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Coming Home Is Another Migration: Life After Working Abroad

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By **Suresh tamang** - September 16, 2026 - Nepal

For returning migrant workers in Nepal, the journey continues after arrival: finding useful work, rebuilding everyday relationships and deciding what a good life at home should look like.

A return ticket can close a period of employment abroad. It cannot, by itself, settle everything that comes next. Where will the next income come from? How will a family share responsibilities again? What happens to experience gained overseas when an employer at home cannot see its value?

These questions deserve space in Nepal's migration conversation. The familiar account follows a worker leaving, earning and sending money home. Return adds another chapter. It asks whether the person who helped sustain a household from a distance can build a satisfying place within it.

This is an explanatory feature based on published research and programme information. It does not present invented interviews or a single returnee's experience as representative of everyone.

There is more than one way to come home

Someone who completes a planned contract and returns with savings faces a different transition from someone whose job ends unexpectedly. Family responsibilities, health and conditions in the destination country can also shape the decision. The International Labour Organization's 2024 study of labour-market reintegration explains why return requires responses matched to individual circumstances.

That distinction matters when judging success. The same offer will not suit a skilled worker seeking employment, a person considering a business and someone who first needs time and support to recover. A returnee should not have to perform a story of either triumph or failure to be taken seriously.

Experience needs a way to become opportunity

The ILO identifies recognition of skills acquired abroad as one part of reintegration support. Access to services and suitable employment also matters. A certificate, useful as it may be, cannot create a vacancy where no employer is hiring.

Consider a hypothetical worker who has maintained equipment overseas. A useful assessment would ask what machines they handled, what faults they diagnosed and what responsibilities they carried. The destination country and job title alone provide an incomplete picture. Employers could make that experience easier to evaluate through practical demonstrations, clear job descriptions and fair recruitment. The point is to discover what a person can do, then identify where that ability fits.

The household has been living its own life

Helvetas's account of its work with returnees in Nepal describes family reconnection as part of reintegration and discusses the need for psychosocial support. Employment assistance alone cannot address every difficulty of coming home.

A household should make room for a conversation about what changed during the separation. A partner who managed school, bills and care deserves recognition for that work. A returning parent needs time to learn a child's current routines. Decisions

about money and responsibilities should be negotiated with the people who will live with them.

There is no need to turn every disagreement into a diagnosis. Equally, families should not treat asking for qualified support as a personal defeat. Reconnection is everyday work, and it is reasonable to need help with it.

A business should be an option, not an expectation

The appealing public story is easy to picture: a worker returns, opens a business and employs others. It is one possible future. It should not become a test that every returnee must pass.

As an editorial principle, Nepal Digest would favour giving people a genuine choice between employment, further learning and enterprise. Knowing how to perform a trade and knowing how to run a business involve different responsibilities. A good cook may want a dependable kitchen job; a technician may prefer employment to managing customers, purchasing and accounts.

For someone considering an enterprise, the useful questions are concrete. Who needs the service? What would make them choose this provider? Which tasks can the owner already handle, and which require support? An attractive idea deserves investigation before it becomes a public promise. A modest, stable livelihood

should receive as much respect as an ambitious opening ceremony.

What Nepal's reintegration initiatives illustrate

The Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers project, known as ReMi, offers an example of an organised response. Its published first-phase description identifies a Nepal-Switzerland initiative involving 20 local governments in Koshi and Madhesh, with technical assistance from Helvetas. Its intended beneficiaries included women and men returning primarily from Gulf countries and Malaysia.

The listed first phase ran from 16 July 2022 to 15 July 2026. Those dates matter: an older project page should not be read as confirmation that a particular service, intake or benefit remains available today.

Helvetas describes support for employment service centres to connect returnees with job searches, training, enterprise assistance and opportunities to certify existing skills. Anyone seeking help should confirm the current service area, eligibility and application process directly with the relevant local office or programme. A project's published ambition and an individual's actual access are different things.

Support works better when it follows the person

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative's reintegration framework, developed for its own programme contexts, considers economic, social and psychosocial needs together. It describes individual plans shaped with returnees and cooperation with local services. It is a useful international reference, not a Nepal-specific entitlement.

The principle can be applied to a simple question: what would make the next step possible for this person? A referral should lead somewhere understandable. A worker should know whom to contact, what information to bring and what the service can realistically provide. Sending someone between offices without a clear next step is not the same as helping them.

Support should also leave room for people who do not match the most visible image of a returnee. Women, older workers and people with disabilities should be able to describe their own priorities rather than have an institution assume them.

Measure life after the programme

The OECD's review of reintegration evaluation discusses measures spanning economic, social and psychosocial conditions. Examples include the reliability of income, food security and people's assessment of their own circumstances. That approach looks beyond whether assistance was delivered.

For Nepal, the useful editorial questions follow naturally. Did training lead to work that used the skill? Could a participant reach the service without unreasonable difficulty? Was support useful several months later? Did the person feel heard?

Attendance totals have a place in administration, but they cannot answer those questions on their own. Programmes should listen to people whose plans did not work out as carefully as they showcase success stories. Otherwise, the most instructive experiences disappear from the public account.

A practical first month at home

A return plan can begin with a notebook rather than a business registration. The following steps are editorial suggestions, not conditions for a government scheme. Their purpose is to turn a large question—what now?—into a few decisions that can be revisited.

Start with a conversation at home. Set aside time to discuss what each person expects from the next month. Who will handle school visits, shopping and care? What needs immediate attention, and what can wait? Write down disagreements as questions to resolve together rather than treating the returning worker as the automatic decision-maker.

Make overseas experience visible. Gather employment letters, training records and references that can be shared appropriately.

Prepare a short account of actual duties: the equipment used, responsibilities held and problems solved. Someone who supervised a shift should describe the work involved, rather than relying on a foreign job title to explain it. Do not include confidential material belonging to a former employer.

Explore more than one route. Contact potential employers, ask a local employment service centre about current assistance and investigate any training that fills a specific gap. Before making a long journey to an office, ask who handles returnee enquiries, what documents are needed and whether an appointment is required. Record the contact person and agreed next step.

Set a review date. After a few weeks, compare what was expected with what actually happened. Which enquiries received answers? What work appears available? Which household arrangements are helping? A plan that changes after new information is doing its job.

Different people need different next steps

Three hypothetical situations show why a single definition of reintegration falls short. A hotel worker returning after a planned contract may want help presenting their experience to employers. A parent returning unexpectedly may first need to reorganise family responsibilities before deciding about work. A technician considering self-employment may need conversations with

prospective customers to understand what service is wanted locally.

These are illustrative situations, not reported personal stories. They should not be mistaken for evidence that one route produces better results. What they make visible is the importance of asking the person what they need before selecting the programme, course or business idea for them.

Families can help by making questions more specific. Instead of asking why someone has not yet become successful, ask which application, introduction or practical task would help this week. That gives a returnee room to act without requiring an immediate, impressive answer about the rest of their life.

Leaving again does not erase the value of returning

We should be cautious about declaring that a person has failed simply because they choose another overseas contract. A fairer public conversation asks whether the choice was informed, whether alternatives were meaningful and whether the person's own priorities were respected.

Nor should staying be measured only through entrepreneurship or visible wealth. Being present for family life, finding suitable work, learning something new or rebuilding a routine can all matter deeply to the individual concerned. These are not outcomes an

outsider can rank from an airport photograph.

Nepal's returning workers deserve to be recognised as people with experience and preferences, not simply as former senders of remittances. Coming home becomes more hopeful when there is room to contribute without having to prove that every year abroad was a success. The journey deserves attention long after the suitcase has been unpacked.

Source review: 16 September 2026. Programme availability should be confirmed with the relevant provider.

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