



National Strategy on Overseas Employment

Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship
Ministry of Labour and Human Resources

2022-2030



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Foreword

The Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR) is pleased to bring forth the National Strategy on Overseas Employment. The strategy aims to provide a clarity on how the overseas employment programs must be designed and implemented that best caters to the need of the individual jobseeker while at the same time serving the overall national interest.

The overseas employment program was initiated in 2013 to create employment opportunities for Bhutanese youth outside Bhutan. Over the years, while the program has benefited many of our youth, there were several issues and challenges associated with it. It was necessary for the Ministry to review the current practices and chart a way forward for a sustainable overseas employment.

Therefore, the strategy is based on extensive evidence gathered from the administrative data maintained by the Ministry, stakeholder consultations, surveys from Bhutanese working overseas and those who returned and reviews of the existing best practices around the world. Hence, the strategy has detailed strategic actions to achieve its vision and missions.

I would like to commend the hard work of the Core Working Committee and my colleagues in the Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship for coming up with this National Strategy on Overseas Employment. It is hoped that this strategy will provide a useful guide to the relevant agencies in designing and implementing future activities related to overseas employment program.

Tashi Delek!



(Tashi Wangmo)

Secretary

Acronyms

BOWs	Bhutanese Overseas Workers
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DLO	Department of Law and Order
DoEE	Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship
DoI	Department of Immigration
ESD	Employment Service Division
FYP	Five Year Plan
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LMIRD	Labour Market Information and Research Division
MIS	Management Information System
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoLHR	Ministry of Labour and Human Resources
NCWC	National Commission for Women and Children
NSB	National Statistics Bureau
NSOE	National Strategy for Overseas Employment
OEP	Overseas Employment Program
RBOEAs	Registered Bhutanese Overseas Employment Agents
RCSC	Royal Civil Service Commission
RBP	Royal Bhutan Police
REBO	Regulation on Employment Bhutanese Overseas
RENEW	Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
RMA	Royal Monetary Authority
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Unemployment has always been a major concern and receives high priority in the country's national development five-year plans. The Overseas Employment Program (OEP) was initiated in 2013 to employ Bhutanese in the overseas job market. The overseas job placement was intended to create opportunities for the Bhutanese to develop skills and experience necessary for the local economy when they returned.

In 2021, the unemployment rate was reported at 4.8 percent with youth unemployment rate at 20.9 percent. As per 12th Five-Year Plan (FYP) projections, 67,805 people were estimated to enter the labour market out of which 6,000 jobs were expected to be created through overseas employment.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in loss of jobs and livelihoods especially in the services and hospitality sectors which compelled many Bhutanese Overseas Workers (BOWs) to return to the country, thus, exacerbating the unemployment situation.

This strategy lays out the best ways to deliver effective services towards decent, safe, and satisfying jobs through placement in overseas job markets. It reviews the existing practices around the world where countries have good policies on administering the employment of their citizens in overseas job markets. The strategy is also based on the extensive evidence gathered from stakeholder consultations and survey of Bhutanese working overseas and those who returned home. The strategy has detailed several strategic actions to be taken to achieve a dynamic system catering to overseas employment.

The Strategic Objective 1 focuses on the strengthening and improved governance of overseas job placements. This objective looks at the management, administration and regulation of placing Bhutanese people in overseas job markets. This phase of strategy of placing Bhutanese overseas ensures smooth processes of finding jobs overseas through placement firms. The placement firms will need to comply with regulations that requires them to analyze the overseas job markets and tie up with credible local recruitment agencies and employers.

The Strategic Objective 2 details the measures to ensure harmonized support and protection of Bhutanese working overseas. Given the past experience of a few Bhutanese who have been through the ordeals of human trafficking, this strategic phase lays out the plans to ensure safety, security and wellbeing of BOWs. Placement firms are expected to effectively manage their clients through the MIS to be developed by DoEE. From recruitment and training to placing them in foreign job markets and tracking their movements through switching of jobs.

The Strategic Objective 3 concerns instituting a responsive reintegration program. This phase of strategy will focus on providing reintegration services to encourage and engage returnees meaningfully in the country. DoEE will work closely with various sector associations, corporate organizations, state-owned enterprises and relevant government organizations to create opportunities for reintegration of the Bhutanese returnees from overseas job markets. Entrepreneurship will be promoted among the returnees to start their own ventures to exercise the knowledge, skills and experience they gained while working overseas.

1. Why a National Strategy on Overseas Employment?

Unemployment has always been a major concern and receives high priority in the country's national development five-year plans. It was estimated that a total of 267,000 jobs will need to be created by 2020¹. In the 11th Five Year Plan (FYP), one of the strategies to achieve full employment (97.5 percent) in the country was to explore decent and productive overseas employment particularly for the youth. Hence, overseas employment was perceived to be one of the ways to address unemployment. Accordingly, in 2013 the Overseas Employment Program (OEP) was initiated² and implemented by the then Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR). The key objectives of the OEP were to: engage youth gainfully so that they benefited from the transfer of knowledge and skills and exposure; contribute towards foreign currency reserves through remittances; and contribute towards employment generation through economic activities upon their return.

Although the unemployment rate in the country reduced from 2.9 percent in 2013 to 2.1 percent in 2016, it increased to 3.1 percent in 2017 and 4.8 percent in 2021. The youth unemployment rate increased from 11.9 percent in 2019 to 22.6 percent in 2020 and then decreased to 20.9 percent in 2021 with female youth unemployment at 24.6 percent and male youth unemployment at 16.9 percent³. The rise in unemployment figures in 2020 is attributed to the overseas returnees and those laid off employees by the pandemic affected sectors⁴.

As per the 12th FYP projections, 67,805 new job seekers (93 percent youth) were estimated to enter the labour market in the 12th FYP, of which about 61,811 new jobs were estimated to be created within the plan period under various sectors including through overseas employment with the potential to employ about 6,000 job seekers⁵.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the loss of jobs and livelihoods for many, since businesses and service sectors remained closed, greatly affecting and reducing employment opportunities. The services and hospitality sector was the hardest hit and many lost their jobs, some were laid off, some were sent on leave without pay and those already overseas had to return to the country. Overseas employment being mostly in the retail and hospitality sector, 1,707 Bhutanese Overseas Workers (BOWs) who were placed through MoLHR and Registered Bhutanese Overseas Employment Agents (RBOEAs), returned from 9 different countries⁶.

Besides the COVID-19 pandemic which caused inconveniences and loss of employment to BOWs, the Department and relevant agencies also had to deal with other challenges such as exploitation and abuse of job seekers by illegal agents, medical issues, suicide and pregnancy related cases amongst others. One of the most concerning among the issues is Trafficking in Persons (TIP). In

¹ Planning Commission, 1999

² Via Cabinet Order number. C-3/7/80, dated 26th September, 2013

³ National Statistics Bureau, 2021

⁴ National Statistics Bureau, 2020

⁵ Gross National Happiness Commission, 2019

⁶ Data maintained by MoLHR as of 1st August, 2020

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the past few years (2017-2020), 185 victims of TIP related to overseas employment were reported in the country. These cases mostly occurred in Iraq, India and Oman⁷.

During the monitoring visits to the destination countries where Bhutanese youth were placed, it was observed that there were incidences of BOWs being paid lower salary, lack of health insurance from the company, work not as per the offer letter and even illegal recruitment. These were particularly evident in the Middle East countries, while in South East Asian countries, it was observed that there is a need to: provide basic language training prior to departure, strengthen pre-departure orientation, strengthen monitoring and have long term collaboration at government level.

The OEP was kept on hold from March 2020 as per the Government directives. The Ministry also received government directives to restrict Bhutanese from traveling abroad for employment until the COVID-19 vaccination was completed in the country⁸. On 25th November 2021, the Ministry received further directives from the government to resume the OEP and to ensure the safety and security of the youths while initiating the program⁹.

With the resuming of the OEP and many job seekers opting for overseas employment, there have been concerns raised on brain drain, safety and security of BOWs and tracking of BOWs. The Department, apart from the Regulation on Employment of Bhutanese Overseas (REBO) 2021, SOP on OEP and Guideline for Health Screening of Bhutanese Overseas Placement, does not have any strategic document governing overseas employment.

On a constructive note, while there are issues facing the overseas employment, working abroad also has its own several positive sides to share. Bhutanese working overseas have expressed the benefits and the advantages of working out of the country for global companies. The advantages include:

- Learning platform for new skills, jobs etc.
- High earning potential for Bhutanese
- Exposure to different culture
- Networking opportunities

Therefore, recognizing the issues and challenges as well as the opportunities brought about by the overseas employment, the need to strategize national efforts and strengthen the OEP was recognized and hence, the development of the National Strategy for Overseas Employment (NSOE) is considered critical.

1.1. Our Vision

Create a dynamic Bhutanese workforce capable of catering to the demands for foreign workers in overseas job markets through safe, secure, satisfying and career-building experience.

⁷ Data from Department of Law and Order

⁸ Via Cabinet order; C-3/86/2021/875 dated 17th March 2021,

⁹ Through Cabinet letter number C-3/106/2021/1132

1.2. Our Mission

- Promote employment opportunities in overseas job markets to ensure safe, secure, and gainful employment for all Bhutanese workforce.
- Strengthen and institutionalize a robust coordination mechanism among all the relevant stakeholders to place Bhutanese in overseas job markets.
- Provide meaningful reintegration of Bhutanese returnees from overseas job markets along with their families to find better prospects based on their knowledge, skills and experience enabling them to contribute towards nation building.

1.3. Core skills for employability in overseas job markets

The world of work is evolving quickly which requires any individual to figure out how to prepare for a future job role that's impossible to predict. Although there is no definite set of skills that can be identified for the future of work, however, there are certain common skills that an individual will need to develop and possess to succeed in future career. We identify five such common skill set that DoEE aims to develop in Bhutanese people interested to go and work in overseas job markets.

i. Cognitive flexibility

The rise of digital technologies means that aspiring workers are going to need to be able to handle the plethora of opportunities and challenges that come with it. Employers and recruiters often look for people with qualities of multi-tasking and the ability to adapt to change and conceptualize complex multiple ideas all at once.

ii. Digital literacy and computational thinking

As the world continues to rely on highly technical and continuously evolving technologies, the need for those with the digital skills to match also increases. Although traditional schools look at developing individuals through STEM education, there is equally an important concept like SMAC (social, mobile, analytics and cloud) which is considered an important area of skill development. Being digitally literate offers capabilities beyond what was once thought impossible when it comes to emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, Internet of Things (IoT), and data science.

iii. Judgement and decision-making

Although robots and automation technology may be better than humans in other ways such as calculations and diagnostic solving, humans will still be dealing with the subjective side of data analytics.

Considering the world is on the cusp of the fourth industrial revolution, there is still the need for individuals who are able to show the world what numbers mean and their significance.

iv. Emotional and social intelligence

For everything that can be replaced by digital technologies and artificial intelligence, emotional and social intelligence remain uniquely human capabilities. In some sectors, these qualities are absolutely crucial. The demand for jobs in healthcare, for example, are on the increase – demonstrating how some roles will always require a human element. The future of jobs is more than likely going to include working closely with others, so having empathy, the ability to collaborate, as well as excellent communication skills is something that every job seeker is most definitely going to need.

v. Creative and innovative mindset

Despite a report by the World Economic Forum in 2018 suggesting robot automation will create more jobs than they displace, job seekers will continue contributing towards creativity promoting and innovative mindset.

Much like having an excellent sense of social intelligence, natural creativity is something which cannot be easily replicated by the latest digital technologies. So, job seekers must be able to think outside the box to be in the game.

2. State of Overseas Employment in Bhutan

The placement of job seekers overseas for employment is carried out either directly through the MoLHR or through the registered Bhutanese overseas employment agencies (RBOEAs). The MoLHR has collaboration with some government agencies (public–public partnership) for implementation of certain programs while it also facilitates placements directly with the potential overseas companies (public-private partnership). Similarly, the RBOEAs collaborate either directly with the potential overseas companies or with recruitment agents of the destination country (private-private partnership).

Apart from the formal implementation of the OEP through MoLHR and RBOEAs, there are some individuals who seek overseas employment on their own or through referrals. Figure 1. Indicates the current mode of engagement of job seekers under the OEP.

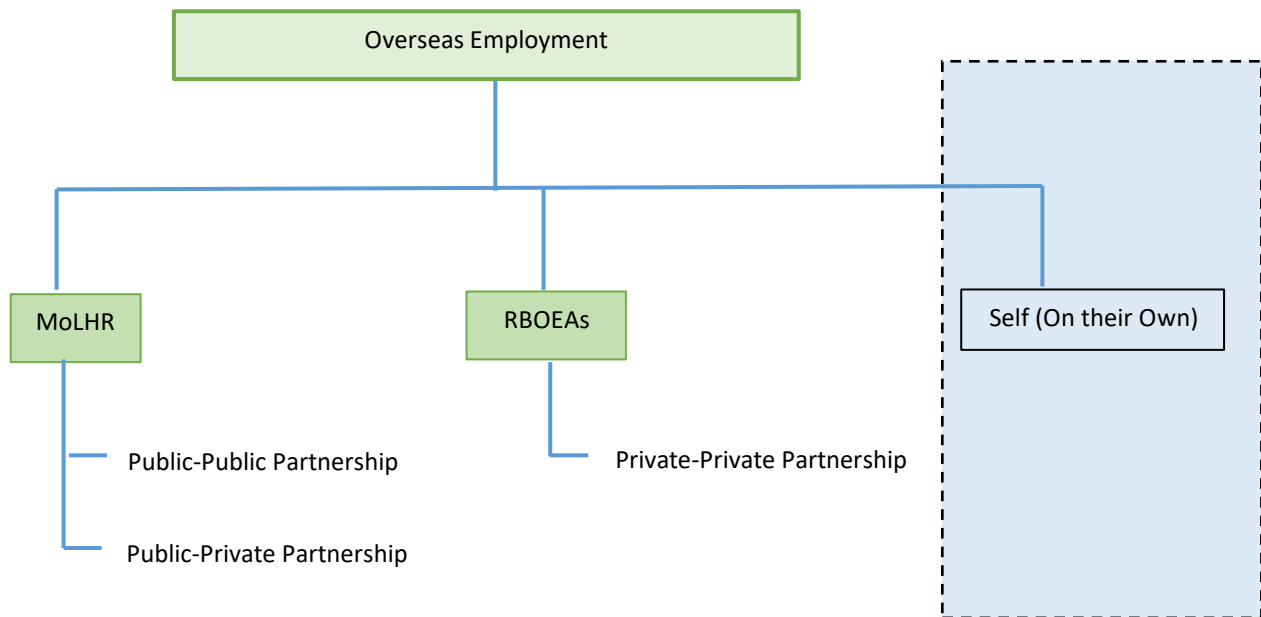


Figure 1. Mode of Engagement/ Overseas Employment

The implementation of the programs is guided by the REBO 2021 and the SOP on the OEP. Prior to recruitment of Bhutanese overseas, the foreign employers are required to submit the vacancies (demand letter) either directly to MoLHR (direct collaboration with MoLHR) or routed through RBOEAs (partnership with RBOEAs) for approval. The MoLHR in collaboration with MFA verifies the authenticity of the vacancies. The selection and recruitment process begins upon the approval of the vacancies. Figure 2 outlines the details of the recruitment and placement process.

The MoLHR is responsible for ensuring safety and welfare of the BOWs in collaboration with MFA, Ministry of Health (MoH), DLO, Department of Immigration (DoI) and Royal Bhutan

Police (RBP) and Judiciary. Hence, these stakeholders are actively engaged during the documentation process in Bhutan, and are also invited to provide pre-departure briefings to the candidates organized by the MoLHR (particularly MFA, DLO and MOH).

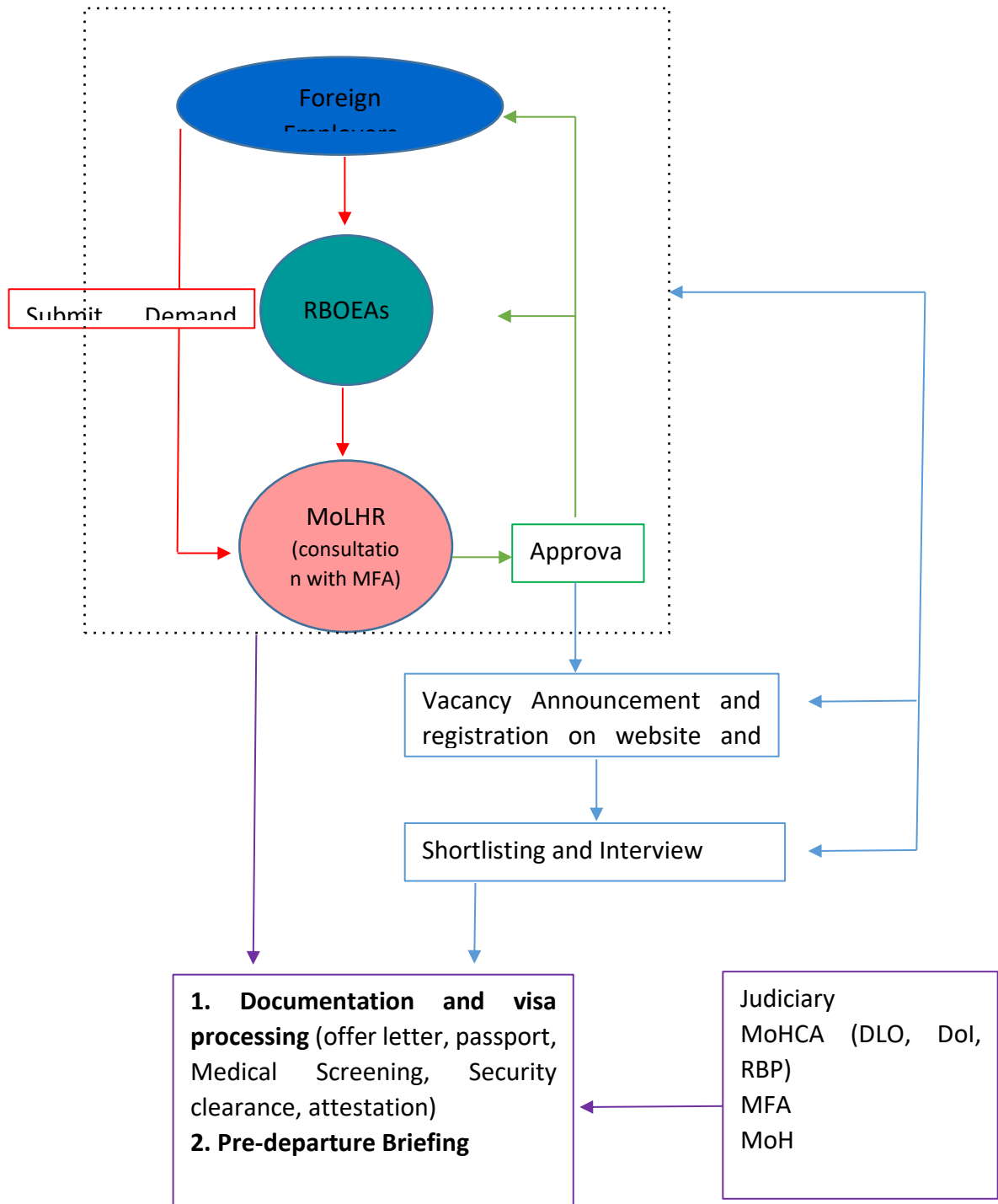
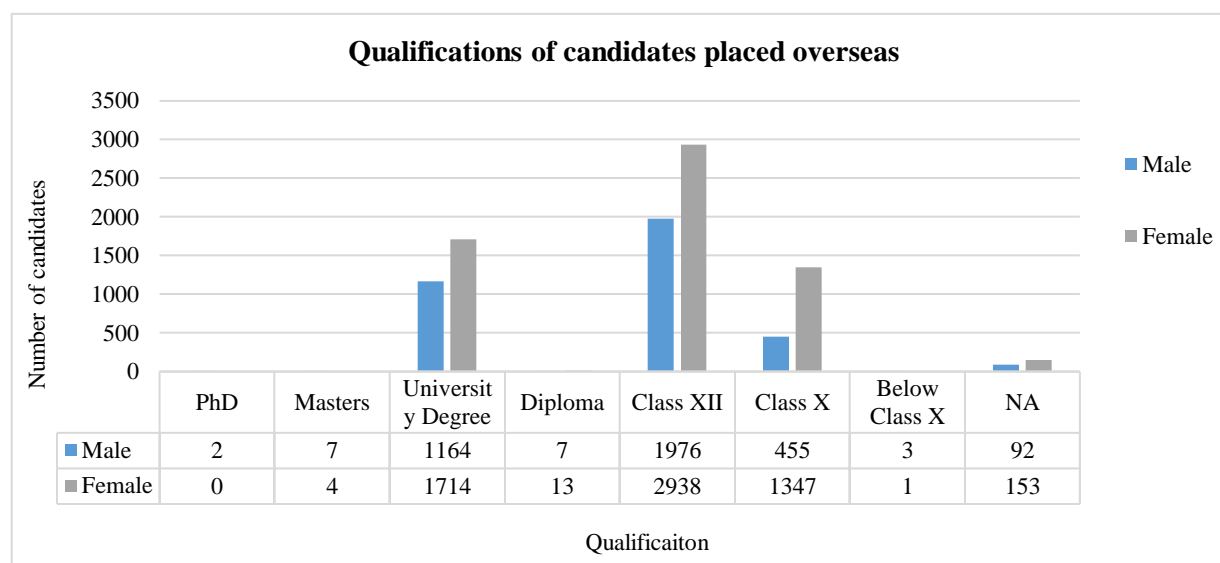


Figure 2. Recruitment and Placement process

The DoEE has been able to place about 9,876 job seekers from the inception of the program (2013) till 30th June 2022 of which majority were female¹⁰. The MoLHR facilitates placement of job seekers aged between 21 to 29 years old with a minimum qualification of class 10.

Figure 3. Qualification of job seekers placed overseas from 2013 till 30th June 2022

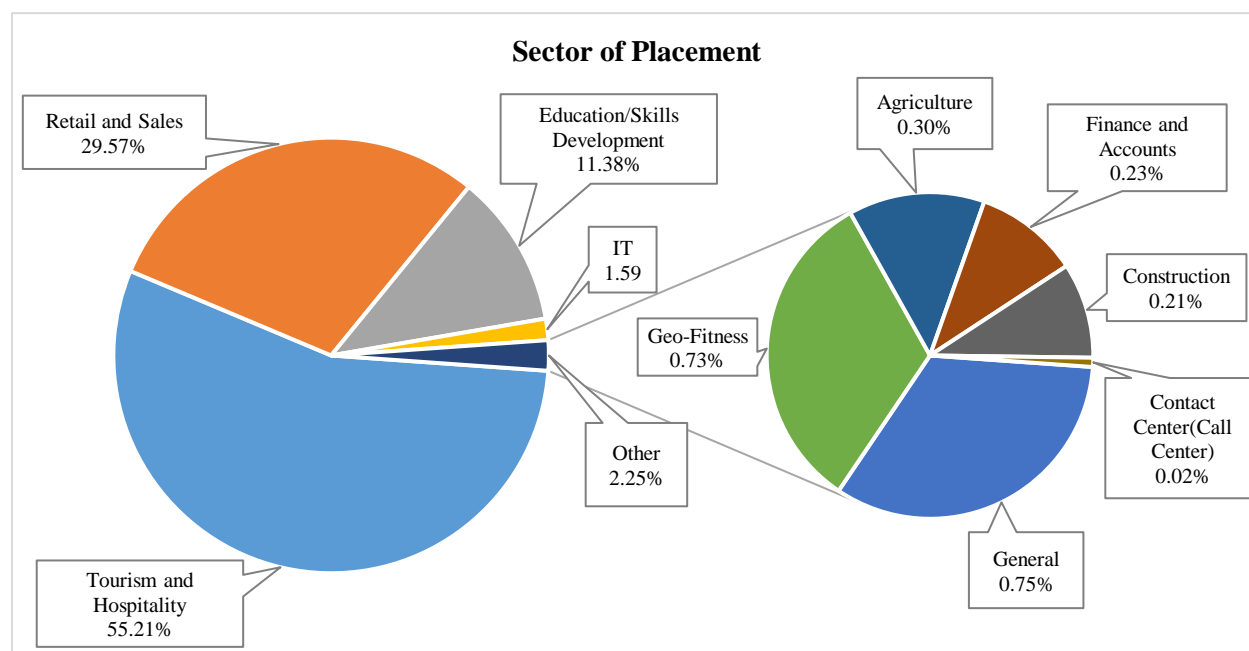


Kuwait is preferred as the most popular destination country for overseas employment followed by India, UAE, Japan and Qatar.

The program has been able to engage Bhutanese job seekers in various sectors such as tourism and hospitality, health (non-nursing), teaching, information technology, accounting and finance, retail, vocational jobs, etc. However, the job seekers are mostly employed in the service sector.

¹⁰ Overseas Employment Data as of 15th April 2022.

Figure 4. Sectors of overseas job placement



In the survey conducted by the National Statistics Bureau (NSB) in September 2020, many of the overseas returnees responded (48 percent) that they preferred to return overseas for employment while 35 percent responded that they were uncertain and 17 percent did not wish to return. Of the total 1,837 overseas returnees surveyed (1,214 female and 623 male), 58 percent of their employment were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Kuwait was the most popular destination among the returnees (42 percent) and majority of the respondents were employed in the tourism and hospitality sector (55 percent). Apart from the Covid-19 pandemic that affected them, 97 percent of the respondents were satisfied with the overseas program. However, the majority of them suggested creating more job opportunities within the country to create better employment opportunities for youth in the country.

The MoLHR also conducted the Overseas Employment Survey 2022 among the Bhutanese Overseas Workers (BOWs) and those aspiring job seekers wanting to go overseas for employment. A total of 378 BOWs were surveyed of which 227 were female, 151 male. A total of 2,561 responses were collected for the in-country survey of which 1,557 respondents were female (61 percent) and 1,004 male. The findings of both surveys indicated that a higher number of respondents are either working or wish to work in the Middle East countries (80.7 percent of the in-country respondents and 71.13 percent of the BOWs surveyed). The findings also indicated that the candidates placed overseas by MoLHR earned more than those placed by the RBOEAs and who went on their own. Financial problems, interest to work outside and lack of job opportunities in the country were cited as some of the main reasons for opting for overseas employment. The respondents unanimously expressed that the OEP program must be continued as it provided an opportunity for them to gain new skills, knowledge, confidence and for learning.

Similarly, the recent Jobseeker Survey Report 2022 by the Department of National Human Resource Development (DNHRD), MoLHR indicated that the first preference of employment is

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in government organization, followed by overseas employment. About 68.5 percent of the respondents shared that overseas employment opportunities are more attractive since there is high income earning potential and the opportunity to gain experience while there were lesser job opportunities in the country. Majority of the respondents (65.6 percent) are actively pursuing overseas employment/ training.

3. Insights from Stakeholder Consultations

3.1. Analysis from SWOT and TOWS

SWOT and TOWS tools were used to identify the existing advantages (strengths and opportunities) in implementing the overseas program, uncover the blind spots and forecast the threats and obstacles that may emerge. Unlike SWOT, TOWS focuses on external factors (opportunities and threats) and enables the development of strategies that use strengths to maximize opportunities and overcome/minimize weaknesses and threats.

	<p>External Opportunities (O)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Socio-economic growth through remittances 2. Address unemployment 3. BOWs gain skills, experience, and exposure leading to career progression 4. Promote self-employment through entrepreneurship and business start-ups 5. Financial independence of the BOWs 6. Expand networking and diplomatic relationships 7. Global increase in demand for workforce 	<p>External Threats (T)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Risk of human trafficking 2. Global crisis (pandemic/disaster) forcing Bhutanese to return home. 3. Dilution of Bhutanese cultural values 4. Demographic imbalance (Aging population left behind/ Loss of productive youth/High rate of migration/Lack of HR in the country) 5. Economic crisis as a result of exodus of Bhutanese seeking employment abroad. 6. Prevalence of illegal recruitment 7. Political uncertainties - change in priorities of the Government in power. 8. Inflation
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<p>Internal Strengths (S)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employment as a national priority 2. Government driven program with dedicated regulation and quality services 3. Established relationships with destination countries 4. Registered Overseas Employment Agents have good network with overseas counterparts 5. Embassy support at destination countries 6. Youthful population 7. Small population 8. Cultural adaptiveness 9. Family support 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote overseas employment as a national policy to address unemployment and enhance the skills and employability of BOWs 2. Increase socio-economic growth through promotion of start ups and entrepreneurial activities 3. Strengthen diplomatic relations and ties with other countries 4. Strengthen the enforcement of Regulations and SOPs on overseas employment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen the enforcement of Regulations and SOPs on overseas employment to prevent TIP 2. Developing reintegration/contingency plans for overseas returnees and responding to emergencies 3. Strengthen the role of embassies and families in preserving the cultural and traditional values 4. Develop overseas employment programs keeping in line with national policies, concerns and priorities 5. Develop economic policies and strategies to create enabling environment in collaboration with key economic sectors
<p>Internal Weaknesses (W)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Absence of reintegration interventions and mechanisms to facilitate productive return of BOWs to their families and communities. 2. Lack of coordination among stakeholders (Government agencies) 3. Bhutan not listed as a source of migrant workers for most countries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Developing responsive reintegration/contingency plans for overseas returnees including entrepreneurship related services and hand-holding support. 2. Appoint Employment Attaché in the existing Bhutanese embassies and mission offices in the destination countries to be responsible for employment related support and services. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a media and communication package to create constant awareness on the risk of Human trafficking associated with overseas employment especially by unregistered agents using various modes of communication channels. 2. Developing responsive reintegration/contingency plans for overseas returnees, those who have been forced out of jobs due to unforeseen global crisis/emergencies and victims of human

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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Lack of diplomatic relations with other countries 5. Conflicting roles of the implementing parties 6. Lack of comprehensive data 7. Poor monitoring and coordination with the recipient country 8. Limited diversity of occupation (retail and services dominant) 9. Poor complaint redressal mechanisms 10. Limited awareness and information on overseas (who the agents are, requirements for availing overseas program, reintegration programs, regulation on OEP, other <i>information related to OE</i>) 11. Restrictions on qualification and age limits access to overseas employment and encourages illegal placements 12. Absence of legal advice and services for the RBOEAs and BOWs 13. Absence of embassies in some of the destination countries 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Strengthen and streamline the roles of the key stakeholders in the implementation of the regulation and the SOP. 4. Expand diplomatic relations with other countries 5. Review the role of MoLHR and outsource the placement of BOWs to RBOEAs to enable the MoLHR to focus on policy, coordination and regulatory matters. 6. Develop a robust and reliable management information system and database to generate real time data and a strong evidence base in coordination with relevant stakeholders. 7. Harness the opportunities presented by the global demand for workforce through proper skill assessment and training especially through digital technologies and platforms. 8. Develop a media and communication package to create constant awareness on overseas employment using various modes of communication channels. 9. Review the qualification and age criteria 10. Creating enabling environment for startups and entrepreneurs in collaboration with key economic sectors 11. Strengthen the enforcement of Regulations and SOPs on overseas employment 	<p>trafficking through entrepreneurship related services and hand-holding support.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Strengthen the role of embassies and families in preserving the cultural and traditional values 4. Develop evidence based economic policies and strategies to create enabling environment in collaboration with key economic sectors 5. Develop overseas employment programs keeping in line with national policies, concerns and priorities 6. Expand diplomatic relations with other countries 7. Review the role of MoLHR and outsource the placement of BOWs to RBOEAs to enable the Ministry to focus on policy, coordination and regulatory matters. This would lead to clear delineation of responsibilities among implementing partners. 8. Harness the opportunities presented by the global demand for workforce through proper skill assessment and training especially through digital technologies and platforms 9. Strengthen the Ministry's MIS to incorporate critical components like complaints redressal, information on transfer of candidates, and also strengthen the SOP highlighting a clear response mechanism. 10. Review the existing qualification and age criteria for overseas employment to deter illegal placements 11. Appoint Employment Attaché in the existing
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<p>14. Lack of proper assessment on skills required in destination countries</p> <p>15. Unable to harness the potential of youth in the country</p> <p>16. Weak support for BOWs from employers/relevant government agencies/RBOEAs and Embassies</p> <p>17. Youth not able to understand and retain the briefings provided on their reciprocal responsibilities and obligations once in the destination country.</p> <p>18. Language, communication and cultural barriers</p> <p>19. Lack of information on transfer of candidates after completion of contract</p> <p>20. Lack of emergency management measures</p> <p>21. Lack of country specific health screening requirements in the country</p> <p>22. Weak health screening mechanisms in the country</p> <p>23. Lack of professionalism/commitment from youths</p>		<p>Bhutanese embassies and mission offices in the destination countries who is well-versed in legal matters for employment related support and services.</p>
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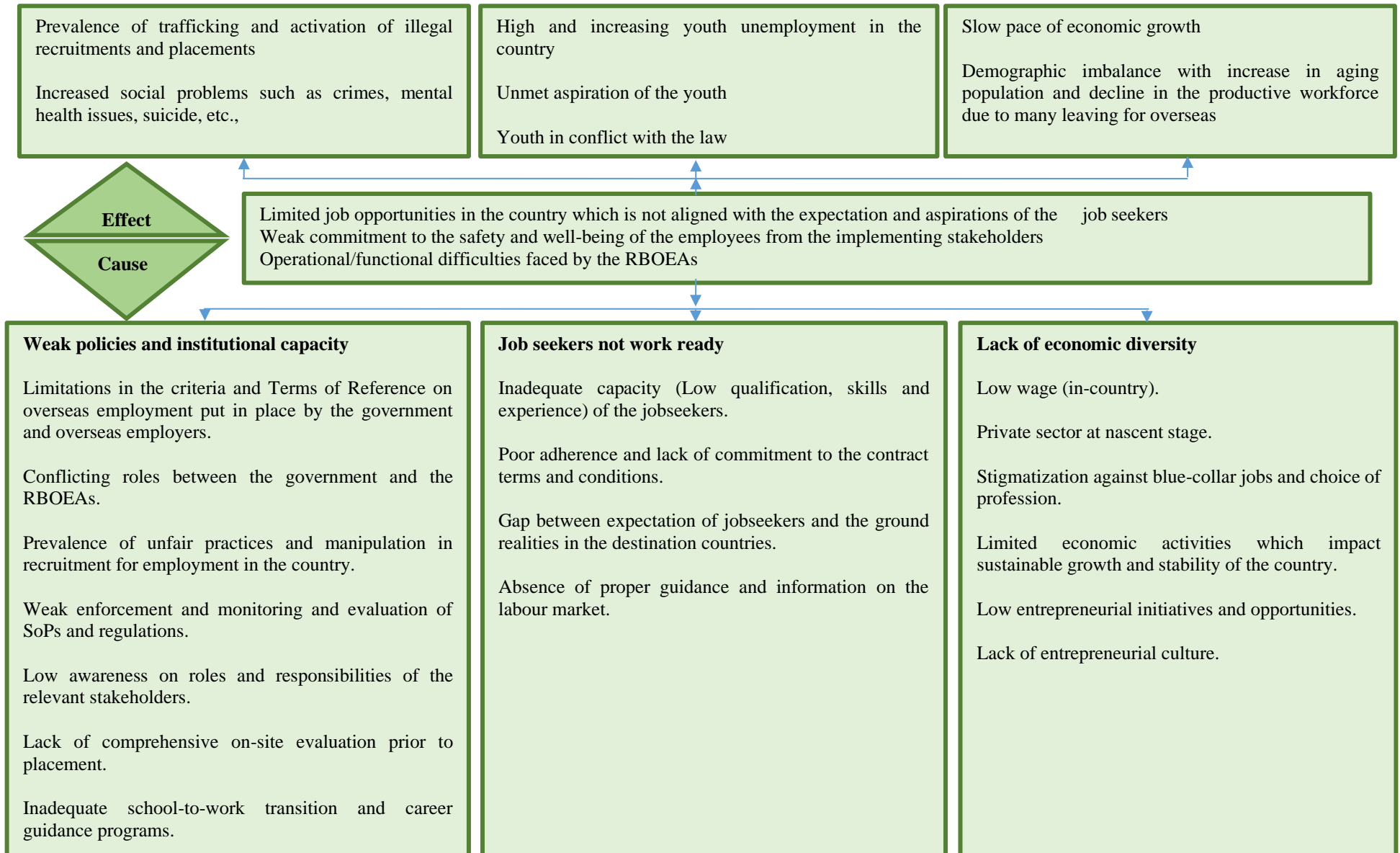
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24. Inadequate work conditions (Low salary/delay in pay/poor accommodation) 25. Limited means to contact BOWs after deployment		
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3.2. Problem Tree Analysis

The problem tree analysis as shown in figure below has been developed through consultations with the aspiring overseas applicants, overseas employment returnees, RBOEAs, relevant government agencies and staff from the MoLHR. The major problems have been listed and its causes have been categorized broadly under the themes; weak policies and institutional capacity, job seekers not work ready and lack of economic diversity. The effects of these problems and its causes are interlinked

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4. Strategic Objectives

Based on the comprehensive literature review, stakeholder consultations, overseas employment surveys and experiences from the implementation of the overseas employment program, the following strategic objectives are proposed. Each strategic objective is accompanied by proposed strategic actions.

Strategic Objective 1: To Strengthen Overseas Job Placement

In order to deliver efficient overseas placement aimed towards gainful employment of Bhutanese workforce in the overseas job market, the following strategic activities are proposed;

Activity 1: Revise the existing rules and regulations on overseas employment and segregate the Ministry's role as a regulator and RBOEAs as service providers. Administration of strict regulation must ensure quality of service from the agents.

Activity 2: Strengthen the online management information system on overseas employment. The online system will advertise only the approved overseas jobs that are verified and approved by MoLHR based on the nature of work, destination country, salary, work conditions, health insurance, etc. It will function like job portal for Bhutanese wishing to go overseas to work with information on job openings, career advice, information on destination countries, information on process of applying for overseas jobs, etc.

Activity 3: Identify the existing and potential overseas job markets focusing on skills required in various economic sectors. A list of such skills demand in the overseas market should be developed through detailed analysis of information and data available from the destination countries.

Activity 4: Build capacities of local training institutions to provide required skills and knowledge. RBOEAs must tie up with these training institutions to train and prepare Bhutanese workers keeping in mind the core skills (refer section 1.3 of this report).

Activity 5: License and train RBOEAs for effective service delivery. Licensing of RBOEAs must be based on strict conditions like having counselling certification from BBCC, trained front desk service providers, proper office, information resources on overseas job markets, WiFi and computer facilities for applicants to apply online.

Strategic Objective 2: Ensure Harmonized Support & Protection for Bhutanese Working Overseas

To ensure safety and security of BOWs and to equip them with necessary information to face the overseas market, the following strategic activities are proposed;

Activity 6: The online management and information system will have all users (job seekers, RBOEAs, MoLHR) in one place, archive the database on BOWs, record transfer of candidates, career guidance information and ensure seamless complaint redressal mechanisms.

Activity 7: Appoint a designated attaché in the Bhutanese embassies/consulates in destination countries with larger numbers of BOWs, responsible for employment related support and services including legal matters to effectively cater to the needs of the increasing number of BOWs and address the issues and concerns faced by them.

Activity 8: Develop a well-designed media and communication package to create constant awareness on overseas employment using various modes of communication channels aligned to the needs of different target groups including family members.

Activity 9: Involve family members in the pre-departure briefings highlighting their role in guiding the BOWs in terms of their conduct and responsibilities as a Bhutanese.

Activity 10: Develop a gender responsive support program prior to departure, during their stay overseas and after their return. This would include awareness on sexual harrasment, TIP, gender-based violence and gender responsive pre-departure and reintegration support in partnership with relevant CSOs/agencies.

Strategic Objective 3: Institute a Responsive Reintegration Program

To encourage the return of BOWs and enable to contribute towards economic development of the country, the following strategic activities are proposed;

Activity 11: Establish a dedicated Unit in the DoEE to deal with overseas returnees to provide both pre and post arrival career guidance information and support and social, psychological, inclusive, and economic reintegration services.

Activity 12: Collaborate with BCCI, industry associations, Thimphu TechPark, and other relevant agencies to reintegrate the overseas returnees based on their knowledge, skills and experience.

Activity 13: Promote entrepreneurship among overseas returnees by providing them entrepreneurship training and facilitate access to finance etc.

5. Resource Mobilization

Understanding that financial resources play an equally important part as human resources, dedicating adequate financial resources for the success of the strategy is critical. The Department will prioritize the strategic activities in its annual planning and budgeting to be submitted to the Ministry of Finance. Further, partnership with donor agencies will be explored seeking financial and technical assistance. On the human resources front, the requirement plan will be apprised to the RCSC for their approval. Given the national priority to address unemployment, this strategy is optimistic to receive funding as well as human resource support

6. Implementation plan

Activity	Inputs	Responsible Agency /Division/Unit
Strategic Objective 1: To Strengthen Overseas Job Placement		
<p>Activity 1: Revise the existing rules and regulations on overseas employment and segregate the Ministry’s role as a regulator and RBOEAs as service providers. Administration of strict regulation must ensure quality of service from the agents.</p>	Review roles and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders	Lead: DoEE Stakeholders: MoHCA, RBP, MFA, MoH, RBOEAs, job seekers, etc.,
	Review SOP including the review of age, qualifications and job categories (be cognizant of the skills shortage within the country while maintaining restriction on certain job categories) for overseas employment	Lead: DoEE and DNHRD Stakeholders: RBOEAs and jobseekers
	Outsource the placement of BOWs currently undertaken by MoLHR to RBOEAs	Lead: MoEE Stakeholder RBOEAs
	Broaden the scope of REBO to include mixed modality programs (education and training followed by guaranteed employment)	DoEE
<p>Activity 2: Strengthen the online management information system on overseas employment. The online system will advertise only the approved overseas jobs that are verified and approved by MoLHR based on the nature of work, destination country, salary, work conditions, health insurance, etc. It will function like job portal for Bhutanese wishing to go overseas to work with information on job openings, career advice, information on destination countries, information on process of applying for overseas jobs, etc.</p>	Advertise overseas jobs that are verified and approved by MoLHR	DoEE
	Provide information on job openings, career advice, destination countries, and process of applying for overseas jobs, etc. on the MIS	DoEE
	Incorporate career guidance component in the MIS	DoEE
<p>Activity 3: Identify the existing and potential overseas job markets focusing on skills required in various economic sectors. A list of such overseas</p>	Carry out skills assessment in potential overseas job markets focusing on skills required in various economic sectors.	DoEE and MFA

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market should be developed through detailed analysis of information and data available from the destination countries.		
Activity 4: Build capacities of local training institutions to provide required skills and knowledge. RBOEAs must tie up with these training institutions to train and prepare Bhutanese workers keeping in mind the core skills (refer section 1.3 of this report).	Consult with local training institute to provide required skills and knowledge in collaboration relevant stakeholders.	Lead: DoEE, DTE, DOS Stakeholder: Local training institutes
	Facilitate and support bringing in international expert to transfer skills and build capacity of the local training institute in collaboration relevant stakeholders.	Lead: DoEE, DTE, DOS Stakeholder: Local training institutes
Activity 5: License and train RBOEAs for effective service delivery. Licensing of RBOEAs must be based on strict conditions like having counselling certification from BBCC, trained front desk service providers, proper office, information resources on overseas job markets, WiFi and computer facilities for applicants to apply online.	Resume registration of new RBOEAs based on strict conditions	DoEE
	Train RBOEAs for effective service delivery	DoEE
	Mandatory Certification of atleast one staff as counselor of the RBOEAs	Lead: DoEE Stakeholder: RBOEAs and BBCC
Strategic Objective 2: Ensure Harmonized Support & Protection for Bhutanese Working Overseas		
Activity 6: The online management and information system will have all users (job seekers, RBOEAs, MoLHR) in one place, archive the database on BOWs, record transfer of candidates, career guidance information and ensure seamless complaint redressal mechanisms.	MIS will generate real time data on BOWs	Lead: DoEE Stakeholder: ICTD and RBOEAs
	Incorporate component on transfer of candidate in the MIS	Lead: DoEE Stakeholder: ICTD and RBOEAs
	Incorporate complaints redressal system in the MIS	Lead: DoEE Stakeholder: ICTD, RBOEAs & job seekers
	Incorporate career guidance component in the MIS	DoEE
Activity 7: Appoint a designated attaché in the Bhutanese embassies/consulates in destination countries with larger numbers of BOWs, responsible for employment related support and services	Consult with relevant stakeholders to appoint a designated attaché in the Bhutanese embassies/consulates or destination countries with larger numbers of BOWs.	Lead: DoEE Stakeholder: RCSC, MFA, Cabinet, OAG,

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including legal matters to effectively cater to the needs of the increasing number of BOWs and address the issues and concerns faced by them.		
Activity 8: Develop a well-designed media and communication package to create constant awareness on overseas employment using various modes of communication channels aligned to the needs of different target groups including family members.	Design target-oriented media and communication package	Lead: DoEE Stakeholder: Media houses
Activity 9: Involve family members in the pre-departure briefings highlighting their role in guiding the BOWs in terms of their conduct and responsibilities as a Bhutanese.	Involve family members of BOWs in pre-departure briefings	Lead: DoEE Stakeholders: Family of BOWs & job seekers
Activity 10: Develop a gender responsive support program prior to departure, during their stay overseas and after their return. This would include awareness on sexual harrasment, TIP, gender-based violence and gender responsive pre-departure and reintegration support in partnership with relevant CSOs/agencies.	Develop a gender responsive support prior to departure (awareness on sexual harrasment, TIP, gender-based violence)	DoEE
	Develop a gender responsive support during the BOWs stay overseas	DoEE & MFA
	Develop a gender responsive reintegration support	DoEE, MFA, CSOs, MoH & MoHCA
Strategic Objective 3: Institute a Responsive Reintegration Program		
Activity 11: Establish a dedicated Unit in the DoEE to deal with overseas returnees to provide both pre and post arrival information and career guidance support and social, psychological, inclusive, and economic reintegration services.	Draft a concept note on Reintegration Program for BOWs for approval by DOEE from the Cabinet	DoEE
	Consult with RCSC on the need to establish a Unit in the DoEE to cater reintegration services	DoEE
	Provide career guidance for effective reintegration	DoEE

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<p>Activity 12: Collaborate with BCCI, industry associations, Thimphu TechPark, and other relevant agencies to reintegrate the overseas returnees based on their knowledge, skills and experience.</p>	<p>Consult with relevant stakeholders to reintegrate the overseas returnees as per their skills and experience.</p>	<p>Lead: DoEE Stakeholders: BCCI, industry associations, Thimphu TechPark, etc.,</p>
<p>Activity 13: Promote entrepreneurship among overseas returnees by providing them entrepreneurship training and facilitate access to finance etc.</p>	<p>Provide entrepreneurship training and programs</p>	<p>DoEE</p>
	<p>Hold business idea pitching competitions</p>	<p>Lead: DoEE Stakeholders: Angel investors</p>
	<p>Enhance counselling and mentorship programs for returnees involving local and international experts</p>	<p>Lead: DoEE Stakeholders: BOWs, & relevant private experts.</p>
	<p>Facilitate access to finance in close coordination with FIs</p>	<p>Lead: DoEE Stakeholders: BOWs & FIs</p>

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure the progress and update the status of this strategic document the DoEE will conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation. The process will include the following:

- The overall progress of the strategic activities outlined in this document will be monitored by DoEE through the APA/AWP and IWP;
- RBOEAs shall be required to provide updates and report to DoEE on the implementation progress as specified in this strategy.
- BOWs shall be required to provide updates on their status to DoEE as and when required.
- DoEE should follow-up with all partnering stakeholders on the implementation of the strategic activities as specified in this strategy.

8. Results Matrix

Results	KPI	KPI Description	Baseline	Target	Data Source	Frequency	Remarks
Outcome							
Productive and gainful employment promoted	Youth employment rate	The KPI measure the youth employment rate	79.1% (2021)	85% (2028)	Labour Force Survey	Annual	
Output							
Safe, secure, satisfying and career enriching overseas employment created	No. of youth gainfully employed under the Overseas employment program	This KPI measures the number of youths placed through the OEP as per their qualification and skills	NA	30% of total placement (2028)	Administrative data and overseas employment portal	Annual	Activity 3 and 4
Quality services related to overseas employment enhanced	Client satisfaction rate	This KPI measures the satisfaction rate of clients on the services provided by the MoLHR, RBOEAS, RBE/missions aboard and other stakeholders	NA	90% (2028)	Client Satisfaction Survey conducted by DoEE	Annual	Activity 5, 7 and 9
	Target oriented media and communication package developed and disseminated	This KPI measures the timeline by which the media and communication package is developed and disseminated	NA	Jun-23	Digital media and communication package uploaded on overseas employment	Annually updated	Activity 8, 10

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					portal and other platforms		
A robust, responsive and reliable data base and information system established	Overseas employment portal developed and incorporated	This KPI measures the timeline by which the overseas employment portal is developed and incorporated in the overall Ministry's MIS	NA	Jun-23	Administrative record	13th FYP	Activity 2 and 6
Governance of OEP enhanced	REBO and SOP for OEP reviewed	This KPI measures the timeline by which the REBO and SOP for OEP is reviewed	NA	Jun-24	Administrative record	13th FYP	Activity 1
Re-integration program instituted	Re-integration plan developed	This KPI measures the timeline by which the re-integration plan is established	NA	Jun-23	Administrative record	13th FYP	Activity, 10,11, 12 and 13
	Re-integration Unit established under DoEE	This KPI measures the timeline by which the Unit is established	NA	Jun-24	Administrative record	13th FYP	



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