

LUMBINI PROVINCE (/NATIONAL/PROVINCE-NO-5)

Frontline health workers deprived of promised risk allowances

Health workers who were engaged in setting up quarantine and isolation facilities and providing treatment to Covid-19 patients last year say they feel cheated by the authorities.



All 10 local units in Palpa have failed to provide risk allowances to health workers. **Madhav Aryal/TKP**



Madhav Aryal (/Author/Madhav-Aryal)

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Palpa

Frontline health workers in Palpa who have been fighting the coronavirus pandemic for more than a year now say the government is yet to disburse their risk allowance.

Health workers who were engaged in setting up [quarantine and isolation facilities](https://kathmandupost.com/province-no-5/2021/04/26/high-risk-of-covid-spread-in-absence-of-quarantine-centres) and providing treatment to Covid-19 patients last year say they feel cheated by the authorities.

Giriraj Ghimire, the health unit chief of Rampur Municipality in Palpa, confirmed that none of the frontline workers have received their [risk allowance](https://kathmandupost.com/province-no-5/2020/09/07/frontline-health-workers-in-kapilvastu-deprived-of-risk-allowance).

“The second wave of the pandemic is here and we need health workers to hold the fort. But they haven’t been paid last year’s dues,” Ghimire told the Post. “This year, it’s getting difficult to mobilise workers for the treatment of Covid-19 patients. They are yet to receive last year’s risk allowance. The authorities concerned have not said anything regarding the risk allowance for the current fiscal year that begins from July 16.”

The federal government had decided to [provide risk allowance to health workers](https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/govt-asks-hospitals-to-immediately-release-risk-allowance-to-frontline-medicos) (https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/govt-asks-hospitals-to-immediately-release-risk-allowance-to-frontline-medicos) who had been mobilised to contain the spread of the virus and provide treatment to coronavirus patients. Following the Cabinet's decision, Rampur Municipality decided to provide 100 percent salary as allowance to frontline health workers, 75 percent to health workers in the second ring and 50 percent to other health workers mobilised for the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

Almost all local units in Palpa are yet to disburse the promised risk allowance to health workers. Ribdikot Rural Municipality had also announced a 20 percent risk allowance to health workers deployed in the treatment of coronavirus patients. According to Sunil Adhikari, the health unit chief of Ribdikot, the rural municipality had announced the risk allowance in March last year but most of the health workers received the allowance for a month only.

"Most health workers received the allowance for a month only. It is still not clear whether frontline workers will get the risk allowance in the current fiscal year or not," said Adhikari. "We talked to the people's representatives about providing allowances to health workers during the second wave as well. They are affirmative about the proposal but no official decision has been taken yet."

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Likewise, health workers in Rainadevi Chhahara Rural Municipality received 50 percent of their salaries as risk allowance for a month only.

"The local unit stopped issuing the allowance after a month, citing budget shortage as the federal and provincial governments did not release a budget for the same," said Jiban Rana, the chief at the health unit. According to him, all 10 local units in Palpa—two municipalities and eight rural municipalities—have failed to provide the risk allowances of the last fiscal year.

Tinau Rural Municipality, however, claims to have provided allowances to frontline health workers until mid-November.

Krishna Prasad Basyal, the chairman of the local unit, said the health workers who received regular salaries from the state coffers should not expect allowances during these difficult times. "They received their salaries. That was all we could manage last year," said Basyal. "If we get the budget for risk allowance this year, we will provide allowances to the health workers."

Most frontline health workers mobilised to contain the pandemic last year in Baitadi of Sudurpaschim Province have also not received the promised allowance.

Eight out of 10 local units in [Baitadi district](https://kathmandupost.com/sudurpaschim-province/2020/04/02/baitadi-reels-under-shortage-of-medical-equipment-to-combat-the-spread-of-covid-10) (https://kathmandupost.com/sudurpaschim-province/2020/04/02/baitadi-reels-under-shortage-of-medical-equipment-to-combat-the-spread-of-covid-10) have yet to provide risk allowances to the health workers. Only Dasharath Chand Municipality and Shivanath Rural Municipality have provided the allowances.

Suresh Sarki, a health assistant at a health post in Pancheshwar Rural Municipality-1, says he did not receive any risk allowance last year despite working in the frontline for months. This year too, he has been deployed in the treatment of Covid-19 patients but says he has no expectations from the government.

"They did not pay us the promised allowance last year, so we don't expect them to pay us this year either," Sarki said.

Meanwhile, the local representatives claim that they could not provide the risk allowances to health workers because the government—both federal and provincial—had not issued the funds for it.

"Since we could not provide the health workers with risk allowances last year, we feel uneasy deploying them to the frontline during the second wave," said Hari Singh Dhama, the chairman of Sigas Rural Municipality.