ Increase the amount of daily wage to NPR. 800.00 and deposit the salary in the bank account of employees for transparency <p>4) Focus on strengthening the Employment Service Centers (ESCs) for registration of unemployed individuals as well as dissemination of information regarding available job opportunities, training schemes and other employment related schemes at the local level. Priority should be given to the most vulnerable groups such as those who have lost jobs and returnees with outstanding loans.</p>		<p>provincial governments for the generation of new employment in their respective jurisdictions.</p>	
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	<p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Train coordinators to enhance information, knowledge, skills, and abilities on: (a) ICT, and (b) job market information management system ❖ ESC to collect, update and publish (on the website) the list of unemployed laborers along with their knowledge, skills and job priority ranking with a special focus on individuals from vulnerable communities ❖ List and publish job opportunities available in the infrastructure development and local development projects along with training schemes that are to be implemented under the federal, province, and local governments ❖ ESC to inform each ward in advance about the people to be engaged in the projects ❖ Overall facilitation support to be provided by the Ministry, ESC- Municipality, and Ward Office <p>5) Prioritize local-level leadership development and motivational programs to build a spirit of “Let’s build our Village Ourselves” locally. Provide psychosocial support to workers in distress including returnees through existing programs like SaMi and PMP.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Train local level political leaders with the information, knowledge, skills, and abilities on stress management, motivation for job and service delivery practices at the local level ❖ Praise and reward daily wage workers for their contributions to local level development efforts ❖ Increase competence based on common cases - discussion, conference and follow up ❖ Allocate budget for training, discussion, and presentation sessions <p>6) Develop standardized operation manuals and monitoring and evaluation guidelines for the effective implementation and evaluation of aforementioned programs.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide an operation manual and guidelines for the proposed employment activities ❖ Monitor and follow up on employment generating activities and publish evidence from the field ❖ Evaluate progress and reward successful institutions and leaders to provide incentives 			
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<p>3. Self-Employment: Create a conducive policy and programmatic environment for self-employment including for returnee migrant laborers.</p>	<p>1) Financial incentives including start-up grants, seed capital, soft loans to be provided to aspiring entrepreneurs along with financial literacy programs in coordination with the private sector and civil society. Emphasize self-employment opportunities to make local municipalities self-reliant.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identification of the sectors that already have firms operating in comparative advantage and provide support based on an overview of their past experiences and lessons learned in business development ❖ Support for the protection of existing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), especially for those MSMEs with comparative advantage ❖ Partnership with MSMEs for business development, risk reduction strategies and insurance coverage. ❖ Support only those farmers' cooperatives that are involved directly in activities related to the production, processing, and marketing of products ❖ provide opportunities for the commercialization of MSMEs with comparative advantage ❖ Provide easy access for MSMEs to finance and deliver financial literacy activities in the PPP model <p>2) Returnees to be provided business development support (BDS), counselling regarding production needs and available self-employment opportunities in the municipality.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Collect and categorize the knowledge, skills and abilities that have been acquired by the returnees abroad ❖ Support to determine the sectors/areas of comparative advantages that they would like to establish a business in in their business plans ❖ Assess the needs for BDS and provide support based on gaps observed ❖ Provide support to protect existing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) ❖ Partnership with MSMEs for business market development, risk reduction strategies and insurance coverage ❖ Support only those farmers' cooperatives that are involved directly in the activities of production, processing, and marketing of their own products ❖ Provide opportunities for the commercialization of MSMEs 	<p>MoICS/ MoLESS /& MOF</p>	<p>NPC/MOF and respective ministry for making effective policy and programs to create more employment</p>	<p>These are continuous activities for at least 2-3 years down the road</p>
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	<p>❖ Provide MSMEs with easy access to finance</p> <p>3) Company acts and other regulatory provisions of the GoN need to be reformed and the process of starting and closing new businesses needs to be simplified, for example, areas to explore include VAT registration exemption, registration of business at ward/municipality with cap on time and scale of operation among others, so that new entrepreneurs can start their businesses easily.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Assess the difficulties observed with regards to establishing, operating and dissolving an outlined in the Company Act and other regulatory provisions ❖ Assess the constraints encountered by MSMEs and self- employed individuals who are engaged in the areas that have comparative advantage ❖ Assess the needs for BDS and design support policies at the local government to provide support as required ❖ Provide free registration support at the Office of the Company Registrar/ Municipality / cottage industry / others. ❖ Connect with firm or industry in a similar area so that startups and self-employed individuals have the opportunity to learn from their experiences <p>4) Group guaranteed bank loans and other support schemes need to be provided to unemployed, local entrepreneurs interested in self-employment. Concessional finance should not be concessional just in terms of capital costs, but the grace period of the loan must also be generous.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Collect the business plan as proposed by the unemployed, local entrepreneurs, and those who are interested in self-employment in selected area / sector of comparative advantage ❖ Provide higher ranking during evaluation of farmers' cooperatives and informal farmers groups that are engaged in production and processing industries ❖ Assess capital needs and provide, at least by 50% of the total capital, the required amount in concessional loans but provide a ceiling cap of NPR. 1500,000.00 - NPR. 2000,000.00 on concessional loans including concessions the rate of interest and period of payment. 			
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	<p>❖ Identify and propose supportive schemes to be made available as per the needs of the applicants for the development of their business plan, establishment and operation of business, and design of marketing strategies among others.</p> <p>5) Seek innovative ways to bring modern cultivation practices to abandoned lands. Promote the role of district Gyan Kendra and Municipality to promote profitable agribusiness activities. Promotion of commercial agriculture is important, and incentives need to be provided to make agriculture attractive to Nepalese youth. Arrangements need to be made to allow fallow land that is widespread in rural areas, to be used for high value and commercial agriculture.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establish market centers, including relevant infrastructures, such as, chilling center, warehouse, and cold storage in the PPP model ❖ Strengthen, at least, a single road network to a local market supply for farmers' agricultural outputs ❖ Provide grants for agricultural inputs, business infrastructure development, and insurance. ❖ Link closely farmers and youths to the Gyan Kendra and municipality's grants / support <p>6) Create economic environment and incentives to enable existing industries and factories to resume operations or run at maximum capacity.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide tax reductions, local market immunities, and financial access opportunities (concessional) for business recovery ❖ Provide incentives to promote for new business ventures ❖ Business risk mitigation and business continuity plan / strategies through the collaborative support of FNCCI and relevant private sectors 			
4. Gradual easing of the lockdown to resume	<p>1) Initiate frequent consultations with relevant stakeholders to impose more targeted, localized lockdowns based on the spread of COVID-19, with gradual relaxation of lockdown in safer zones to resume economic activities.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p>	Directive Committee of COVID-19 Crisis Manage	All the respective ministries at the federal, provincial	

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<p>economic activities while maintaining social distancing at work and enforcing a strict monitoring mechanism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Protect the people from the transmission of COVID-19, maintain required safety measures and create awareness of the means of transmission of COVID-19 at the workplace ❖ Support businesses from the recession and shocks, and provide support to formulate business continuity plans <p>2) Protocols on maintaining safe distance at work, businesses (hotels, restaurants) should be set and strictly followed.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide safety protocols related to the health hazard, such as social distancing, appropriate use of sanitizers, and disinfectants in the workplace 	<p>ment Center / Cabinet</p>	<p>level and local governments as well as subject matter experts</p>	
<p>5. Emphasize skills training, testing and certification programs.</p>	<p>1) Map out employment opportunities available at the local level and the skills in demand to help inform the design of skills related schemes.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Collect the employment opportunities available at the local level with the support of the federal government, provincial government, private sectors, development partners, NGOs and others ❖ Map out the skills in demand in various sectors at the local level ❖ Explore the available skilled laborers through the supply side labor market information ❖ Identify the gaps in the supply of skilled laborers and provide training as required <p>2) Local government to provide accelerated support for locally based skill enhancement training informed by the local demand to retain the labor force locally. Provide recognition of prior learning, bridge courses and linkages to loans and business development services.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify skilled labor demand (and gaps) and available skills in labor supply at the local level ❖ Coordinate with the labor (including youth) supply at the local level and open calls for applications for business plan ❖ Evaluate the skills required for local youths for business development 	<p>Provincial Governments / Municipalities and various development related sectorial ministries</p>	<p>CTEVT in support of the DCC/ Municipality. The present regulation of getting CTEVT permissions for petty-scale training programs to be reformed, and training institutes to be allowed</p>	<p>MOE ST/ CTEVT to authorize municipality/DCC to manage local level skill enhancement</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Create linkages with academic qualifications, experiences, loan requirements, capacities, and circumstances. ❖ Promote business development services in selected areas and sectors of comparative advantage ❖ Provide a higher rank in the evaluation of farmers' cooperatives and informal farmers groups that are engaged in production and processing industries. <p>3) Training modules need to be based on thorough assessment of local markets in each local unit that identify critical shortage of skills in sectors such as motor mechanics, carpenters, masons, barbers, and others. The skill development programs need to be initiated by each municipality such that the labor demand in each district for all levels of skills are met locally.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify the critical shortage and demand of skilled laborers (including regular labor, such as motor mechanics, carpenters, masons, hairdressers) in the districts -to be collected by the municipalities ❖ Select from impoverished people the best fit with the required skills for the position ❖ Collect the business proposals of unemployed aspiring local entrepreneurs ❖ Design training modules according to the level of understanding of selected participants ❖ Launch training modules according to the subject area, needs and context of the districts <p>4) Conduction of skills testing and certification programs for returnees to formally recognize their skills and experiences at the local level by the municipality or under District Coordination Committee (DCC). Such programs can first be initiated at the districts with high reverse migration including Dhanusha, Jhapa, Siraha, Darchula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Achham before rolling out the program to other areas.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Selection of districts with high reverse migration rates including Dhanusha, Jhapa, Siraha, Darchula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Achham for piloting the skills testing and certification programs ❖ Collection of applications from the returnees for skills testing and certification programs ❖ Provision of a short refreshment course for the returnees before conducting skill tests. ❖ Distribution of certificates along with possible business development support and job matching 		<p>to register in municipality (and at District Level Cottage Industry office in each district)</p>	<p>ent training, as per local needs . Federal govt (or CTE VT) to prepare TOT for training manuals/ modules.</p>
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	<p>5) Information sessions on the job market, business opportunities in the locality and available support services for start-ups.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Motivational and informational sessions for the promotion of self-owned business enterprises ❖ Collection of business plans proposed by unemployed prospective local entrepreneurs in selected areas or sectors with comparative advantage ❖ Provision of a higher ranking in the evaluation of farmers' cooperatives and informal farmers groups that are engaged in production and processing industries ❖ Provide support in the documentation, registration, tax payment, and creation of linkages with industries 			
<p>6. Conduct a nationally representative survey of returnee migrant workers.</p>	<p>1) A comprehensive migration survey should be conducted immediately to better understand the characteristics and aspirations of returnee migrant workers and to inform the policies targeting their socioeconomic reintegration. The survey should cover different areas including returnees' skills, experiences, wage-employment and self-employment aspirations, and intentions to re-migrate.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Propose a Request for Proposal (RFP) or go through CBS for "A National Migration Survey" to conduct an analysis of socio-economic reintegration of returnees in Nepal ❖ Propose a mixed methodology survey with both qualitative and the quantitative data ❖ Study the acquired skills, business development interests, knowledge and experience, wage-employment and self-employment aspirations, and intention to re-migrate ❖ Understand the overall characteristics and aspirations of returnee migrant workers ❖ Develop policies on enterprise / business development and strategies for skill development for the socioeconomic reintegration of returnees based on recommendations from the final report 	<p>Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security</p>	<p>1) CBS, and NPC</p> <p>2) Provincial government ; provincial level NPCs in each province</p> <p>3) Local governments</p> <p>4) Other leading policy think tanks, universities. The study can be conducted province-</p>	

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			wise according to the needs of a province.	
7. Update the Foreign Employment Policy to address the evolving context and priorities of Nepal.	<p>1) There are several contradictory policy issues regarding overseas employment from Nepal. There is a need to harmonize and operationalize the policy in practical terms, with a clear policy vision and direction on foreign employment from Nepal.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Review the documents with regards to the national priorities and needs of the country (Constitution of Nepal and Long-term Vision and achievements envisioned by the Periodic Plans) ❖ Estimate the growth and development of government and private sectors ❖ Explore the evolving choice and demand of youths in future periods ❖ Estimate the context of overseas employment with a focus on primary destination countries of Nepali migrants ❖ SWOT and PESTEL analysis, synthesis of information, priority options, policy formulation, and revisions 	MoLESS, FEB and DoFE.	NPC, provincial governments, Nepalese Missions abroad.	
8. Effectively formalize the Land Bank, with clear policy framework.	<p>1) Clear policy guidelines (Acts) and frameworks need to be developed and discussed with key stakeholders to operationalize the Land Bank.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Review of existing literature including academic and non-academic documents (reports published by think tanks, I/NGOs, policy organizations) ❖ Empirical analysis and information drawing on the key areas of policy demands, and needs assessment ❖ Collection of information and experiences gained by bureaucrats and leaders of relevant ministries ❖ consultation with stakeholders on key policy demands, and for needs assessment ❖ Draft the policy framework and content guidelines 	Ministry of Land Management, Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation (Land Bank)	NPC/MOF/MoLM/CO PR/	
9. Establish a research wing at the	<p>1) A separate research division at MoLESS to conduct frequent labor market analysis of both the national and international labor markets to support the design of evidence-informed policies. The research conducted should be done in close coordination with CBS, NPC and line ministries as well as labor research institutes.</p>	MOLESS	NPC/CBS	

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Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security.	<p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Formulate a draft concept of the research division wing to conduct regular labor market analyses in Nepal ❖ Collaboration and networking with other line ministries, agencies, development partners, and other relevant offices ❖ Close coordination with CBS and NPC in data collection, analysis, and policy formulation ❖ Documentation, decision making, and execution 			
10. Emphasize the recovery of wages and benefits of migrant workers who have returned without being adequately reimbursed or are still in the destination country.	<p>In coordination with employers or recruitment agencies, proper measures should be taken to ensure workers are adequately compensated.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Arrange for a transparent payment mechanism (bank payment practices), and reporting practices ❖ Circulate guidelines and codes of conduct ❖ Collaborate with private sector agencies to monitor ongoing practices 	Diplomatic Missions and DoFE/Foreign Employment Tribunal (FET)		

3.2. Rebound and Revival Strategy

Table 7: Rebound and Revival Strategy (1- 2 years)

Policy Response	Action Points	Lead Ministry/Agency	Supporting Ministry/ Agency/Partners	Remarks
1. Initiate the establishment of “National Employment Promotion Authority (NEPA)”.	<p>1) Establish NEPA to integrate various employment generation programs and entities in the country and to facilitate one-stop services for jobseekers.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Collect the best practices including lessons learned from the Prime Minister Employment Program and other models of employment generation ❖ Design the scope, board practices, decision-making mechanisms, the functionality of the NEPA and its departments, labor market information development, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms ❖ Draft the information for approval ❖ Implement the decision 	MoLESS	<p>NPC/MoF/ Cabinet</p> <p>MoPIT, MoICS, MoTCA, MoALD, and local governments</p>	
2. A comprehensive Human Resource Development Plan should be formulated to match the demand and supply of the labor forces required in the next 5 years.	<p>1) Based on information on both the labor supply and demand, a comprehensive HRD plan needs to be developed.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Review previous studies conducted in HRD in Nepal ❖ Conduct a consolidated study on HRD plan in Nepal ❖ Review the report and follow up on specific policies that need improvement based on the findings ❖ Communicate and update the policy information with relevant line ministries and agencies including the academia and private sectors <p>2) The HRD plan should be reflected in the curricula of educational and training institutes to ensure relevant, demand-based education and training programs.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Revise the curricula of education programs, training, and academic institutions 	MOLESS	NPC/MOEST/ Line ministries	To be done with a focus on skilled employment and semi-skilled labor demand and supply situation.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Communicate the policies to private-sector agencies ❖ Support the development of required human resources in accordance with national priorities 			
3. Update the curriculum of secondary school to include vocational training so that students are equipped with marketable skills relevant to the labor market.	<p>1) Emphasis on market-oriented skills can increase youth employability so they can also engage in skilled employment opportunities in Nepal in manufacturing, agribusiness and transportation sectors currently occupied by foreign workers.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Conduct a study to identify the sectors where foreign workers are employed including in manufacturing, agribusiness, and transportation ❖ Design the curricula to impart technical education to secondary school students on the sectors identified through the aforementioned study ❖ Identify the academic institutes, colleges, and training centers that can produce the skilled graduates ❖ Orient, inform, and train the students as per the needs of the market ❖ Provide job placement 	MOEST	Provincial Government and Municipalities to take more active roles, based on scale of the program activities. Include inputs from private sector	
4. Gradually increase the share of migrants in skilled and professional categories.	<p>1). Emphasize joint skills training initiatives with stakeholders of the destination countries including Government and employers. Leverage current or new bilateral labor agreements to design such initiatives.</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify skill training providers and other stakeholders from the destination countries ❖ Negotiate with the diplomatic missions to revise labor agreements and conditions for skill improvement of Nepali migrant workers ❖ Select and communicate with skill training providers and stakeholders ❖ Propose a joint effort to provide the skills required for Nepali migrant workers ❖ Design and improve skill development courses and practices for aspirant migrant workers in Nepal <p>2)Market exploration for higher skilled opportunities in current and new destination countries</p>	MoLESS/ Diplomatic Missions	MoFA/ MoEST	

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	<p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establish migrant job market information centers for skilled Nepali youths ❖ Establish digital display centers and websites to disseminate information regarding international HR demands ❖ Negotiation and coordination support for employment services 			
<p>5 Introduce policy and program making, housekeeping and caregiving into formal sector</p>	<p>1) Conduct research and collect data on returnee migrants working in housekeeping and caregiving sectors:</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Collect qualitative and quantitative information on returnee migrant workers with experience in the housekeeping and caregiving services ❖ Review of the report for designing policy framework and guidelines ❖ Formulate policy ❖ Introduce policy, program, and law <p>3) Establishment of an institution or company for the formalization of this sector</p> <p><u>Strategies and plan of action to execute the action point:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Explore Nepal's own experiences with regards to housekeeping and caregiving services ❖ Collect the private sectors' information on housekeeping and caregiving services in Nepal ❖ Review of international models for housekeeping and caregiving services ❖ Design a model for the formalization housekeeping and caregiving services in Nepal 	<p>MoLESS/ provincial and local government authorities</p>	<p>MoF</p>	

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A series of policies, programs, and activities have been implemented by the GoN for employment generation. Opening the economy, private sector development policies, financial access and poverty reduction policies, Prime Minister Employment Program are a few examples of such policies and programs. However, there are only a handful of programs tailored to address unemployment during crises and disasters. The existent policies do not provide sufficient pathways to pursue new employment creation while protecting existing employment opportunities, and to provide incentives for private businesses, specifically to support the low-skilled and vulnerable workers. In this context, the private sector will have no willingness to promote employment and will instead try to reduce the fixed cost of business including the reduction of fixed salary earning labor. The Government is under immense pressure to create over one and a half million jobs for new entrants, unemployed youths and migrant returnee workers. Employment creation and social security are some urgent priorities of the nation, even more so due to the loss of jobs spurred by the pandemic. A study done by the NPC shows that creating over 2.5 million jobs is possible in the next four to five years by restructuring and expanding various existing government programs. The largest number of employment opportunities could be created in agriculture-based self-employment programs. The best way forward is through collaborative efforts of the public, private and cooperative sectors at all tiers of government.

4.1 Survival and Recovery Strategy

The survival and recovery strategies are as follows:

- (a) Conduct a comprehensive mapping of labor market opportunities and strengthen the information dissemination system regarding employment opportunities.
- (b) Emphasize employment creation by designing livelihood development opportunities to absorb unemployed youth and migrant returnee workers by expanding the Prime Minister Employment Program and integrating local infrastructure and local development programs and projects.

- (c) Focus on strengthening the Employment Service Centers at the local level by prioritizing the most vulnerable people. Provide and extend psychosocial support to workers in distress and develop standardized operation manuals and monitoring and evaluation guidelines for the effective implementation and evaluation of these programs.
- (d) Create a favorable policy and programmatic environment to emphasize self-employment by providing financial incentives to aspiring entrepreneurs in coordination with private sector and civil society. Provide business development support and counseling.
- (e) Enable existing industries and factories to resume operations or run at maximum capacity and reform company acts and other regulatory provisions to simplify the process of starting business and ease provision for group guaranteed bank loans and other support schemes.
- (f) Employ modern cultivation practices in rural areas and promote the role of district Gyan Kendra and municipality to promote profitable agribusiness activities.
- (g) Resume economic activities and work by enforcing pandemic protocols such as maintaining social distance and using sanitizers frequently with a strict monitoring mechanism, frequent observations and consultations on the evolving needs with relevant stakeholders.
- (h) Emphasize skills training, testing and certification programs at local level. Map employment opportunities and the skills in demand. Initiate skills development training, such as motor mechanics, carpenters, masons, hairdressers. For returnees, make provision for skills testing and certification programs through the municipality or under District Coordination Committee (DCC) in districts facing high reverse migration such as Dhanusha, Jhapa, Siraha, Darchula, Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Achham. Conduct informational sessions on job markets and business opportunities for returnees.
- (i) Conduct a nationally representative survey of returnee migrant workers to better understand their characteristics and aspirations and for effective socioeconomic reintegration by availing their skills and experiences.
- (j) Update the Foreign Employment Policy to address the evolving context and priorities of Nepal and harmonize and operationalize the policy pragmatically.
- (k) Formalize and operationalize the Land Bank with the involvement of key stakeholders.

- (l) Establish a research wing at the Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security to conduct frequent labor market analyses of both local and global levels with the coordination with CBS, NPC and line ministries as well as labor research institutes.
- (m) Emphasize the recovery of wages and benefits of migrant workers and take proper measures to ensure workers are adequately compensated.

4.2 Rebound and Revival Strategy

The rebound and revival strategies can be summarized as:

- (a) Initiate the establishment of National Employment Promotion Authority to integrate various employment generation programs and to facilitate one-stop services for jobseekers.
- (b) Formulate comprehensive Human Resource Development Plan to analyze the demand and supply of the labor forces required in the next five years with reflection in the curricula of educational and training institutes.
- (c) Update the curricula of secondary schools to include vocational training to equip students with market-oriented skills in manufacturing, agribusiness and transportation.
- (d) Enhance the share of migrants in skilled and professional categories through joint skills training initiatives and bilateral labor agreements.
- (e) Explore the foreign labor market for high skilled labor opportunities in current and new destination countries.
- (f) Introduce policy and programs to formalize housekeeping and caregiving sectors by conducting research and collecting data of returnee migrant workers in those sectors and opening new institution or company for the management of the sectors.

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