GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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## Strategic Interventions of MoFA in Bilateral Labor Migration Agreements


Fellow Name: Anusha Khanal

Cluster: Human Mobility, Labour Diplomacy, and Workers' Rights


### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs) are among Nepal's most consequential foreign policy instruments, directly shaping the protections available to migrant workers abroad. Despite Nepal's growing reliance on bilateral agreements to protect its migrant workers, relatively little attention has been paid to the institutional processes through which these agreements are negotiated, implemented, and sustained. Similarly, the process through which these agreements are negotiated and implemented themselves remains institutionally fragmented.. This brief examines Nepal's BLMA process from negotiation through implementation, identifies key institutional and operational gaps, and proposes strategic interventions to strengthen labour diplomacy. It focuses particularly on the relationship between MoFA and MoYLE, the role of diplomatic missions and Labour Attachés, Nepal's negotiation and institutional-learning capacity, and the mechanisms available to ensure **that agreements remain functional after signing.**

### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

01 Establish a MoFA–MoYLE BLMA mechanism responsible for country assessment, drafting, negotiation, implementation monitoring, and periodic agreement review. A working team should be formed at the very beginning of the drafting and research phase, ensuring that knowledge sharing is embedded from the outset.

02 Conduct tructured learning exchanges, in partnership with organizations such as the ILO and IOM, with experienced labour-sending and destination countries including the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and India. These exchanges in the form of learning programmes, should be convened by MoFA, bringing together the Nepali team responsible for drafting and negotiating BLMAs with counterparts from drafting and Joint Technical Committees in partner countries.

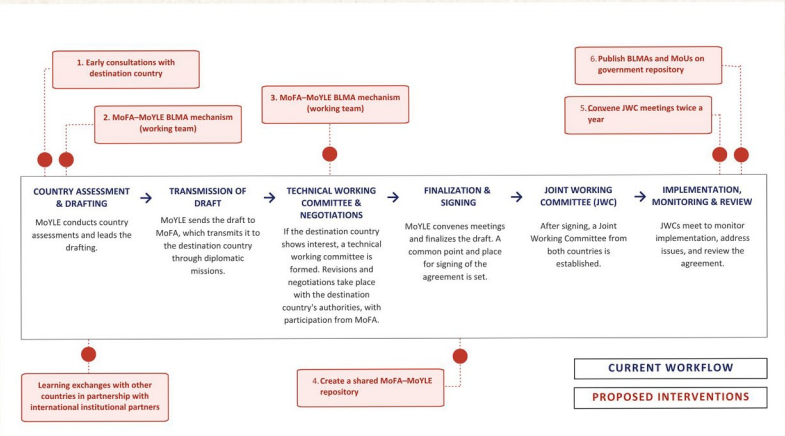
03 While drafting BLMAs, MoFA and MoYLE should develop negotiating clauses that draw on international human rights and labour standards ratified by both Nepal and destination countries. Future negotiations should systematically reference these shared international human rights and labour conventions, as both Nepal and destination countries are signatories to key instruments.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


Nepal has authorized labour migration to 111 destination countries but has concluded Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs) OR Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with only 13. Drawing on interviews with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), the Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment (MoYLE), and international organizations, alongside a review of bilateral agreements and relevant legislation, this brief examines how BLMAs are developed and implemented. It finds that Nepal's labour diplomacy is constrained by fragmented institutional roles. Post-signing mechanisms are similarly weak, with Joint Working Committees (JWCs) rarely meeting, leaving many agreements effectively dormant. These gaps are compounded by the absence of systematic mechanisms to retain lessons from previous negotiations and limited public access to the agreements themselves.

**The memo outlines interventions to strengthen Nepal's labour diplomacy across the BLMA lifecycle. These include institutionalizing early and sustained MoFA** participation; strengthening negotiation capacity through international peer learning; adopting a negotiation framework grounded in shared international commitments; systematically engaging diplomatic missions and Labour Attachés; ensuring regular and effective JWC mechanisms; building institutional memory across negotiations; and improving transparency and public access to agreements. Collectively, these reforms would reposition labour diplomacy as proactive and coordinated, thereby strengthening Nepal's bargaining capacity, improving implementation, and enhancing the protection of Nepali migrant workers throughout the migration cycle.


### KEY VISUALS




### KEY TAKEAWAY

Nepal's internal process for BLMA remains institutionally fragmented; this brief recommends that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assume equal ownership of labour diplomacy alongside the Ministry of Youth, Labour and Employment, working in close and continuous partnership from the earliest stages of the process.