



Exchange of reintegration practices in the Asian region



Caritas International Belgium's reintegration partners that are highlighted in this brochure

Kazakhstan

Mongolia

Kyrgyzstan

Tajikistan

Pakistan

Nepal

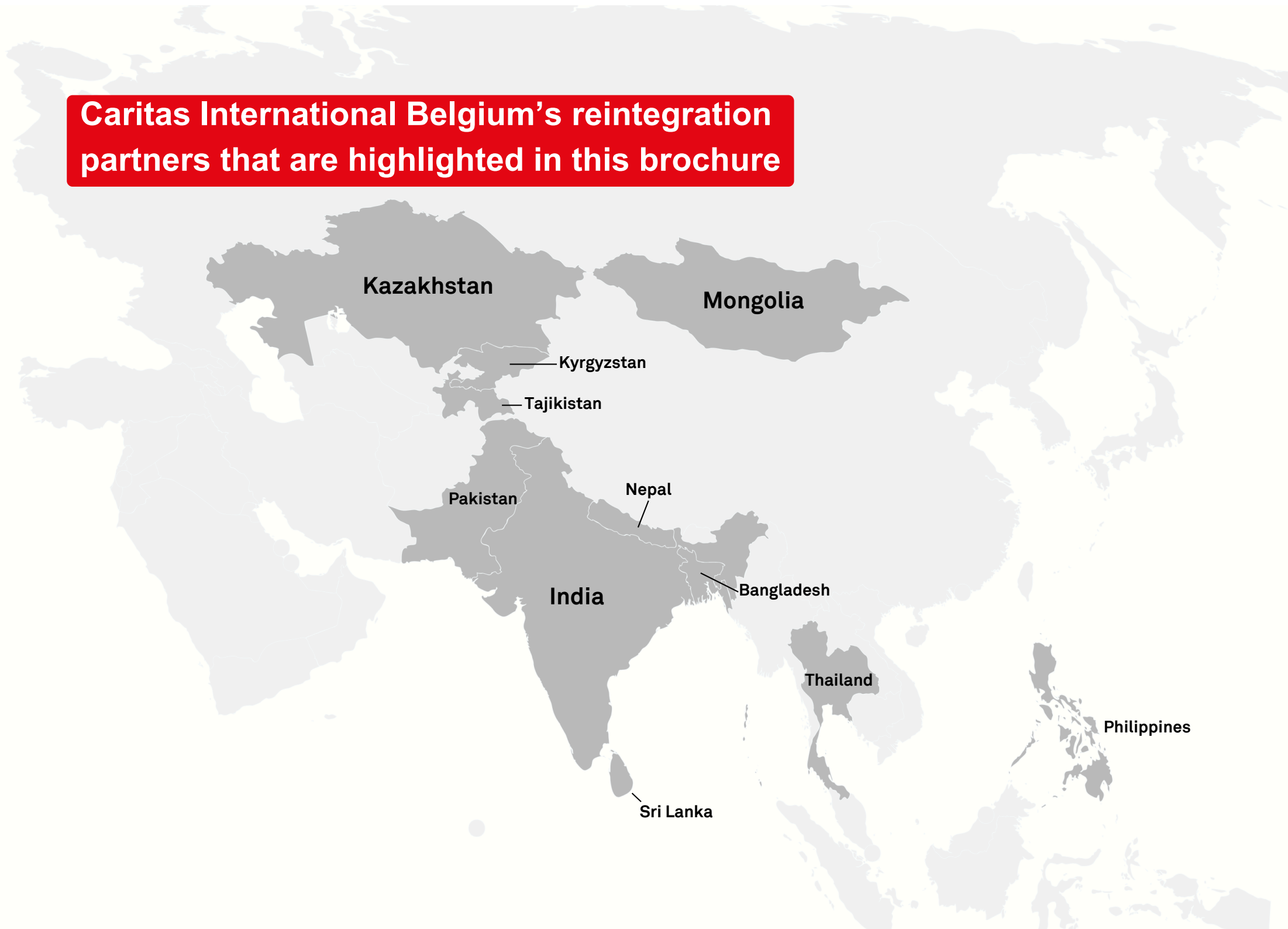
India

Bangladesh

Thailand

Philippines

Sri Lanka





Glossary

AMIF: Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

CIB: Caritas International Belgium

ERRIN: European Return and Reintegration Network

EURP: EU Reintegration Programme

Frontex: European Border and Coast Guard Agency

IOM: International Organization for Migration

RIAT: Reintegration Assistance Tool



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1. Introduction

When working with individuals returning to their countries of origin, access to accurate, up-to-date, and **practical information** is crucial. **Reintegration is a complex and multifaceted process** that goes beyond the simple act of returning; it encompasses a wide range of social, economic, and political factors that vary significantly from one country to another. Each returnee faces a **unique set of challenges**, influenced by the circumstances of their migration journey, their personal background, and the specific realities of their home country. Understanding these dynamics is essential for ensuring that returnees receive the support they need to make their individual reintegration possible.

This brochure is designed as a valuable resource for return and reintegration counselors, offering key insights into migration and reintegration landscapes across multiple Asian countries. It aims to equip frontline social workers with the necessary knowledge to provide returnees with relevant, practical, and **well-informed guidance**. By addressing **country-specific challenges** and opportunities, the brochure serves as a bridge between theoretical reintegration frameworks and the **lived experiences of returnees**.

This guide helps professionals navigate the challenges of reintegration more effectively, enhancing the impact of their support services. **Caritas International Belgium (CIB) has been deeply engaged in reintegration efforts since 2004**, working to build a robust network of reintegration partners across the globe. Initially focused on implementing the Belgian reintegration program together with the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), CIB expanded its scope in 2012 when they started to provide assistance within multiple European reintegration programs.

Today, CIB continues to play a key role in **facilitating reintegration from all over Europe**, ensuring that return services in Europe are effectively connected with reintegration partners in countries of return. Through nearly two decades of dedicated work, **CIB has gained significant expertise in strengthening reintegration support systems**, fostering cooperation between European return services and local reintegration organizations. This brochure is part of our ongoing efforts to enhance this collaboration, ensuring that returnees receive comprehensive, coordinated, and effective support.

Developed with reintegration experts from Bangladesh, India, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Tajikistan, **this guide combines local expertise with European perspectives**. The reintegration landscape is constantly evolving, shaped by policy, economic, and social changes. By working closely with experts on the ground, we provide an updated and holistic view of reintegration realities. **This guide highlights both the challenges returnees face and the opportunities available**, helping social workers and organizations deliver informed, tailored support.

Inside this brochure, you'll find essential **country-specific information**, including overviews of social and economic conditions, migration trends, and key reintegration programs. By offering a well-rounded perspective, **we aim to help professionals navigate the complexities of reintegration** with confidence and ensure returnees access the resources they need. At CIB, we believe humane, informed reintegration is key to long-term stability, and dignity. Reintegration is more than returning, it's about rebuilding lives. We hope this brochure supports your work with returnees through clarity, **compassion**, and a deep understanding of the reintegration landscape.



In September 2024 various reintegration actors came together in Nepal to exchange on voluntary return and reintegration to the Asian region.

2. BELGIAN VOLUNTARY RETURN CONTEXT

- ✓ Belgian Reintegration Program launched in 2004 by Fedasil, IOM, and Caritas International Belgium (CIB).
- ✓ Voluntary return exists since 1984; reintegration support began two decades later.
- ✓ CIB and IOM are the main partners providing tailored reintegration support to returnees from Belgium.
- ✓ Fedasil plans to expand partnerships with other reintegration organizations in 2025 to cover more countries.
- ✓ Belgium is seen as a European pioneer in reintegration assistance.
- ✓ Program is open to all returnees, regardless of legal status.
- ✓ Provides personalized, rights-based support for smoother reintegration.
- ✓ Since February 2025, Belgian Return Program is only accessible for persons with return decision (order to leave Belgian territory)

The Belgian reintegration program

The Belgian Reintegration Program, funded by Fedasil and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), is open to all non-EU citizens who choose to return voluntarily to their country of origin.

The program provides tailored support to help returnees rebuild their lives after return, based on their specific needs and the context of their return. The program classifies foreign nationals into three categories, based on their country of origin:

- Citizens from visa-obliged countries
- Citizens from visa-free countries: category 1 (Latin American countries)
- Citizens from visa-free countries: category 2 (Non-Latin American countries)



Full details: reintegration criteria table

In addition, EU citizens may also be eligible for reintegration support on a case-by-case, exceptional basis. Although this category is not formally listed in the reintegration criteria, assistance can still be considered depending on individual circumstances and vulnerabilities.

Types of support

Returnees eligible for reintegration support can receive a minimum of €500, with the exact amount determined by factors such as nationality, length of stay in Belgium, administrative status, and specific vulnerabilities. Fedasil's reintegration criteria, outlined on their website, allow support for various purposes, including:

- ✓ Housing (e.g., renovation, rent, property purchase, furniture)
- ✓ Education (schooling and training for children and adults)
- ✓ Administrative assistance
- ✓ Income-generating activities (e.g., business start-ups, investments, joint ventures)
- ✓ Medical needs (medication, treatment, equipment)
- ✓ Specialized support (e.g., shelter for trafficking victims, psychological aid for unaccompanied minors).

Role of Caritas International Belgium

As mentioned above, Caritas International Belgium (CIB) is one of the two reintegration partners working with Fedasil to assist returnees from Belgium. CIB guarantees pre departure counselings with all (potential) returnees. A pre departure counseling can take place at CIB office, at a Fedasil return desk, or at any other social service/hospital/reception center/and even at the home of a returnee if he/she is not mobile.

During the pre departure counseling or informative counseling, reintegration possibilities in the country of origin are discussed, as well as specific information which needs to be taken into account for providing a reintegration assistance after return (e.g. medical information, professional history, educational background, family composition, etc.).

After return

Obviously, CIB is not offering reintegration assistance on its own. In order to provide qualitative assistance to people returning from Belgium, CIB has active partnerships in more than 60 countries. On daily basis, the reintegration team of CIB in Brussels is in contact with local reintegration workers and experts in different countries.

Even if a returnee is still in Belgium, the local reintegration partner can already be part of the puzzle by assisting an online call together with the returnee to establish a trust relationship.

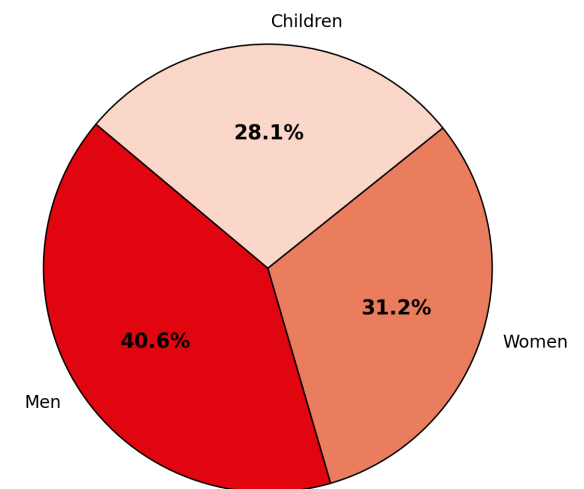
The local reintegration partners of CIB are responsible for the follow up of reintegration projects during minimum 12 months after return from Belgium. For specific cases, a longer follow up can be required by CIB, or the returnees themselves can voluntarily choose to stay in touch with the local reintegration partners also after that 1 year period.

Some numbers to clarify for 2024

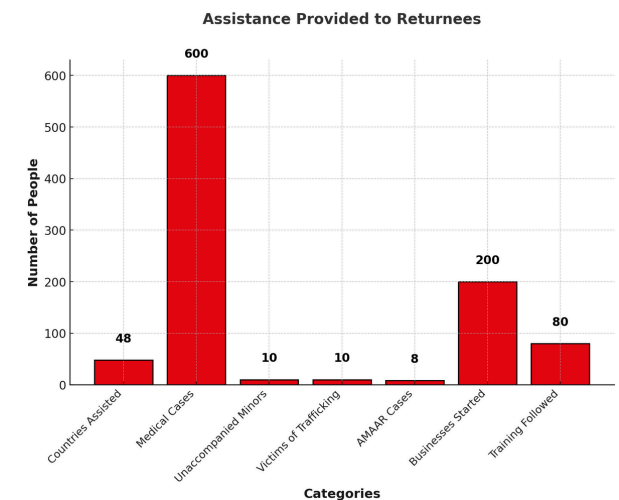
CIB has a team of 14 reintegration counselors working on different country specific regions (Latin America, Eastern Europe & Balkans, Northern Africa, Sub Saharian Africa, Caucasus, Middle East, Central & East Asia).



CIB Assistance in 2024
Total: 1600 People, 1050 Return Cases



Includes ~260 Families with Children



3. EUROPEAN VOLUNTARY RETURN CONTEXT

- ✓ Caritas International Belgium became a European reintegration partner in 2012.
- ✓ In 2018, the European Return and Reintegration Network (ERRIN) was launched to harmonize efforts.
- ✓ In 2019, legal responsibility shifted to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex).
- ✓ Frontex reintegration activities began in April 2022.
- ✓ The EU Reintegration Programme further harmonized partners and support.

The EU reintegration programme (EURP) in a nutshell

Migrants leaving the EU, voluntarily or not, may be eligible for reintegration assistance if they apply within six months of returning to their home country. Those with legal residency or protection under the Temporary Protection Directive are not eligible. The assistance supports migrants by helping them rebuild their lives in their country of origin.

The EU Member States and Schengen-associated countries participating in the EU Reintegration Programme implement it according to their own national laws and policies. Caritas International Belgium holds a four-year contract under the EURP, with the countries eligible for return assistance changing yearly. In 2025, the program covered 23 active countries of return.



More info: Frontex Reintegration Assistance

Types of support

EU Member States determine the type of support a returnee receives from the local reintegration partner. The available assistance is divided into two main packages: the Post-Arrival package and the Post-Return package.

Post-Arrival package: This provides immediate help upon return, coordinated by the responsible Member State and reintegration partner, and may include:

- ✓ Cash assistance
- ✓ Airport pick-up
- ✓ Onward transportation
- ✓ Temporary housing
- ✓ Medical assistance upon arrival

Post-Return Package

Long-term assistance activities which can be implemented up to 12 months after the date of departure. This can include:

- ✓ Cash assistance
- ✓ Long-term housing and related expenses
- ✓ Ongoing medical care
- ✓ Education opportunities
- ✓ Job counseling
- ✓ Support to start a small business
- ✓ Legal and administrative assistance
- ✓ Psychosocial support

To activate long-term support, a personalized reintegration plan must be created jointly by the returnee and the local reintegration partner. This plan must be approved by the Member State and Frontex before implementation. Return and reintegration counseling ensures returnees understand the process and make informed decisions, improving the quality of assistance.

The case management for reintegration is facilitated through the Reintegration Assistance Tool (RIAT).

The role of Caritas International Belgium

Caritas International Belgium (CIB) is one of six reintegration partners working under a framework partnership agreement with Frontex, which acts as the financial authority. Together with local partners, CIB provides reintegration support and serves as a link between EU Member States, Frontex, and local realities in the countries of return. The goal is to offer practical and personalised help that fits each returnee's situation. In some cases, CIB's reintegration counselors offer online pre-departure counseling to better prepare returnees. These sessions, often arranged with regional or local colleagues, help identify urgent needs and possible challenges, such as lack of social support or health problems. Returnees also get advice on what to expect after arrival. This early contact helps make the reintegration process smoother and more effective.

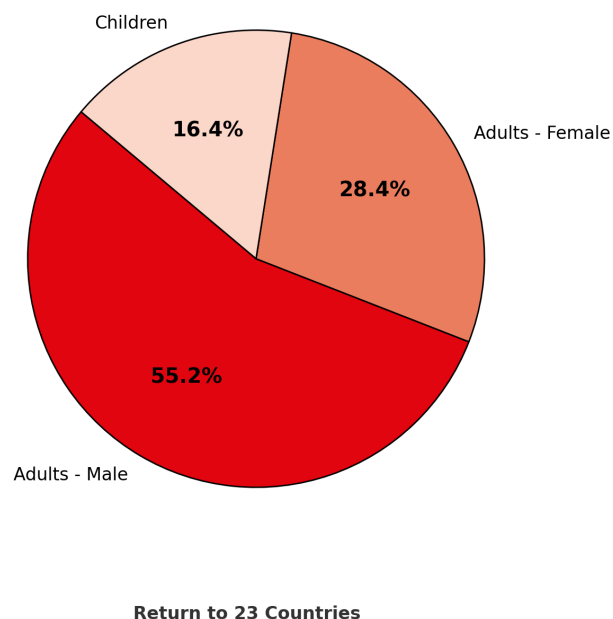
After return

CIB does not provide reintegration assistance alone. To ensure high-quality support for returnees from Belgium, we collaborate with active partners in 23 countries. The local partners understand the realities on the ground and play a key role in tailoring reintegration support to each returnee's needs.

CIB's goal is to ensure that support after return is consistent and not dependent on the EU country of departure. The reintegration team, organized by region, maintains close contact with local reintegration partners, ensuring support is delivered based on the needs of the returnees rather than the EU country they are returning from.

Under the EURP, reintegration projects are followed up for a minimum of 12 months after return. However, in many cases, local partners and returnees maintain contact even beyond this period.

CIB Assistance within EURP Project (2024)



4. Migration and Voluntary Return in Asia



4. GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE ASIAN REGION

Asian migration in the 21st century is complex and varied, with a major influence on global demographics, economies, and politics. It is shaped by a mix of historical patterns, economic needs, social networks, political factors, and growing environmental pressures. Understanding this migration requires looking at both the reasons people move, such as work, education, or conflict, and how these movements are influenced by policies and regional dynamics.

A Shift in Migration Patterns

Historically, Asian migration was shaped by events like colonialism (e.g., the Indian diaspora in British colonies), post-WWII labor movements (e.g., Koreans to Germany), and Cold War dynamics (e.g., Vietnamese refugees to the U.S.). Traditionally, many migrants moved westward, a trend that still continues due to reasons like unemployment, political instability, and the pursuit of better education or jobs. However, migration trends are shifting. Today, most migration happens within the region. Asia has become not just a source of migrants but also a key destination and transit region. Temporary and circular migration is also on the rise, challenging the traditional idea of permanent settlement.

Economic Drivers of Migration

Migration brings both economic benefits and challenges across Asia. Remittances support household incomes and national economies but may reduce pressure for local job creation or reform. High-skilled migration is growing in sectors like tech and healthcare, while low-skilled migrants remain essential in construction, agriculture, and domestic services. Aging societies such as Japan and South Korea increasingly depend on migrant labor, though lack of regulation can lead to exploitation. Regional frameworks like the ASEAN Economic Community and China's Belt and Road Initiative are also reshaping labor mobility across the region.

Social and Demographic Trends

These economic trends are closely tied to social and demographic changes. Aging populations in countries like Japan, South Korea, and Singapore have increased demand for foreign care workers. Education is another key factor, with more Asian students studying abroad or within the region. Women now make up nearly half of all Asian migrants, often working in care or domestic roles, while men tend to work in construction, especially in the Gulf.

Political and Environmental Factors

Migration governance plays a big role, with labor agreements (e.g., Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership) and regional dialogues (e.g., Colombo Process) shaping policies.

Forced migration is another concern, including refugees (e.g., Rohingya, Afghans) and internal displacement due to government policy plans. Climate change adds another layer, with rising sea levels, desertification, and frequent natural disasters (e.g., floods and typhoons) forcing people to move. Some countries, like the Maldives, are even considering planned relocations.

Emerging Issues and the Future

Technological advances are reshaping migration. Digital platforms connect migrants and support recruitment, while tools like blockchain improve remittance systems. Meanwhile, automation may reduce low-skilled job opportunities. Urbanization has turned Asia's mega-cities into migration hubs, bringing both opportunities and challenges such as overcrowding and strained infrastructure. Family separation and returning migrants introducing new cultural values are also reshaping communities over time.

Looking ahead, managing Asian migration will require a careful balance between technological progress, effective urban planning, and inclusive policies that respect the cultural and human needs of migrants. Regional cooperation will be essential to managing these shifts and ensuring solutions benefit both migrants and host communities.

A path forward

Asian migration holds great potential to drive development, especially when managed with fairness, inclusion, and a long-term approach. As migration continues to shape the region, policies must address key challenges such as climate-related displacement, irregular migration, and the impact of new technologies on jobs. These issues require practical solutions that support safe, well-managed migration while protecting the rights and well-being of migrants, many of whom play important roles in both their home and host countries. Helping local communities adapt to migration will also be important for social harmony and long-term success. By strengthening regional cooperation, using data to guide decisions, and ensuring migrants are included in social support and development plans, Asian countries can create stronger, more people-focused migration systems, and set an example for the rest of the world.



NEPAL



- ✓ Landlocked between China (north) and India (south, east, west)
- ✓ Population: ~30 million (2025)
- ✓ Capital: Kathmandu
- ✓ Majority Hindu, with Buddhist and Muslim minorities; official language: Nepali
- ✓ High rates of labour migration abroad, especially to Gulf countries and Malaysia

Migration in Nepali society

Migration in Nepali society is shaped by economic, political, social, and environmental factors. Many Nepalis leave in search of better jobs, higher wages, and education due to widespread unemployment and poverty.

Political instability, social unrest, and past conflicts have also pushed people to seek safety abroad. In rural areas, natural disasters, environmental changes, and shrinking farmland make life harder and drive outmigration. Established diaspora communities in India, the Middle East, Malaysia, and the UK further encourage this trend. Labor migration is central to Nepal's socio-economic development. While foreign employment is officially permitted in 110 countries, Nepali workers are present in 172 countries, often facing exploitation and abuse. Demand from Gulf countries and labor shortages in Malaysia, Japan, and parts of Europe continue to create opportunities. Remittances play a major role in the economy, though the risks highlight the need for stronger protections.

The effect of migration on Nepal

Migration in Nepal has both positive and negative impacts. Remittances are vital for many families, improving living standards and supporting local businesses, education, and healthcare. These financial contributions also help reduce poverty and boost the national economy. However, migration brings serious social costs, including broken families, mental and physical health issues, such as chronic illness, depression, and suicides and disrupted education.

About 3 million Nepali workers abroad are unskilled, mostly employed in hazardous, physically demanding jobs in poor working conditions. Many return with injuries or illnesses, often without proper support or compensation.

The migration of skilled professionals also contributes to a "brain drain," slowing development and weakening key sectors like healthcare and education. The large outflow of young workers leaves behind an aging population, straining agriculture and disrupting traditional community life.

Migration destinations

Most Nepali migrants move to Asia and the Middle East for economic opportunities, primarily in labor-intensive sectors such as construction, domestic work, hospitality, and factories. Popular destinations include India, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Malaysia, where wages are higher but working conditions are often poor. India has long been a top choice due to its proximity, shared language, and cultural ties. In recent years, Romania has emerged as a key European destination, along with the UK, Portugal, Austria, Denmark, Croatia, Cyprus, Turkey, and Greece, reflecting a growing trend of Nepali migration beyond traditional regions in search of better opportunities.

Migration towards Belgium

Belgium is a secondary destination for Nepali migrant workers due to language barriers, limited job opportunities for low-skilled workers, and a highly competitive job market. In contrast, Middle Eastern countries and neighboring nations like India and Malaysia remain more popular choices, as they offer more accessible employment in labor-intensive sectors and fewer administrative hurdles.

Still, Belgium attracts some Nepali migrants, particularly those seeking work in the hospitality sector or pursuing higher education. The presence of an established Nepali diaspora also provides valuable support, helping newcomers adapt, find job opportunities, and build social connections in their new environment.

Caritas Nepal

Caritas Nepal's head office is in Dhobighat, Lalitpur, near Kathmandu, with three provincial offices in Nawalparasi, Kohalpur, and Damak, and five field offices in Pokhara, Bardia, Palpa, Surkhet, and Doti. The program manager and coordinator at the head office oversee the reintegration project. Through its regional and field offices, Caritas Nepal provides nationwide support, ensuring close assistance for returnees.

Assistance to returnees

Head office personnel also visit returnees' hometowns to offer direct aid, monitor their reintegration, and assess ongoing challenges they may face. Caritas Nepal focuses its intervention on promoting sustainable reintegration for returnees through a range of support services. These include providing access to information via Help Desks and door-to-door visits, and offering skill training and certification in collaboration with local governments, with an emphasis on recognizing local contributions. Returnees, particularly those who are undocumented or vulnerable, receive legal, health, and psychosocial support.

Community awareness is raised through street dramas and folk songs that highlight the challenges faced by returnees. Caritas Nepal also works with like-minded organizations to strengthen the implementation of existing migration policies and support the development of reintegration guidelines at the local level. Vulnerable migrants are rescued from destination countries in collaboration with the Foreign Employment Board and Nepali embassies, and upon return, are connected to local government schemes. The program also aims to amplify returnees' voices and address the vulnerabilities of those working in the informal economy.



INDIA



- ✓ Located in South Asia, borders Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar
- ✓ Population: ~1.42 billion (2025)
- ✓ Capital: New Delhi
- ✓ Majority Hindu, with Muslim, Christian, and Sikh minorities; official languages: Hindi and English
- ✓ Major origin and transit country; large diaspora, internal and external migration shape economy

Migration in Indian society

Migration plays a key role in shaping India's socio-economic landscape, driven by economic, social, and environmental factors. Internal migration is most common, with millions moving from rural to urban areas for jobs, education, and better living conditions. Cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore attract large numbers of workers, while seasonal migration for agriculture and labor is widespread among lower-income groups. Internationally, India has one of the largest diaspora populations, with over 18 million Indians abroad (UN, 2020). Many migrate for jobs, higher education, or better living standards, with the Gulf, the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia as top destinations. Economic disparity, social mobility, and environmental challenges like droughts and floods further drive migration, shaping India's labor force and demographics.

Popular Migration Destinations

Domestically, cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore attract migrants with job opportunities and advanced infrastructure, especially in technology, finance, and manufacturing. Internationally, Indians migrate for better jobs, education, and quality of life. Many work in construction, oil and gas, hospitality, domestic services, and restaurants, drawn by higher salaries abroad.

Effects of migration on India

Migration in India has both benefits and challenges. On the positive side, remittances from the Indian diaspora provide a vital source of income for rural families and boost the economy. In 2022, India received \$100 billion in remittances, making it the top recipient globally. Migration also strengthens transnational ties and opens up opportunities for knowledge exchange and investment. On the downside, it contributes to brain drain, particularly in critical sectors such as healthcare, IT, and academia, which can slow the country's long-term development. Internal migration further strains urban infrastructure, resulting in overcrowding, housing shortages, and rising unemployment in major cities.

Migration towards Belgium

Migration from India to Belgium is relatively modest compared to other European countries, with most migrants being students, IT professionals, and academics. Belgium's strong ties with India, along with opportunities in technology, pharmaceuticals, academia and healthcare make it an attractive destination for some. In conclusion, migration in India is a complex process with significant impacts on individuals, communities, and the nation. Policymakers must work to balance its benefits and challenges for sustainable outcomes.

Caritas India

Caritas India, established in 1962, serves as the development arm of the Catholic Church in India and is registered under the Societies Registration Act. The name “Caritas,” which means “Love in Action,” reflects its core mission of compassion and service. As a member of the global Caritas confederation, one of the world’s largest humanitarian networks, it is connected to over 160 organizations operating in nearly 200 countries.

Reintegration assistance in India

Caritas India provides tailored reintegration support to meet the diverse needs of returnees, helping them rebuild their lives with dignity and stability. This is done through different forms of support. This support often begins before the person has even left the host country.

At the returnee’s request, pre-departure counselling is offered to build trust and provide reassurance about the reintegration process awaiting them in India. This helps to address any concerns and ensures a smooth case referral. Meet and greet services at the airport can be arranged for returnees with special needs, if requested during pre-departure.

In cases where individuals arrive with severe medical conditions, Caritas India, together with its partners, ensures close accompaniment at the airport to provide immediate care and a safe transition upon arrival.

Once back in the country, the focus shifts to long-term reintegration. Caritas India’s reintegration team works closely with each returnee to develop a personalised reintegration plan, taking into account their skills, needs, and available grant support. This often includes business consultancy and micro-business planning to support sustainable livelihoods. Legal advice is also provided, particularly around the use of reintegration grants and the necessary documentation required for the process. To further enhance employability, Caritas India and its local partners offer vocational training opportunities that are tailored to the returnees’ individual skill sets and interests

Caritas India supports undocumented migrants returning from 14 countries, including the UK, Belgium, France, Italy, and especially Austria. Many migrants leave rural or job-scarce areas in search of better opportunities abroad. Driven by hopes of financial stability, some take risks through irregular migration routes to support their families.



▲ This returnee purchased a milling machine using his reintegration budget.



▲ This returnee purchased two buffaloes through reintegration support, now a key source of dairy and income for his family.

BANGLADESH



- ✓ Located in South Asia, borders India and Myanmar
- ✓ Population: ~172 million (2025)
- ✓ Capital: Dhaka
- ✓ Majority Muslim (88%), with Hindu minority (10.5%); official language: Bengali
- ✓ Key labour-sending country with significant diaspora and internal climate migration

Migration in Bangladeshi society

Most people in Bangladesh rely on agriculture for their livelihood, especially in rural areas where job opportunities are scarce. Education and job skills in these areas are often limited. Influential individuals, known as "Dalals" (middlemen), encourage poor people to migrate abroad for better income opportunities, particularly in foreign currencies. In exchange for a large sum of money, Dalals assist with obtaining passports, visa processing, and other necessary paperwork. As a result, it is common for people from rural Bangladesh to migrate to the Middle East and European Union countries in search of work. Poverty is a key factor driving migration. Migrants leave with the hope of earning foreign currency and sending money back to their families in Bangladesh to improve their living conditions. After earning, many use their income to build houses in rural villages, towns, or even metropolitan cities in Bangladesh.

Popular migration destinations

The largest Bangladeshi diaspora is in Saudi Arabia, with significant communities also in the UAE and Oman. Most Bangladeshis in these countries are foreign workers, and their cultural and religious ties, as Muslims, align well with the predominantly Muslim societies in the region.

Effects of migration on Bangladesh

Migration plays a crucial role in Bangladesh's economy in two key ways: reducing unemployment and generating remittance inflows. Over the years, migration has steadily increased, positively impacting the country's development as remittance inflows continue to rise. The strong link between migration and remittances is evident, with both contributing significantly to poverty reduction. For developing nations like Bangladesh, remittances play a vital role in socioeconomic progress, supporting the balance of payments, strengthening foreign currency reserves, and boosting GDP.

Migration is increasingly seen as a pathway to economic stability, especially for unskilled and illiterate workers at the family level. As of December 11, 2023, Bangladesh sent a record 1.2 million workers abroad, with 25% classified as skilled and 50% as unskilled, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET).

Migration towards Belgium

Migration to Belgium is relatively lower compared to other Asian countries. However, recent trends show an increase in migration to Belgium, as well as to other EU countries like France, Austria, the Netherlands, and Italy.

Caritas Bangladesh

Caritas was established in 1967 as the eastern branch of Caritas Pakistan. After the devastating cyclone of November 1970, it was reorganized and became known as CORR (Christian Organisation for Relief and Rehabilitation), officially gaining national status on January 13, 1971. The name Caritas was reinstated in 1976. Caritas Bangladesh operates from its Central Office in Dhaka, with eight regional offices in Barishal, Chattogram, Dhaka, Dinajpur, Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, and Sylhet. It focuses on Integrated Development, Disaster Management, and Human Resource Development under a central management system. Currently, Caritas is active in 208 upazilas (sub-districts) for human development initiatives but extends its operations nationwide during emergencies such as natural disasters.

Reintegration assistance in Bangladesh

Caritas Bangladesh operates through eight regional offices and 208 upazilas (sub-districts), delivering vital services to vulnerable communities nationwide. It supports the reintegration of returnees from EU countries and beyond, mainly from Italy, Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, Slovenia, and Austria, ensuring they receive the help needed for a sustainable future.



PAKISTAN



- ✓ Located in South Asia, borders India, Afghanistan, Iran, and China; coastline along the Arabian Sea
- ✓ Population: ~243 million (2025)
- ✓ Capital: Islamabad; largest city and economic hub: Karachi
- ✓ Majority Muslim (second-largest Muslim population globally); official languages: Urdu and English
- ✓ Mixed economy with strong labour migration patterns, especially to the Gulf; key sectors: agriculture, textiles, manufacturing, and IT

Migration in Pakistani society

Migration is crucial to Pakistan's economy, with millions living abroad, particularly in GCC countries, Europe, the U.S., Canada, and Australia. In 2022, over 800,000 Pakistanis migrated, mostly for work in the Gulf and Europe. Migration reduces unemployment, improves living standards, and contributes to the economy through remittances, which totaled \$29 billion in 2023. Many low-skilled workers find jobs in construction and services, while skilled professionals and students seek opportunities in the West, with many securing permanent residency, especially in Europe. Migration has become essential for better economic prospects and plays a significant role in Pakistan's development.

Migration from Pakistan is driven by a mix of economic, social, political, and security factors. High unemployment, especially among youth, and low wages push many to seek better opportunities abroad. The remittance economy plays a key role, as migrant workers send money home to support their families.

Many students migrate in search of education and improved career prospects. Political instability, corruption, and weak governance further encourage skilled professionals to leave the country.

Popular migration destinations

Pakistanis migrate to various countries for work, education, and better opportunities. Europe and North America are popular destinations, especially for skilled workers seeking higher wages and better exchange rates, especially after the devaluation of the Pakistani currency in recent decades. The UK remains a preferred choice for many Pakistani migrants in Europe. The Middle East has hosted a large Pakistani population since 1947, with many working in sectors like trading, media, telecommunications, banking, and aviation. Regarding study abroad, Pakistan experiences significant student migration, with many students heading to China, the UK, and other OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). After completing their studies, most of them seek to settle in European countries.



▲ The majority of the Pakistani returnees decide to invest their reintegration budget into a dairy farm business.

Effects of migration on Pakistan

Migration from Pakistan has both positive and negative impacts. On the positive side, remittances reduce poverty, support infrastructure, and ease unemployment by creating job opportunities abroad, especially for low- and semi-skilled workers. Skilled professionals gain expertise overseas and sometimes return with knowledge that benefits healthcare, education, and technology. Overseas Pakistanis also contribute through investment, global networks, and cultural promotion.

However, there are clear drawbacks. The country faces brain drain, with skilled workers leaving for better opportunities, causing shortages in key sectors. Pakistan's reliance on remittances makes it vulnerable to external shocks, with much of the money going toward consumption rather than long-term development. Many migrant workers, especially in the Gulf, face exploitation, poor conditions, and low wages.

Socially, long-term family separation causes emotional strain, and remittance dependency can discourage entrepreneurship. Migration benefits some regions more than others, creating imbalances. High rural migration also reduces agricultural labor, affecting food production and weakening rural economies.

Migration towards Belgium

Migration from Pakistan to Belgium has grown due to economic, educational, and family reunification factors. Belgium's labor demand in sectors like construction and services attracts Pakistani workers, with many also running small businesses. It's also a key destination for asylum seekers, particularly from persecuted minority communities in Pakistan. Belgium's affordable universities, including programs like Erasmus Mundus, draw Pakistani students, and family reunification is common. The country's EU membership and legal migration pathways further increase its appeal. This migration impacts Pakistan, with remittances supporting families and boosting foreign exchange reserves, though it also contributes to the brain drain of skilled professionals.

Reintegration assistance in Pakistan

The reintegration process begins with pre-departure contact, during which the organization provides information, addresses questions, and offers counseling to help prepare returnees. Upon arrival, returnees are usually welcomed by family or friends, though the organization also offers meet-and-greet services when requested. Immediate support includes transportation, basic necessities, and guidance on available reintegration programs.

If returnees go directly home upon arrival in Pakistan, the organization conducts post-arrival contact and a needs assessment to tailor support to their situation. This follow-up allows the organization to adapt assistance according to individual needs while also managing different temperaments. Due to limited employment opportunities in Pakistan, 99% of returnees choose to start small businesses. The organization supports this process by providing financial assistance and livelihood support to help them rebuild their lives.

Reintegration Support Services (RSS) partners with Caritas International Belgium to support the sustainable reintegration of Pakistani nationals returning home. RSS takes an impartial, non-directive approach, respecting returnees' rights and empowering them to make informed decisions. All personal information is kept confidential to protect their privacy.

Returnees from Europe to Pakistan mainly come from countries with large Pakistani diaspora communities or stricter migration policies. These include Belgium, Italy, Greece, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Return takes place either voluntarily or through forced deportation, reflecting broader migration and asylum trends among Pakistani nationals in Europe.

MONGOLIA



- ✓ Landlocked in East-Central Asia, borders Russia and China
- ✓ Population: ~3.4 million (2025)
- ✓ Capital: Ulaanbaatar
- ✓ Majority religion: Buddhism with Shamanist elements; official language: Mongolian
- ✓ Increasing labour and education-related migration, especially to South Korea and Europe

Migration in Mongolian society

Several factors drive Mongolians to seek opportunities abroad. Limited economic opportunities, despite the country's mineral wealth, push individuals to find better jobs in countries with stronger economies and higher wages. Political instability and unfavorable taxation have led some to seek stability in countries with more established political systems.

Many also look for better access to healthcare, education, and services, especially in rural areas. Environmental challenges like harsh winters, desertification, and air pollution affect livelihoods and health, prompting migration to more sustainable regions. Social factors such as discrimination, inequality, and limited growth opportunities also play a role. Some seek to study or experience different cultures through educational exchanges or scholarships.

Family reunification, marriage, or personal circumstances can also lead to migration. As of 2024, around 216,000 Mongolians live in over 90 countries, with top destinations including South Korea, the U.S., Australia, Japan, and Europe (particularly the Czech Republic and Sweden).

In summary, a combination of economic, political, environmental, social, and personal factors drives Mongolians to seek opportunities abroad.

Caritas Mongolia

Since 2007, Caritas Mongolia (CM) has been working with returnees to support their social reintegration. The social reintegration program offers tailored post-arrival and post-return assistance to meet the needs of individual returnees.

CM collaborates with European partners to help Mongolian migrants returning home, providing a comprehensive range of support from reception to accompaniment for up to 12 months after arrival. The program focuses on housing, health, employment opportunities, legal and administrative support, micro-business setup, and education and training.

In terms of returnee numbers, the leading countries were the Czech Republic, Sweden, and Germany. Mongolians primarily migrate to Eastern European countries through labor agreements, while those heading to Western Europe often seek better opportunities, including healthcare, education, language skills, and higher-paid work in informal sectors.



Reintegration assistance in Mongolia

The reintegration process follows a structured and step-by-step approach to support returnees throughout their journey. It begins with the establishment of first contact, where Case Managers (CM) receive case details from partners and reach out, especially in vulnerable cases, or respond when returnees make the initial contact. This is followed by counseling and planning, during which the CM explains the procedures and helps adjust any pre-arrival plans if needed.

Next is the referral to services, connecting returnees to medical care, education and training, legal support, and employment assistance. Together, the CM and returnee prepare and submit a Reintegration Plan, covering both business and social aspects. Once approved, the preparation of paperwork begins, returnees are encouraged to sign contracts with vendors or partners, ideally verified by a notary. The CM then submits payment requests based on the approved plan, after which returnees receive funds and must provide receipts for any purchases.

The process concludes with monitoring, including field visits, phone calls, and online or in-person meetings to assess progress and impact.

Between 2022 and 2024, the top return countries by number of cases were the Czech Republic, Sweden, and Belgium, while the highest number of individual returnees went to the Czech Republic, Sweden, and Germany. Most Mongolian returnees had previously migrated to Eastern Europe under labor agreements or to Western Europe for improved healthcare, education, and informal job opportunities.



KYRGYZSTAN



- ✓ Located in Central Asia, borders Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China
- ✓ Population: ~7 million (2025)
- ✓ Capital: Bishkek
- ✓ Majority Muslim; official languages: Kyrgyz and Russian
- ✓ Strong reliance on labour migration, especially to Russia; economy includes agriculture and mining

Migration in Kyrgyz society

Migration is a key aspect of Kyrgyzstan's social and economic landscape, with millions of citizens migrating both within and outside the country each year. These movements are driven by the desire for better living standards, employment opportunities, education, and stability.

Approximately 1.5 million Kyrgyz citizens live abroad, making up over 20% of the total population, according to IOM. National migration is also significant, with many people moving to major urban centers like Bishkek, Osh, and other administrative hubs in search of jobs and better access to social services.

Key drivers of migration from Kyrgyzstan include economic, social, and political factors. High unemployment rates, low wages, and limited career advancement opportunities motivate many citizens to seek employment abroad, particularly in Russia, which remains the primary labor market for Kyrgyz workers.

Socially, the desire for better access to education, healthcare, and a more secure future significantly influences migration trends. Additionally, periods of political unrest and economic crises have led to increased migration, as people seek safety and stability in other countries.

Migration destinations

Russia remains the primary destination for Kyrgyz labor migrants, with around 1 million Kyrgyz citizens residing there in 2024. It continues to attract migrants with higher wages and job opportunities in construction, agriculture, and services. For many, the Russian labor market offers a familiar environment and fewer language barriers. Kazakhstan is the second most popular destination, favored for its proximity, cultural ties, and employment prospects in major cities. While smaller in scale, migration to Turkey and European countries is growing. Turkey draws younger Kyrgyz seeking education and work in services and construction, while Europe is increasingly appealing to professionals and students pursuing long-term opportunities abroad.

Migration from Kyrgyzstan to Belgium

Migration to Belgium is limited but forms part of a growing trend toward Europe. While Russia and Kazakhstan remain the primary destinations due to proximity and job availability, countries like Belgium are increasingly attracting Kyrgyz citizens in search of more stable living and working conditions. Though smaller in scale, this shift highlights a gradual diversification in migration patterns beyond the traditional regional hubs.

Caritas Kyrgyzstan

Caritas Kyrgyzstan, established in 2016, supports vulnerable populations through education, rehabilitation, reintegration, and charity. It offers free courses in subjects like mathematics and languages for high school students, empowering those from low-income and remote areas. The organization also provides specialized care and social integration for children with special needs. Caritas assists Kyrgyz citizens returning from abroad with legal, social, and employment support, while providing essential aid like food, clothing, and medicine to those in need.

Reintegration assistance in Kyrgyzstan

Caritas Kyrgyzstan offers comprehensive reintegration support to individuals returning to the country. The process begins with pre-return contact, establishing communication with returnees before their arrival. Once they return, Caritas conducts a needs assessment to identify immediate requirements such as temporary accommodation, transportation, and necessities. Practical assistance is provided, including airport pickup, transfer, and essential supplies. Caritas also offers personal counseling, holding one-on-one meetings with returnees and their families to understand their needs and develop a tailored reintegration plan.

The organization helps restore necessary documents, including residence registration, and provides legal and social support in accessing services like healthcare and education. Employment assistance is offered to help returnees find job opportunities, and they are connected with relevant job centers. Caritas also refers individuals to medical, psychological, and social support organizations when needed. Ongoing support is maintained throughout the reintegration process, with Caritas continuing to offer assistance as necessary.

Most returnees come from Germany, with others arriving from Austria, Poland, Belgium, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Denmark, and the Netherlands.



▲ Our colleague Alexandra is speaking with a returnee about how to use reintegration support to launch a business project.

TAJIKISTAN



- ✓ Landlocked in Central Asia, borders Kyrgyzstan, China, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan
- ✓ Population: ~10.6 million (2025)
- ✓ Capital: Dushanbe
- ✓ Majority Muslim (95% Sunni, 3% Shi'a); official language: Tajik, Russian widely used
- ✓ Heavy dependence on labour migration, mainly to Russia, vital for household income

Migration in Tajik society

Since gaining independence in 1991, Tajikistan has seen a steady rise in migration, largely driven by political instability and job losses following the 1992 civil war. Most citizens migrate for work or study, making migration a central part of the country's social and economic fabric.

Migration destinations

In the first half of 2024, over 392,000 Tajik migrants were recorded, with Russia remaining the top destination due to visa-free access, strong labor demand, and an established diaspora. However, recent developments, such as the war in Ukraine and the Crocus City Hall attack, have led to stricter conditions and deportations, prompting some to seek irregular entry into the U.S. via Mexico. Other migration destinations include Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Türkiye, and the UK, though in much smaller numbers.

Effects of Migration on Tajikistan

Migration has a significant impact on Tajikistan, particularly in terms of economic development and labor dynamics. It is a major driver of GDP growth, with remittances playing a vital role in supporting families, stabilizing the economy, and strengthening foreign currency reserves. However, it also reduces the available labor force, especially in rural areas where many working-age individuals leave, affecting local productivity and family structures.

In response, Tajikistan is seeking to diversify its migration pathways by exploring new destinations for its economic migrants, including the Gulf states, South Korea, the UK, and the European Union.

Caritas Tajikistan

Caritas Tajikistan is a humanitarian organization founded in 2007, dedicated to serving vulnerable populations regardless of religion or ethnicity. The organization runs a wide range of programs addressing health care, water and sanitation, gender equality, and the reintegration of homeless individuals.

Reintegration assistance in Tajikistan

Since 2015, Caritas Tajikistan has supported the reintegration of returning migrants, providing tailored assistance to help them rebuild their lives. Its experience and multi-sectoral approach position it as a key actor in addressing the needs of returnees in Tajikistan. Returnees receive support including financial assistance, vocational training, and legal and administrative help to ease their return and promote long-term reintegration. Since the start of the EURP program in 2023, over 85 returnees have received financial aid for accommodation renovation and the purchase of household goods to improve their living conditions. More than 70 returnees received full support to organize income-generating activities such as taxi services, dental services, carpentry, and dairy production. Over 45 returnees are currently in the process of receiving various forms of reintegration assistance.

As a result of successful cases, returnees who have established small businesses could become valuable role models for new returnees by sharing their knowledge, skills, and offering guidance and mentorship. This can inspire others to use the funds in a rational way, gain long-term benefits, become successful entrepreneurs, and improve their livelihoods. As a result, there may be less re-migration in the country. Some returnees with stable businesses report that it feels better and safer to live in their home country, and they are not planning to re-migrate. However, those who face difficulties finding jobs and whose livelihoods depend on remittances are forced to re-migrate to Russia. Thus, the reintegration project serves as a stepping stone toward sustainable reintegration for returnees.

Most returnees are men between the ages of 19 and 66. Only five cases involved women returning with their children—four from Germany and one from Austria. Since 2023, Caritas Tajikistan has provided reintegration assistance to over 163 returnees. Those who received full support have successfully implemented their reintegration plans. Returnees with income-generating activities continue running their small businesses and are steadily improving their livelihoods in their home communities.

Since launching its reintegration program in 2015, Caritas Tajikistan has assisted returnees from several European countries. The majority have returned from Germany, followed by increasing numbers from Poland, particularly in 2024, possibly due to the influx of Ukrainian migrants during the Russian invasion. Other returnees have come from Austria, the Netherlands, and Lithuania. Only one male has returned from Belgium and received reintegration support.



KAZAKHSTAN



- ✓ Location: Central Asia, borders Russia, China, and others
- ✓ Population: About 20.3 million (2024).
- ✓ Size: 9th largest country globally, 2.7 million km².
- ✓ Diversity: Multi-ethnic and multilingual; Kazakh and Russian are official languages.
- ✓ Religion & Politics: Muslim-majority, secular state with a presidential system.

Migration in Kazakh society

Migration plays a vital role in Kazakh society, shaping both internal dynamics and international ties. Internally, many move from rural areas to cities like Astana and Almaty in search of better opportunities. At the same time, Kazakhstan attracts migrants from neighboring countries such as Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan due to shared cultural ties, jobs, and education.

Meanwhile, many Kazakh citizens migrate abroad, especially to Russia, Europe, and China, for work, studies, or improved living conditions. These movements are driven by economic factors, political instability in the region, and family connections. While migration supports the economy through labor and remittances, it also raises concerns about brain drain. Overall, it is a deeply embedded part of life in Kazakhstan. Citizens migrate abroad mainly for better job prospects, education, and higher living standards.

Migration destinations

Russia remains the top destination due to shared history, language, and strong labor demand. Others move to Europe, the U.S., Canada, or China for studies, career opportunities, or to reunite with family. These movements reflect both economic motivations and personal ties.

Effects of Migration on Kazakhstan

The migration of Kazakh citizens abroad has both positive and negative effects on the country. It contributes to brain drain, as many highly qualified professionals leave in search of better living and working conditions, which can weaken domestic development in the long term. At the same time, remittances sent by migrants support families and boost the national economy.

Migration also helps strengthen Kazakhstan's cultural and economic ties with other countries. However, the growing reliance on migration as a response to local challenges raises concerns about long-term sustainability.

Migration from Kazakhstan to Belgium

The migration of Kazakh citizens abroad has both positive and negative effects on the country. It contributes to brain drain, as many skilled professionals leave in search of better opportunities, which can undermine long-term domestic development. At the same time, migrants often send remittances that support families and strengthen the national economy. Nevertheless, increasing dependence on migration as a way to address local challenges raises concerns about long-term sustainability and the need for stronger development efforts within the country.

Caritas Kazakhstan

Caritas Kazakhstan is a small but active organization with the status of a Public Foundation within the Republic of Kazakhstan. Based in Almaty, it currently has a team of 17 employees, though this number may vary depending on project needs. At present, Caritas Kazakhstan is implementing five projects, including the Assistance in Reintegration project.

Reintegration assistance in Kazakhstan

As part of its reintegration project, Caritas Kazakhstan offers tailored support to returnees across several key areas. Social assistance includes one-time financial aid funded by FRONTEX to cover essential needs such as housing or medical care. Depending on individual circumstances, returnees may also receive temporary accommodation, food, and clothing.

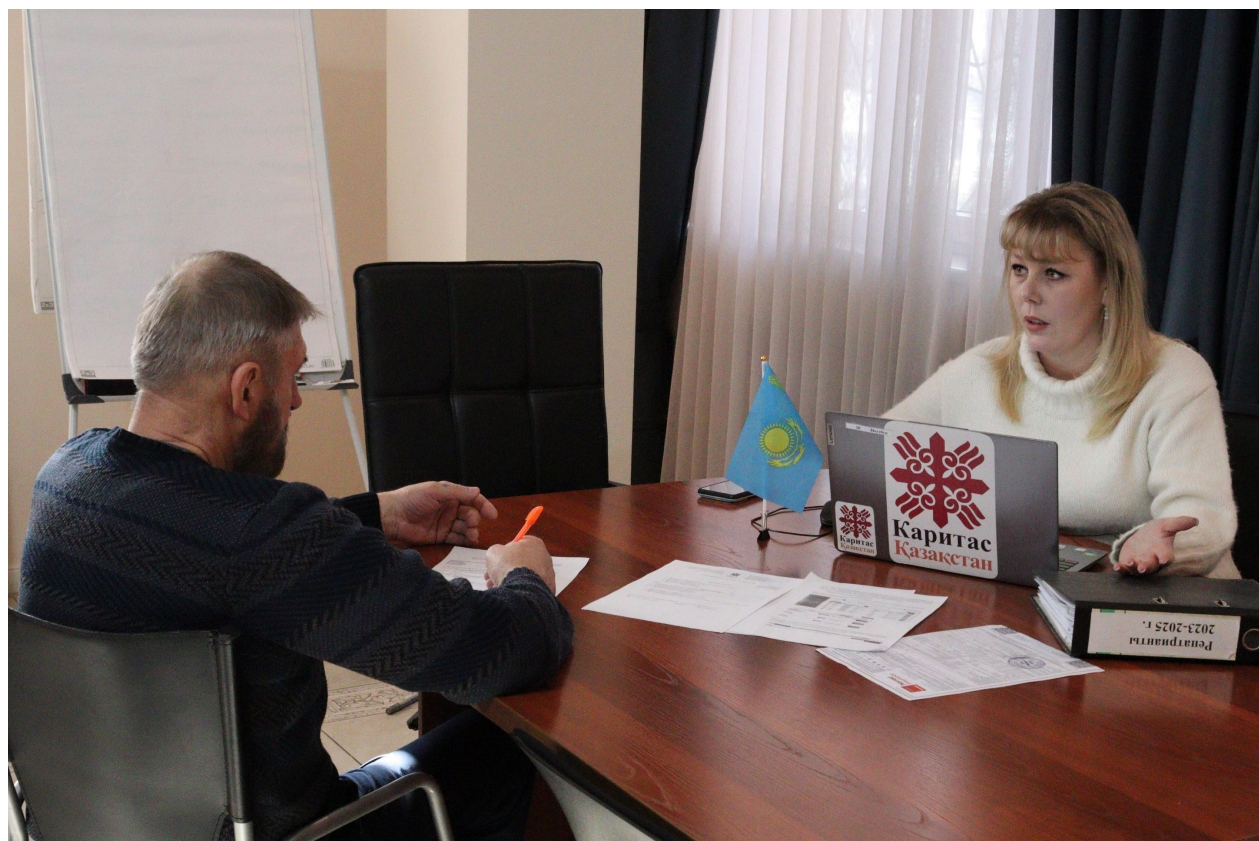
Employment and entrepreneurship support are major components of the program. Returnees receive guidance on job placement and registration as unemployed, and they can access the Enbek.kz platform to apply for business grants, participate in on-the-job training, or find temporary work.

For those aiming to start a business, Caritas provides consultations, helps draft business plans, and supports the preparation of registration documents. Legal advice is available as well, covering issues such as labor law and intellectual property.

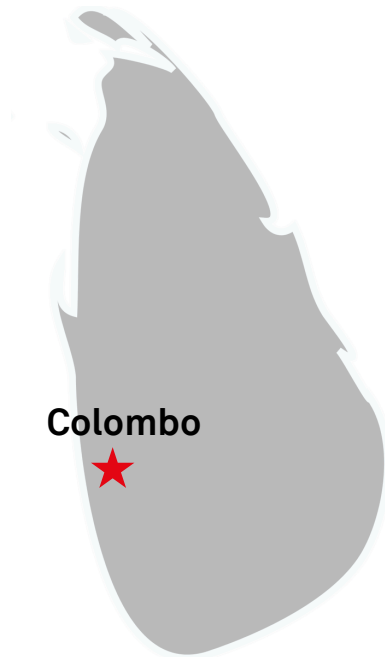
Although most returnees report limited medical needs, assistance is available for health insurance registration, specialist consultations, and basic check-ups or tests. Dental care and access to necessary medication are the most commonly requested forms of support.

Reintegration of returnees

The majority of returnees to Kazakhstan from EU countries come from Germany, which accounts for around 50% of all returns. Belgium ranks second, followed by Austria, the Netherlands, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Finland, making these countries central to current return migration trends. Returns are often driven by difficulties with adaptation, the end of temporary employment contracts, or a personal desire to return home. Economic stability in Kazakhstan and access to social support programs also serve as incentives. Family and cultural ties remain a key factor in return decisions. Among the returnees, single women make up a noticeable group, while large families form a significant share. Single-parent families account for about 3%, and childless couples around 1% of those returning.



SRI LANKA



Colombo

- ✓ Island nation in South Asia, south of India in the Indian Ocean
- ✓ Population: ~23.2 million (2025)
- ✓ Capitals: Colombo (commercial) and Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte (administrative)
- ✓ Majority Buddhist, with Hindu, Muslim, and Christian minorities; official languages: Sinhala and Tamil
- ✓ Outward migration shaped by both economic factors and post-conflict displacement

Migration in Sri Lankan Society

Migration is a significant aspect of Sri Lanka, with many citizens leaving the country for work abroad. Annually, an average of 230,000 to 250,000 Sri Lankan workers migrate, with an estimated 298,000 leaving in 2023.

The Middle East is the primary destination, where most men work in construction and hospitality, while most women are employed in domestic work. Sri Lankan migration is diverse and complex, including the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, the migration of domestic workers, and boat migration to Australia.

Sri Lanka endured a 30-year civil war (1983–2009) between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), seeking an independent Tamil state. The war caused widespread loss of life, displacement, and long-term economic and social damage.

The country also faces severe economic crises, with the most recent in 2022, marked by fuel and food shortages, inflation, and political turmoil. Years of economic mismanagement, heavy debt, reduced tourism, and the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the crisis, leading to mass protests and the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Migration destinations

Sri Lankans primarily migrate to the Middle East for employment, with Saudi Arabia being the largest destination for unskilled and semi-skilled labor, followed by Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE. Beyond the Middle East, many Sri Lankans move to Europe, Canada, the U.S., and Australia for work, education, family reunification, or better economic opportunities. Others migrate to escape conflict, persecution, or human rights violations.

Effects of migration on Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has long benefited from labor migration, with a steadily growing number of its citizens seeking employment opportunities abroad. This trend has become an integral part of the country's economic landscape, contributing significantly through remittances and reducing domestic unemployment.

Caritas Jaffna

The Human Development Centre (HUDEC), Caritas Jaffna is the social arm of the Catholic Church in Jaffna, serving the community for over 50 years. It partners with SEDEC-Caritas Sri Lanka, which coordinates activities with 13 diocesan Caritas organizations nationwide to support social and economic development.

Reintegration assistance in Sri Lanka

Since HUDEC-Caritas Jaffna lacks its own funding for returnees, it relies on reintegration support from Caritas International Belgium. This enables returnees to start small businesses and work toward self-employment, while HUDEC monitors their progress through field visits and shares updates with Caritas International Belgium. The support focuses on long-term sustainability and helps returnees build stable livelihoods within their communities.

Most returnees to Sri Lanka resettle in the Jaffna region, the majority being single men. Family returns are rare, so far, only two families have returned. One family, consisting of a husband, wife, and their four children, successfully started a construction materials business. The other case involves a father who returned with his child and is working to rebuild their life in the area. One elderly returnee arrived unaware that his wife had abandoned him. With a friend's help, he found housing and started poultry farming with reintegration assistance.

However, after a few years, he could not sustain it and later moved to a religious institute, where he now works as a watchman. All male returnees prefer self-employment, using reintegration support to establish independent livelihoods.



▲ Returnee Rexraj Kumar with a machine to make brick stones, he bought this machine with his reintegration budget.

PHILIPPINES



- ✓ Located in Southeast Asia, archipelago of 7,640 islands in the Pacific Ocean
- ✓ Population: ~116.8 million (2025)
- ✓ Capital: Manila
- ✓ Majority Christian (mostly Roman Catholic); Muslims make up 12%; official languages: Filipino and English
- ✓ One of the world's top labour-sending countries, with millions of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs)

Migration in Filipino Society

Migration remains a key part of the Philippine economy, with over 2 million Filipinos leaving annually as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) due to limited job opportunities and low wages. The Middle East, North America, Europe, and East Asia are major destinations, with OFWs mainly in domestic work, healthcare, and construction. Remittances make up nearly 10% of GDP, supporting millions of families.

Migration destinations

Saudi Arabia remains the largest host, followed by UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait, where demand is high, visas are affordable, and skill requirements are minimal. The U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand are preferred destinations, but high visa costs and strict job requirements push some into undocumented work or trafficking.

Migration trends are shifting as Japan and South Korea open to caregivers and agricultural workers due to labor shortages. Internal migration also continues, with rural Filipinos moving to Metro Manila, Cebu, and Davao, though many end up in informal jobs due to overcrowding and high living costs. Despite efforts to boost local job creation and return programs, labor migration remains essential to the economy.

Effects of migration on the Philippines

Remittances from Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) have been vital for poor families, improving education, healthcare, and housing. Some gained financial stability through asset-building. However, decades of labor migration created dependence—both for families and the government, which relies on remittances to sustain the economy. This fuels a service-led, consumer-driven model and leaves the country vulnerable to global labor shifts. A long-term solution requires not just reforms, but a shift in national priorities toward inclusive and sustainable development.

Migration towards Belgium

Filipino migration to Belgium is relatively modest compared to other European countries but follows several key patterns. It includes students who remain after graduation to seek employment, families joining relatives already settled in the country, and individuals who arrive on au pair visas and overstay, becoming undocumented. There are also cases of undocumented workers, such as seafarers who jump ship at nearby ports. These trends reflect broader migration drivers such as education, family reunification, and the search for better economic opportunities. Many migrants also hope to regularize their status over time and build a more stable life.

Local partner Unlad Kabayan NGO

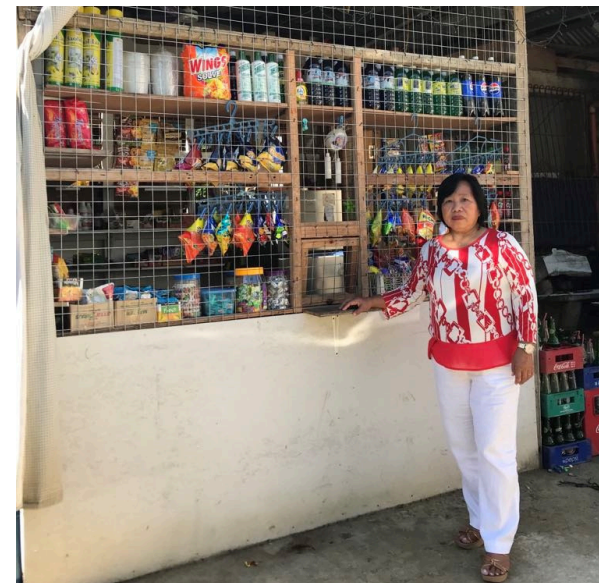
Unlad Kabayan, the local reintegration partner, is a civil society organization headquartered in Mindanao, in the southern Philippines, and has been active in supporting the reintegration of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) since 1996. While based in Mindanao, the organization operates nationwide through digital communication and partnerships with local migrant networks. It works closely with returnees and their families, offering guidance in areas such as entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and social reintegration. With deep grassroots connections and a longstanding focus on economic empowerment, Unlad Kabayan is a key partner in reintegration programming across the Philippines.

Reintegration assistance in the Philippines

Reintegration support in the Philippines focuses on helping returnees prepare for and rebuild their lives after migration. Unlad Kabayan plays a central role in this effort, offering pre-departure seminars and training through local partners to promote early reintegration planning. The organization's flagship initiative, the Migrant Savings for Alternative Investments (MSAI), encourages OFWs to save and invest in small businesses prior to return.

Once back in the country, returnees receive practical support in launching livelihood projects, ranging from organic farming to food processing and retail, along with training in entrepreneurship, financial management, and access to social protection systems. Family reintegration is also a key component, with counseling provided to address relationship difficulties and support smoother adjustment at home. Where feasible, Unlad Kabayan follows up with in-person visits during the first year to monitor progress and provide additional guidance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, most returnees assisted were women aged 40–55, many of whom were able to rebuild or start new businesses despite difficult conditions.

▼ Ruanne used her reintegration budget to start a business in Ilocos Sur. The store brings in P5,000 (€75) a month.



▲ Ruanne Marcaida and her son with the tricycle which earns P6,000.00 (€90) a month.

THAILAND



- ✓ Located in Southeast Asia, borders Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia
- ✓ Population: ~71.6 million (2025)
- ✓ Capital: Bangkok
- ✓ Majority Buddhist (93.9%), with Muslim and Christian minorities; official language: Thai
- ✓ Major destination and transit country for migrants; strong economy driven by tourism and trade

Migration in Thai society

Thailand relies on migrant workers from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia due to labor shortages and locals avoiding "dirty, dangerous, and demeaning" (3D) jobs. Meanwhile, many Thai workers seek similar jobs abroad in Taiwan, South Korea, Israel, and Europe for higher wages.

There are 3.35 million documented migrant workers under MOU agreements, but estimates suggest at least 5 million, with 40% undocumented and over 300,000 children accompanying them. Migrant workers are allowed in construction, factories, markets, shops, restaurants, domestic work, and agriculture, with high concentrations in Greater Bangkok, Rayong, Chonburi, Tak, Chiang Mai, and Udon Thani.

Thai workers migrate in search of higher wages and better opportunities, as farming in rural areas provides low incomes and limited job prospects. Many move to Thai cities or seek better-paying jobs abroad, particularly in Taiwan, South Korea, and Israel, where they can earn more and improve their livelihoods.

Popular migration destinations

Thai workers migrate where jobs are available, with the government regulating the types of work they can seek.

Major cities attract migrant labor for hotels, bars, restaurants, and construction, while others work on farms across the country. According to IOM, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, and Malaysia are the main destinations for Thai workers abroad, with many also employed in agriculture in Finland and Israel. These countries demand labor to sustain production, industry, and construction.

Effects of migration on Thailand

Migration impacts Thailand both economically and socially. Many Thai workers migrate abroad to Taiwan, South Korea, Israel, and Europe for higher wages, creating labor shortages in rural areas where farming offers low income and few alternatives. Remittances sustain families, boost local economies, and support Thailand's national economy, increasing disposable income and business growth. However, the loss of workers, especially skilled labor, can hinder local industries and development.

Socially, migration disrupts families, as households lose breadwinners and leaders, weakening community stability. Children and the elderly often lack support, and some migrants face exploitation or trafficking abroad. While migration provides financial benefits, it also creates workforce gaps and social challenges in Thailand.

Caritas Thailand

Caritas Thailand is the social action arm of the Thai Catholic Church, operating under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand (CBCT). Established in 2006, its roots go back to 1968 with the formation of the Relief and Development Commission. Renamed in 1972 as the Catholic Council for Thailand Development (CCTD), it later joined Caritas Internationalis as Caritas Thailand. The organization delivers emergency relief, refugee support, migrant care, and prison ministry through specialized Desks, working with Diocesan Caritas offices and Social Action Centers (DISACs) across Thailand's 11 dioceses.

Reintegration assistance

Reintegration support is successfully provided through a partnership with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) under a Danish government programme. Also, with CIB, Caritas Thailand has a direct cooperation on case-by-case assistance. The initiative offers cash assistance, business start-up support, healthcare, skills training, accommodation, and children's education, among other tailored services. Currently benefiting Thai returnees, all of whom are women, the program operates effectively through strong international collaboration and the support of the Caritas Thailand network.

Returnees to Thailand

The majority of returnees to Thailand are single Thai women who previously migrated abroad to work in massage therapy or the beauty industry. Many sought better economic opportunities, often in countries with higher demand for personal care services. However, various factors such as unstable employment, difficult working conditions, legal restrictions, or personal circumstances have led them to return home. Their reintegration often requires financial assistance, skills training, and support in securing stable livelihoods, ensuring they can rebuild their lives and achieve long-term stability in Thailand.



CONCLUSION

This brochure:

- ✓ Provides an overview of the European and Belgian return and reintegration context
- ✓ Highlights key migration trends between Asia and Europe
- ✓ Offers country-specific insights into reintegration in various Asian nations
- ✓ Sheds light on the challenges and opportunities faced by returnees

Migration is a dynamic and ever-evolving phenomenon, influenced by a wide range of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. Many individuals leave their home countries in search of better opportunities abroad, while others return home due to various personal or structural reasons. For those who do return, the reintegration process can be complex, requiring support in multiple areas, including employment, housing, education, and social inclusion. **Assisted reintegration** is not only beneficial to the returnees themselves but also contributes to the development and stability of their home communities. One of the key takeaways from this brochure is that **reintegration is not a one-size-fits-all process**. Each country faces distinct migration patterns and challenges, requiring tailored approaches to reintegration.

While some returnees benefit from strong family and community ties that ease their reintegration, others face economic hardship, social stigma, or limited access to essential support services. Recognizing these varied experiences is crucial to designing programs that effectively respond to the **diverse needs of returnees**.

At the core of **sustainable reintegration** lies collaboration. Reintegration is a complex, **multidimensional process** involving governments, international organizations, civil society, and local communities. Strong partnerships among these actors are essential to ensuring returnees receive the comprehensive support they need. Each actor brings a unique perspective and set of resources that, when aligned, can significantly enhance reintegration outcomes.

By working together, sharing best practices, and coordinating efforts, stakeholders can develop strategies that are more effective, inclusive, and sustainable, benefiting both individuals and society. Knowledge exchange between reintegration partners is especially valuable, as challenges in one context often mirror those in another. Innovative solutions can be adapted across borders. Ongoing **dialogue and cooperation** help identify gaps, refine programs, and develop new, **evidence-based approaches** to reintegration.

Strengthening these networks also helps to improve the consistency and efficiency of reintegration support, ensuring that returnees receive assistance that is not only well-coordinated but also **culturally and contextually relevant**. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that reintegration is not an endpoint but rather a **continuous process**.


A returnee's reintegration depends on long-term stability, which is influenced by access to livelihood opportunities, social inclusion, and psychological well-being. As migration dynamics continue to shift, reintegration programs must also evolve to address **emerging challenges**, such as climate-induced migration, the impact of economic fluctuations, and changing labor market demands.

Looking ahead, strong partnerships and close cooperation will be key to keeping reintegration policies and programs effective and responsive. Through ongoing dialogue, capacity building, and **knowledge exchange**, stakeholders can foster humane, dignified, and sustainable reintegration processes that **empower** returnees and strengthen the communities they rejoin. We thank Fedasil for their collaboration in the Belgian reintegration program and for the trust placed daily in Caritas International Belgium and its partners.



Caritas International Belgium

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