

POURAKHIKO AAWAAZ

VOICE OF POURAKHI

An Endeavor to Uphold the Voice of Women Migrant Workers

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Education is our rights.....



STOP AIDS, Keep The Promise



POURAKHI

Committed to conserve right of women migrant worker

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***Solicitation:** If there are any articles, news items or stories about migrant women workers, particularly in Nepal and the South Asian region, please send that to POURAKHI for wider dissemination among migrant community and stakeholders!*



Migration is nothing new to Nepal as a huge number of Nepalese workers go abroad for better livelihood options. The reasons behind migration are almost same in Nepal as in other parts of the world. Poverty, limited employment opportunities, deteriorating agricultural productivity, and armed conflict are some of the motives behind international labor migration. There are many villages in Nepal where labor migration has been established as a culture of a community; that is, going abroad for work for awhile and returning with some money and the experience of living in a different geographical location. The influences of friends, relatives and well-wishers have also played a prominent role in the promotion of international labor migration. On 17 June 2009, The Daily Kantipur reported that people going to foreign employment through personal visa is double than those going through recruiting agencies. Besides, a class division among the labor migrants is also found to select the country of destination, i.e. poor people are to India, the Gulf States and Malaysia and rich people towards Japan, South Korea, North America and Europe.

Statistics show that remittances sent by migrant workers more than one hundred billion each year and this amount holds great importance to the national economy. Some economists have analyzed the Nepalese economy as a remittance economy, in which the contribution of remittances has played a prominent role in keeping the national economy in balance during difficult financial times. The amount of remittances sent through informal channels has not yet been calculated but it is estimated to be equal to that which comes in from the formal channel.

A migrant worker has to face numerous problems while he/she makes the decision to migrate for foreign employment.

(Continued)

Compiled & Edited by: **Zakir Ahsan, Sabiha Laizu, Bikram Giri & Ransubba, POURAKHI**

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Most of the migrant workers are taking a blind decision to migrate for work without any consideration of actual income that he/she will receive in the country of destination. Similarly, he/she has to face the problem of finding sufficient money to go abroad and the only way to get money is through a loan with a high interest rate. The government, except some cases, does not offer special provisions to subsidize loan interest rates.

Information is lacking in each and every step for potential labor migrants. Most of them are not aware of where they are going, what work they have to do, the actual cost they need to spend to go for work and other social and cultural information about the country of destination. Most of the migrant workers abroad are working in vulnerable situations without any effective legal protection. Workplace exploitation by foreign companies is well known. As a result, there are numerous real stories of the suffering of Nepalese migrant workers abroad. Female migrant workers are found to be more vulnerable in comparison to male migrant workers. The existing law is itself found to be discriminatory towards women and the issues facing women migrant workers are not considered sincerely enough.

If the problems faced by migrant workers both in the home country and the country of destination are not addressed at the policy level, solutions are far behind. International provisions are found to be very sound and applicable in the protection of the rights of migrant workers but governments in both sending and receiving countries do not seem genuine in their domestication of the spirit of international instruments, conference, recommendations and plans of action.

In this reality, POURAKHI works towards creating a stronger and resourceful network so as to raise the voice of women migrant workers as well as to enhance the process of information dissemination on safe migration issues.

Ms. Manju Gurung
Chairperson

From Within

Heartfelt Greetings to Project Staffs of “Migrant Workers Supporting Migrant Workers”

1	Ms. Nirjala Bhattarai (Mainali)	Project Coordinator
2	Ms. Ganga Limbu	Finance Officer
3	Ms. Ransubba Gurung	Advocacy & Communication Officer
4	Ms. Kalpana Giri	Supervisor
5	Ms. Uma Karki	Supervisor
6	Ms. Leela Ghimire	Counselor
7	Ms. Agni Gurung	Paralegal Volunteer
8	Ms. Pabitra Rai	Paralegal Volunteer



Legal Support

POURAKHI successful to help to late Mr. Rabin Bagale's family

POURAKHI with its continuous effort by writing and frequent follow up has been finally able to manage relief to the family members of late Mr. Rabin Bagale who died in a road accident in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Mr. Bagale had been working at Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Ms. Yoymaya Bagale, wife of late Mr. Bagale, was able to get her compensation and dues of her husband with the help of POURAKHI. The compensation was pending for the last half year and now the family is finally able to receive it.

Ms. Bagale had given an application to POURAKHI asking for help on 2009 February 2nd. POURAKHI was able to provide Ms. Bagale her compensation on June 2009. She received her draft from Ministry of Foreign Affairs in presence of Government personals, media personals and POURAKHI members. Ms. Bagale thanked POURAKHI for all the help and support and committed to work for other migrant workers in need in the future.

Garanja family received body of deceased Mr. Ram Bahadur Garanja

Through the month of February 2009 POURAKHI helped to get the body of late Mr. Ram Bahadur Garanja for the Garanja family. Mr. Ram Bahadur Garanja was working in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He died in a road accident when his van on which he was selling goods during his duty was hit by another large truck.

Ms. Punam Garanja, wife of late Mr. Garanja, had given an application to POURAKHI on 3 February 2009 asking for help to get the body of their deceased family member. POURAKHI arranged necessary help and essential correspondence required for the help and finally was able to help to get the body for the deceased family.



POURAKHI Emergency Shelter

POURAKHI has been providing service of emergency shelter for the deported and trafficking survivors in the process of migration. POURAKHI observed that the victims of foreign employment do not have economic and moral support and are undergone depression once they back from destination countries. During this phase the victims will be provided with emergency shelter support. Victims receive support and help including emergency shelter, counseling, legal aid, safe migration information and referral to other needed services. For the detail information, please contact:



Ms. Nirjala Bhattarai

Program coordinator

Tel: 01- 4720573, 2081644

Hotline number: 9849-135206

Migrant Workers Supporting Migrant Workers

POURAKHI is pleased to start the project “Migrant Workers Supporting Migrant Workers” funded by Department of United State, G-TIP from April 2009. The goal of this project is to mobilize former migrant workers to provide support for migrant workers that focus on women migrant workers through the provision of emergency services, counseling, legal aid and re-integration assistance.

Under this project, POURAKHI is expanding its existing and new services. This will be done through providing pre-departure information about migration issues in passport offices, recruiting agencies, bus parks, the international airport and Nepal embassies abroad. Information desks have been extended to its branch offices at Pokhara and Dharan that provides information and counseling to migrant workers. Recently emergency shelter home is established for women trafficked in the process of labor migration. Through this project legal aid is being provided to returnee migrant women workers. Since POURAKHI radio program is on going and through this project radio outreach will be increased by working both with national and regional radio stations. The project intends to build the leadership skill of returnee women migrant workers as leaders. POURAKHI will help sufferer to reintegrate in their family and community after they receive the emergency shelter home support.



Solicited Legal Aid from POURAKHI

Bikram Giri, Admin Officer, POURAKHI

POURAKHI throughout the month of April to June 2009 has received seven applications for help on migration related problems. Some of the applications received were as:

- 1) **Case** of being employed other than mentioned in the contract, Suman Makaju, Malaysia, request for rescue.
Applicant: MR. Ram Bahadur Shrestha, Panauti V.D.C, Kavre, Nepal.
- 2) **Case** of employee missing, Miss Laxmi Tamang, Kuwait, application for search and rescue.
Applicant: Mr. Jeet Bahadur Tamang, Nuwakot, Bagmati, Nepal.
- 3) **Case** of employee out of connection and missing, Krishna Maya Tamang, Kuwait, application for search and rescue.
Applicant: Mr. Biaya Lama, Nagarkot V.D.C-4, Kavre, Nepal.
- 4) **Case** of employee in worse situation and unstated condition, Ms Tenji Lamhu Sherpa, Oman, request for search and rescue.
Applicant: Ms Nanu Sherpa, Tinchuli, Bouddha, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- 5) **Case** of Ms. Putali Pariyar and Ms. Radha Batha, out of connection, Kuwait, application for search and rescue.
Applicant: Ms Tulsi Batha, Sanothimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal.



Messages from POURAKHI News Archive

Ransubba Gurung, Information Officer, POURAKHI

Foreign employment is one of the main sources of income for Nepali people. The remittance from the foreign employment also has a big role in the economy of the country. So, lots of things about the foreign employment make the headlines of the national daily's. Here is some important event related to migration that happened in the last three months:

- Labor and Transportation Ministry had requested the government to ban Saudi Arabia for women (4 May, Nagarik).
- Person going to Japan for training from their respective company don't have to pay any money. All the expenses have to be beard by the company (13 May, Kantipur).
- Nepal Chamber of commerce prepares to send 6 lady trainee to Japan and more 20 trainees later (15 May, Kantipur)
- "The inflow of remittance has increased with 60% in the last nine months," says Nepal Rastra Bank (31 May, Kantipur).
- United Arab Emirates will soon open a counselor office in Nepal (12 June, Kantipur).
- Deputy Head of the UAE Commission Mohan Krishna Shrestha suggested the government that, "It's better not to send domestic worker to gulf countries." (12 June, Kantipur).
- Recruiting agencies submitted application to the labor ministry for legal approval to send people to Cyprus and Poland for foreign employment (15 June, Nagarik).
- Unemployment rate increases in Australia due to economic crisis (15 June, Nagarik)
- In 4 gulf countries around 200 Nepali migrant workers were dead in the last 8 months (17 June, Kantipur)
- People going to foreign employment through personal visa is double than those going through recruiting agencies (17 June, Kantipur)
- Korea has temporary postponed to take migrant worker for work other than agriculture and fisheries (18 June, Kantipur).
- Nepal government is planning to establish embassy in 4 more countries, which are Kuwait, South Africa, Canada, and Brazil (23 June, Kantipur).
- Nepali maid killed in Lebanon, Lebanese send African corpse (23 June, The Himalayan times).
- 4 women going to Oman via India were rescued by the Indian police in sohoratgadh in India (24 June, Kantipur).
- Delegates from the Nepali government will go to Israel to know about the situation of Nepali migrant workers working there (24 June, Aarnapurna Post).
- Foreign employment promotion board gives compensation to 6 people returned due to economic crisis and to 20 people who were dead (26 June, Kantipur).
- From the selected 170 manpower company who was responsible for recruiting people to Japan, only 22 Manpower company has their contact office in Japan (27 June, Aarnapurna Post).

Discussion Program on Women in Foreign employment: Right or Wrong

Sabiha Laizu Nishi, Fk Volunteer, POURAKHI

On 13 March, 2009 a discussion program on “Women in Foreign employment: Right or Wrong” was held at NCCR hall in Jawlakhel jointly organized by Nepal Institute of Development Studies (NIDS) and Labor Journalist Group of Nepal. The Resource persons were Dr. Tasneem Siddique from Refuge and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Bangladesh and Mr. Ganesh Gurung from NIDS.

Dr. Tasneem spoke about the migration situation of Bangladesh. She mentioned the restriction and ban on migration for women from 1981 to 2008 and many changes that took place in policy, rules and restrictions. In the context of Bangladesh, previously it was considered that migrating women were being trafficked. After many research and analysis it was proved wrong and as a result there has been a significant change in the view point. RMMRU had taken the initiative and leadership to change the situation and other NGOs had supported it. In 2003 Government withdrew the ban. Female migration came to 3 percent of the total people who migrated abroad for work. Now Bangladesh Government realized that we should go ahead for women migration as well.

There was one question put up to Dr. Tasneem on whether women should go for migration as migrant worker. She responded positively but put up a condition. Women could migrate for foreign employment as skilled personnel. There was a large demand for B. Sc. nurse in USA and in the Middle East. Every year 1.2 million nurses were needed in USA. She added that if we train nurses and make them skilled manpower, female migration can go up in a high position. Women migration can bring a large change. Women migrants are empowered through hardship. She further added that to think that women are being exploited in foreign migration was not true for all time. Exploitation and harassment was limited. If simple information to the women about their destination countries before going, like the dos and don'ts of that country, restrictions and other information were given then the rate of exploitation, harassment would be very less.

Mr. Ganesh Gurung, from NIDS told about the causes of migration. There was lack of enough employment opportunity in Nepal. So people opted for foreign labor migration. On 16 May, 1997 Government has imposed a ban for going to Gulf countries for women. In 2007, after ten years the Government declared to lift the ban. On 5 September, 2008 Government again put up a ban for going to those countries where there was no Embassy of Nepal. Nowadays, Government does not say that there is a ban in women migration. Women empowerment is going on in Nepal. Now the women in Nepal are so empowered that they take the decision on which school their children should go. Nepali women are free to take their decision and can make informed choice. Trafficking is so harsh in Nepal and there are a lot of things that Government can do in Nepal like:

- Government can arrange more skill development training for women through private institute.
- The Labor Migration Policy can be strengthened and appropriate policies can be adopted for looking after long term point of view.
- The new Foreign Employment Act and the Labor Migration policy can be implemented to protect the labor rights of the concerned persons.

We need to go beyond our society attitude.....

Kazi Zakir Ahsan, Fk Volunteer, POURAKHI



Hundreds of thousands of children across the world become infected with HIV every year and, without treatment, die as a result of AIDS. In addition, millions more children who are not infected with HIV are indirectly affected by the epidemic, as a result of the death and suffering that AIDS causes in their families. UNAIDS reported that there were about 2 million children living with HIV around the world at the end of 2007. The UNICEF report *Increasing Vulnerability of Children in Nepal* estimates the number of children infected by HIV/AIDS to be more than 13,000. But, the national estimate of children 0 to 14 years of age infected by HIV was 2,500 in 2007.

On 16 April 2009 we went to visit Ankura Care Village of HIV positives and AIDS patients situated on the top of the hill adjacent to Begnas Lake, Kaski. We went there under the guidance of Ms. Prabina Gurung, Chairperson, POURAKHI-Pokhara. A HIV positive Ms. Laxmi Adhikary, spouse of a HIV positive established the center in 2007 with the hope of ensuring the rights of HIV positives. She was trying to provide support to infected women whom husbands died of HIV infection. We met there three HIV infected women and one of the HIV positive women informed us that they were infected by their husbands whom were returnee migrant from India. Ms. Lakxi Adhikary said that they were trying to raise their fund through different agricultural activities like poultry, dairy, goat farming, vegetable and fruits. They had rented 20 ropenees land from the government at NRS 2,000.00 per year. They have severe water scarcity as it situated on the hill and Ms. Prabina Gurung expressed her interest to provide an electric pump to them. No doubt, the initiative of Ms. Laxmi Adhikary could be a model for the NGOs trying to reach out to the communities.

At that time, there were 3 children Ghanashyam, Manisha and Aliza in that care village and among the three, two were infected by HIV. The children were more likely to delay school enrolment. According to their mother, this was due to increased financial pressure at the household level, including diverting money toward medical treatment. But they were attending a primary school though the school was far from village. Unfortunately, on 13 May 2009 through *The Himalayan Times* I came to know that the school administration was compelled to expel those children from the school under pressure of local guardians. It was a clear instant of discrimination attributed by the society and to turn out the innocent children from the school need to be considered a crime.

The most of the student unions in Nepal have strong legitimate ground and they have long history of political contribution for establishing rights, justice and peace. But on HIV & AIDS issue, student unions have yet to play important role and most often HIV & AIDS do not included in their agenda. It is important to acknowledge the strengths of such student unions, which could play vital role in awareness raising campaigns on HIV and AIDS. Moreover, NGOs engaged in this field definitely have to play pivotal role in the fight against the injustice and empowering individuals and communities to claim their rights in the context of the HIV epidemic.

Mansara Failed to Make Her Dream True
A Case Study on a Returnee Saudi Migrant
Interviewed by Bikram Giri, Admin Officer, POURAKHI



I was born in 2038 B.S in Kohalpur, Banke district of Nepal. My parents were originally from Dailekh. We were eight children of our parents, seven daughters and one son. Our parents were farmers thus due to our economic condition and large family we couldn't go even for primary education. I got married at the age of 15, my husband (Chakra Bahadur Chand) was 30 years, it was an arrange marriage. My husband works as a labor in construction site and we live in a slum area in Makaibari, Garjial Tole-5, along with our children's. We have three children's eldest daughter Puja (12 years) reads in grade 6, middle son (9 years) reads in grade three, and our youngest daughter Uma (6 years old) studies in grade 2 in a government school named Chyama Secondary School in our area.

We were sustaining our lives in great difficulties and with extreme poverty. In such a situation one of the local agents came to us. He told us about different things of working abroad and of earnings that I would make at Kuwait. It was like my dream to earn come true at that critical and worsening economic situation. It was like time I had at least some thing good to hear and know and to change the condition of my children's and my family. I had my family discussions but they did not agree to give me permission for foreign employment. But later I decided to go on my own.

I was taken to Mumbai and kept there for a month. Initially I was told to go for Kuwait but later the agents changed their words and said that there was no availability of visa for Kuwait but they could send me to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It was that I had already moved from home so I accepted it. I was finally sent to Saudi Arabia as a domestic worker.

While moving for foreign employment I had no idea about the foreign employment process. All I did was as per the saying of the agent. If I would have known then I wouldn't have had gone. There are some women from our area who have gone to Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Lebnan and some other countries in the process of foreign employment. I heard about their goodness and success only and never heard of their problems that were the only thing that led me to get inspired for foreign employment. My whole family was against but I went behind the agent and his good information on foreign employment.

I thought that I would work properly, earn for my family and then come back at the end of my visa. I was determined to do any sort of household job. At the very beginning I thought it would be good to work and earn and if the work is fine I would further extend my visa for next time before arrival to Nepal. The agents told me a salary of 45 KD for Kuwait at beginning and will increase to 60 KD once I become experienced working there. But for Saudi Arabia I was told a salary of 500 Saudi currencies.

It was completely different when I reached there. It was really difficult with work as I had to work all the hours. The halls were too large and I had to clean the whole building alone. There were six members in the family and the building had 15-16 rooms. I was poorly feed. They gave me with worse bed to sleep, it was dirty and I had to sleep with half stomach food much of the times. Still the work was going on. After one and half months I asked to the

employers for my wage, but they denied paying me and finally they took me in a van and left me at a road side. I was all alone and was weeping. Luckily, some Nepali peoples there helped me with food and some money. They called the police and the police handed me to the embassy of Nepal in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I stayed in the embassy for around 20-22 days then I was send to Sappora and jailed there for almost one months and 12 days in the Saudi jail. So I was sent to Nepal with the help of embassy once I was released from the jail. Finally I reached Nepal. In Nepal POURAKHI helped to rescue me at my hard times. I felt a bitter experience during foreign employment and I am upset with the happenings with other fourteen Women Migrant workers who also arrived to Nepal in similar condition to me.

POURAKHI helped Ms. Mansara Rawat to the emergency rescue and brought her to the emergency shelter home of POURAKHI and helped her with food, lodging and with psychosocial counseling as well. Ms Rawat was in a terrible condition and was even without proper clothes. POURAKHI members helped her and also helped her to get some economic relief from the Foreign Employment Promotion Board.

POURAKHI would like to thank Yours Excellency Mr. Hamid Ansari, Ambassador, Embassy of Nepal in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to the other staffs of the embassy, journalists Mr. Devendra Bhattarai and Mr. Rudra Kumar Karki and to all the seen and unseen participants in the rescue of our fifteen Nepalese women.

For more information, please contact

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