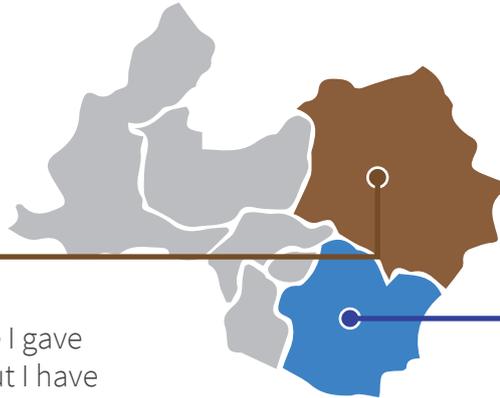


Welcome to the second **Citizen Helpdesk Bulletin!** The Citizen Helpdesks are groups of young volunteers (Community Frontline Associates) who gather and disseminate information on critical issues affecting Nepali citizens - to eliminate information gaps between the government, the media, donor organizations and communities; and improve collective decision-making.

Concerns

THUMPAKHAR, SINDHUPALCHOWK

“It’s been four months since I gave my passport to an agent, but I have heard nothing about my visa and he refuses to give me back my passport. What can I do?”



MAHADEVSTHAN, KAVREPALANCHWOK

“I gave my passport to an agent from a recruitment agency and have passed the interview and medical test. But I am no longer able to go abroad, so I asked for my passport, but the agent refuses to give it back. What can I do?”

Answers

It is illegal for anyone to hold someone else’s passport for more than three months.

If a recruitment agency has been holding your passport for longer than three months, you may file a report at the Department of Foreign Employment or at the nearest Police Station.

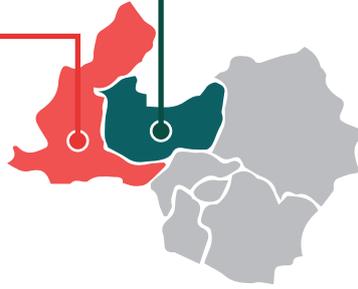
In the event that you passed an interview and a medical test but changed your mind and do not want to go abroad, then you must pay the recruitment agency all the processing costs they bore and ask to get your passport back.



Questions

NALANG, DHADING

“My husband passed away while working abroad. I heard that migrant workers have insurance before they go abroad. Is there a way I can collect the insurance claim amount?”



RALUKADEVI, NUWAKOT

“In the event that someone dies or becomes disabled due to an accident during foreign employment, is there a way to collect the insurance claim amount? What is the process for this?”

Answers

If someone dies or becomes disabled within the foreign employment visa period, then you may collect the insurance claim amount.

The insurance claim process begins once the insurance holder applies for an insurance claim at the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE). After confirming that the applicant went abroad with a valid work permit, DoFE forwards the application to The Foreign Employment Promotion Board where the application is approved and forwarded to the concerned insurance company. The applicant is then able to collect their insurance claim amount.

Conditions when you can you apply for an insurance claim:

- 1.** The insurance holder passes away: If the insurance holder passes away in Nepal, then the next of kin may collect the insurance claim amount and the funeral costs. If the insurance holder passes away abroad, then the next of kin may collect the insurance, the funeral costs, plus the salary for the month of death.
- 2.** The insurance holder becomes completely disabled: The insurance holder may collect the insurance claim amount and the salaries for the remaining months left on their contract.
- 3.** The insurance holder gets in an accident: The insurance holder may claim up to 10% of the insurance amount.

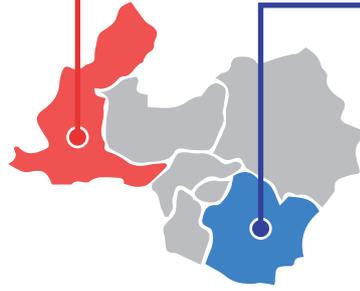
**Department of Foreign
Employment**
01-4782454

Ujwal Aryal
Claim Department
Nepal Life Insurance Company
01-4169082

Concerns

JIWANPUR, DHADING

“Is the ‘Free Visa, Free Ticket’ only for a special group of people who have the right connections?”



KUMPUR, DHADING

“It is called a ‘Free Visa, Free Ticket’ program, but the agent charges us more than 100,000 NPR to send us to a Gulf country to work, while only giving us a receipt of 10,000 NPR.”

RABIOPI, KAVREPALANCHWOK

“The government speaks of the ‘Free Visa, Free Ticket’ program, but I am not aware of everyone who has gone to work abroad that way. What is this program? And if it is not a free program, then why is the government spreading this kind of information?”

Answers

On 6th July 2015, the Government of Nepal announced the ‘Free Visa, Free Ticket’ program for seven countries: Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, U.A.E., and Kuwait.

Companies from the above countries are able to sign an agreement with recruitment agencies in Nepal that have been authorized by the Government of Nepal.

To work in any of the given seven countries, you only need to pay for the visa and the ticket, nothing else. Although the recruitment agencies may charge you a processing fee of 10,000 NPR. If, however, the foreign company has already paid the recruitment agency a processing fee, then the aspiring migrant worker does not need to pay the recruitment agency a processing fee at all.

The recruitment agencies have expressed that the processing fee of 10,000 NPR declared by the ‘Free Visa, Free Ticket’ program is just too low. So, they demand that for each person they send abroad to one of the seven countries the migrant must pay the recruitment agency their first salary.

If you have evidence that a recruitment agency has charged more than 10,000 NPR to send someone to one of the seven countries, then you have the right to file a case against that agency with the Department of Foreign Employment, and the company will face prosecution by the Government of Nepal.

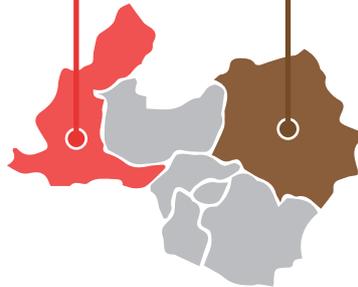
Rama Bhattarai

Spokesperson
Department of Foreign
Employment
9851180566

Rumours

KUMPUR, DHADING

“Is it true that houses with dimensions of 35X16 ft. that were built before the grant agreement do not qualify for the grant?”



LISHANGKHU, SINDHUPALCHWOK

“We hear that they have introduced new criteria! There is a rumor that houses built with fewer than nine pillars (ek nale) will not qualify for the grant.”

Facts

The criteria set by the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) are implemented by the Department of Rural Development and Building Construction, and the NRA engineers inspect the houses based on those criteria.

The criteria for inspection are as follows:

1. The breadth of the house must be at least 1/3 its length.
2. Each room's surface area must be less than 145 ft². The surface area for mud houses will be measured from within the inner walls, but the surface area for cemented houses will be measured from the centre of each pillar.
3. Mud houses need to meet only the above criteria. However cemented houses must be built with at least nine pillars, and each pillar's base surface area must be 1 ft².

Since the criteria for building new houses weren't clearly set in the past, there was a lot of confusion. Following the NRA's declaration of the criteria the NRA also announced that houses built before the declaration that do not meet the criteria will not be eligible for the grant.

Engineers inspecting the newly built houses are currently conducting the first phase of the inspection where they will record the number of pillars used in each house. The NRA has said that they will review Phase 1 inspections before taking any further necessary steps.

Yam Lal Bhusal

Spokesperson
National Reconstruction Authority
9849600660

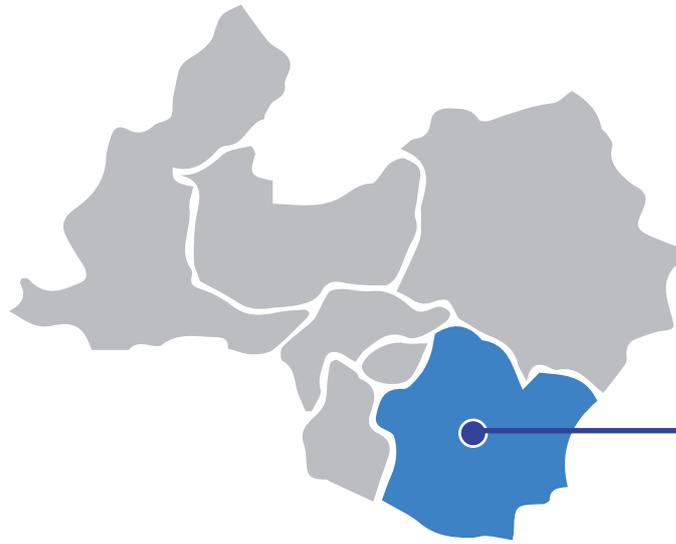
Dilip Bhandari

Division Head
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NRA Engineer
9847089938

Story from the Field



Arjun Sapkota

Rabiopi, Kavrepalanchowk

Arjun Sapkota, from Rabiopi in Kavre, is one of many Nepalis who have fallen victim to fraud while trying to work abroad. Sapkota first went to Malaysia in 2002. He sold his land to pay the processing fees to work abroad, but he returned after two years, empty-handed. He was unemployed once he came back until an agent suggested he could earn good money in Iraq. In 2006, he started preparing to go to Iraq, selling his remaining land and paying the agent 1,70,000 NPR. Accompanied by nine others, Sapkota went to Kuwait through India, where he lived in prison like conditions for five months before returning back to Nepal. Then, he went to Qatar and worked there for six years where his monthly salary was just enough to cover his living expenses there. He returned to Nepal again empty-handed. Even after all this, Sapkota continued to pursue risky options to work abroad, in order to repay the loans he had acquired trying to go abroad in the first place. He sees no other way. Many like Sapkota have been victims of fraud because of the lack of information and advice on the foreign employment process.

Know Before You Go - the latest Government Decisions

- List of countries opened by GoN for Foreign Employment through recruiting agencies ([Link](#))
- Notice Regarding Foreign Employment ([Link](#))
- Authorized Manpower Agencies ([Link](#))
- Important notice for foreign employment ([Link](#))

The sources of information, rumours and issues presented here were collected from CFAs, community meetings, development agencies and face-to-face discussions in communities with over 535 people in 4 districts between 1st – 28th February 2017. The issues highlighted were chosen on the basis of prevalence and relevance. The information presented here is correct at the time of issue.

Citizen Helpdesk Bulletin is brought to you by **Accountability Lab** in collaboration with **Local Interventions Group**.

