

EDITED BY
S IRUDAYA RAJAN

SOUTH ASIA MIGRATION REPORT 2024

Remittances, Resilience and
Rehabilitation

“The South Asia Migration Report provides an important, relevant and timely introspection into migration related issues in South Asia in the contemporary context. It acts as an overarching bridge covering a myriad of aspects ranging from social mobility, remittances and reintegration policies for migrants, youth and gender aspects, climate change driven aspects, as well as vulnerabilities arising out of exogenous shocks that drive migration, including the Covid-19 pandemic across different geographies within South Asia. This book is a vital addition towards understanding multi-faceted issues in a significantly populated and vulnerable region, setting a precedent for further exploration for young researchers, civil society and policy practitioners.”

— *Bilesha Weeraratne*, Head of Migration and Urbanization Policy Research;
Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka

“South Asia Migration Report is an invaluable resource for those interested in understanding migration and associated aspects in the region and beyond. The report's editor S. Irudaya Rajan and contributors have since 2017 provided a comprehensive overview of the region's migration patterns, policies, and challenges. They also offer valuable insights into the opportunities and vulnerabilities of migrants, both within South Asia and abroad. As the report's editor, Mr. Rajan, being a leading expert on South Asian migration, has in all editions brought together a team of experts to produce a volume that is both informative, insightful, and adds to the existing body of knowledge. The report's contributors come from a variety of disciplines, including economics, sociology, anthropology, and law. This diversity of expertise ensures that the report provides a well-rounded perspective on South Asian migration. I highly recommend this report to anyone interested in learning more about South Asian and migration patterns in this region. It is an essential tool for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners alike.”

— *Vaqar Ahmed*, Joint Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy
Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

SOUTH ASIA MIGRATION REPORT 2024

South Asia Migration Report 2024 documents key themes of remittances, resilience, and rehabilitation from the region.

This volume:

- Includes dedicated fieldwork to map migration within and outside South Asia;
- Analyses the impact of Covid-19 on migrants and migration in South Asia;
- Highlights the plight of Afghan migrants post-Taliban takeover in the country.

This book will be indispensable for scholars and researchers of economics, development studies, migration and diaspora studies, gender studies, labour studies and sociology. It will also be useful to policymakers, think tanks and government institutions working in the area.

S Irudaya Rajan is Chair of the International Institute of Migration and Development, India and also chair of the World Bank KNOMAD working group on internal migration and urbanization. He is the editor of two Routledge Series – India Migration Report (since 2010) and South Asia Migration Report (since 2017) and Founding Editor in Chief, Migration and Development (Sage). Rajan has published extensively in national and international journals on demographic, social, economic, political and psychological implications of international migration and coordinated nine large-scale migration surveys in Kerala since 1998 (with K C Zachariah), Goa (2008), Punjab (2009), Tamil Nadu (2015) and instrumental for Gujarat (2011), Jharkhand (2023) and Odisha (2023). As a principal investigator, Rajan is currently coordinating the Kerala Migration Survey 2023 with the financial support of the Department of Non-Resident Keralite Affairs, Government of Kerala through Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, Kerala.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

SOUTH ASIA MIGRATION REPORT 2024

Remittances, Resilience and
Rehabilitation

Edited by S Irudaya Rajan

Designed cover image: @getty

First published 2025

by Routledge

4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2025 selection and editorial matter, S Irudaya Rajan; individual chapters, the contributors

The right of S Irudaya Rajan to be identified as the author of the editorial material, and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

The Open Access version of this book, available at www.taylorfrancis.com, has been made available under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives (CC-BY-NC-ND) 4.0 license.

Any third party material in this book is not included in the OA Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. Please direct any permissions enquiries to the original rightsholder.

Funded by International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD)

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Maps used in this book are for representational purposes only. The international boundaries, coastlines, denominations, and other information shown in the maps in this work do not necessarily imply any judgement concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such information.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-78010-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-86079-4 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-52122-8 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003521228

Typeset in Sabon

by Taylor & Francis Books



CONTENTS

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>List of contributors</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xiii</i>
1 South Asia Migration: Opportunities and Vulnerabilities <i>S Irudaya Rajan</i>	1
2 International Migration of South Asia <i>Syed Naimul Wadood and Mehdi Chowdhury</i>	16
3 A methodologically oriented interrogation of connections between migration and social mobility in South Asia <i>Marta Bivand Erdal and Anu Abraham</i>	35
4 The Afghan Diaspora Remittances: A Lifeline for Families and (Potential) Contributions to Development <i>Nasrat Sayed and Katrin Marchand</i>	56
5 Reintegration of Nepali returnee migrants: An analysis of policies, approaches and practices <i>Jagannath Adhikari, Mahendra Kumar Rai, Chiranjivi Baral and Mahendra Subedi</i>	80
6 Migration and Integration Policies in Nepal <i>Padma Prasad Khatriwada</i>	100
7 Social Backgrounds, Capitals and Risks in Youth Migration from Bangladesh	121

<i>Syeda Rozana Rashid</i>	
8 Activism, law and life in between: The Rohingya in Bangladesh camps <i>Sucharita Sengupta</i>	142
9 Where have all the climate (change) refugees gone? <i>Ilan Kelman</i>	164
10 Opportunities and Vulnerabilities of Internal Migrants in Bangladesh Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic <i>Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder, Selim Reza, Syed Nurullah Azad and Fardeen Hassan Anton</i>	173
11 Circular Labour Migration and Women in the Indian Sundarbans:: Subjective Experiences of Gendered Belonging <i>Anuradha Sen Mookerjee</i>	204
<i>Index</i>	226

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

1.1	Emigration trends of registered labour migrants in South Asia, 2014–2023	3
1.2	COVID-19 infections and deaths across the world, 2020	4
1.3	Evolution of international travel restrictions in South Asia	6
1.4	Inward remittances to countries in South Asia, 2015–2022	8
1.5	Student visas issued to South Asians in United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, 2015–2021	9
1.6	Outward remittances from India for studies abroad	10
4.1	Financial remittances to Afghanistan 2008–2022 (USD million)	60
4.2	Estimated bilateral remittances to Afghanistan from the top 10 countries (USD million)	61
5.1	An integrated approach to reintegration	84
8.1	Food assistant card, photo by the author	146
8.2	Kutupalong registered refugee camp, photo by the author.	148
8.3	of the ‘Refugee card’ as issued by UNHCR in the registered camps of Kutupalong and Teknaf, photo by the author.	150
8.4	Protests going on inside the registered camp of Kutupalong	152
8.5	Collected and compiled by the author from Facebook profiles. Picture of Mohibullah has been taken by the author after seeking due permission.	155
8.6	Mohibullah, photo by the author.	156
8.7	Mohibullah’s office in the camp, photo by the author	157
8.8	Mohibullah’s office, photo by the author	158

10.1 Location of the Study Areas: Dhaka and Rajshahi districts ()	180
---	-----

Tables

1.1 International migration stock from South Asia, 1990–2020	2
2.1 International Migration from India	25
2.2 International Migration from Bangladesh	25
2.3 International Migration from Pakistan	26
2.4 International Migration from Afghanistan	27
2.5 International Migration from Nepal	28
2.6 International Migration from Sri Lanka	28
2.7 International Migration from Bhutan	29
2.8 International Migration from Maldives	30
2.9 International Migration within South Asian Countries	31
2.10 International Migration towards South Asian Countries	32
4.1 Summary of IOM Temporary Return Programs to Afghanistan	69
6.1 ILO Conventions Ratified by Nepal	103
6.2 ILO Conventions Related to Migration Not Ratified by Nepal	104
7.1 Profile, Data-Collection Methods and Number of Youths Interviewed	123

CONTRIBUTORS

Syed Naimul Wadood, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Mehdi Chowdhury, Deputy Head, Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics, Bournemouth University Business School, United Kingdom.

Anu Abraham, Senior Researcher, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway.

Marta Bivand Erdal, Research Professor in Migration Studies, Peace Research Institute Oslo.

Nasrat Sayed, Researcher, Faculty of Law and School of Business and Economics, Maastricht University, The Netherlands.

Katrin Marchand, Researcher, UNU-MERIT, Maastricht University, The Netherlands.

Jagannath Adhikari, Adjunct faculty, Curtin University, Australia.

Mahendra Kumar Rai, Assistant Professor, Tribhuvan University; and Researcher, Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Nepal.

Chiranjivi Baral, Researcher, Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Nepal.

Mahendra Subedi, Researcher, Nepal Institute of Development Studies, Nepal.

Padma Prasad Khatiwada, Professor, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

Syeda Rozana Rashid, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Sucharita Sengupta, PhD candidate, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Graduate Institute of Geneva.

Ilan Kelman, Professor of Disasters and Health, University College London, UK and Professor II at the University of Agder, Norway.

Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder, Assistant Professor and Member, Department of Political Science and Sociology and Coordinator, Centre for Migration Studies (CMS), South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), North South University (NSU), Bangladesh.

Selim Reza, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Sociology and Member, CMS at SIPG, North South University, Bangladesh.

Syed Nurullah Azad, Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science and Sociology and Coordinator, CMS at SIPG, North South University, Bangladesh.

Fardeen Hassan Anton, Undergraduate Student (LLB Honors), Department of Law, North South University, Bangladesh.

Anuradha Sen Mookerjee is Senior Fellow, Institute for Human Development, Delhi, India.

S Irudaya Rajan, Chair, International Institute of Migration and Development, Kerala, India.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the third edition of the *South Asian Migration Report* (SAMR). The SAMR series has made significant contributions to migration literature in South Asia, driving evidence-based approaches to migration policy in the region. This edition is particularly timely as South Asia navigates the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theme of SAMR 2023, ‘Remittances, Resilience, and Rehabilitation,’ reflects the post-pandemic migration landscape’s critical areas. This volume presents a collection of chapters aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of contemporary South Asian migration, especially post-COVID-19. It delves into themes like remittances, resilience, reintegration, social mobility, climate change, and gender dynamics in migration. The chapters offer insights into migration crises, such as the Rohingyas in Bangladesh, challenges faced by internal migrants during COVID-19, and gender dynamics in circular migration in the Sundarbans.

I extend my sincere thanks to the contributors of this report. Their meticulous work has captured the various dimensions of South Asian migration, and their expertise has been crucial in creating this report. This volume of the SAMR was organized with support from the International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD) (www.iiimad.org), where I am the chair. I take this opportunity to thank the board members, Ginu Zacharia Oommen, honorary professor – IIMAD, and the research team – Sunitha, Sreeja, Migdad, Ajay, Rohit, Rahul, Shyam, Kevin, Sisira, Lathika, and Varsha – of the IIMAD for their hard work and enthusiastic support in putting the series together.

None of this would have been possible without my wife, Hema, and our four children, Rahul, Bincy, Rohit, and Mary Catherine. I will always be indebted to them for their understanding, patience, and emotional support. Last but not least, I want to express my appreciation for the hard work of the editorial and sales team at Routledge for bringing out this report on time.

S Irudaya Rajan
Chair

1

SOUTH ASIA MIGRATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND VULNERABILITIES

S Irudaya Rajan

Migration is an all-weather phenomenon in South Asia and has transformed the region beyond measure. Migrating for work is an honorable and reasonable way to climb the ladder of life. This has manifested in several ways, such as in the development of one of the most vibrant migratory corridors in the world, the South Asian – Gulf migratory corridor (Rajan, 2018, 2021), and its recent diversification that is attracting the young South Asians to Europe, Canada, Australia the United States of America and other advanced economies.

International Migration from South Asia

Table 1.1 provides a useful representation of the subtle changes in migration dynamics that have occurred in the region from 1990 to 2020. Migration within South Asia, which constituted the major part of the South Asian migration pie in 1990, has gradually decreased over the years. South Asian migration to Northern Africa and Western Asia has consistency increased from 1990 and has become the biggest migratory corridor for South Asians. The gradual increase of South Asian migration to Europe and Northern America is also evident from its year-on-year increase, as many high skilled workers and students prefer to migrate to the west. The new-found growth of south Asian migration to eastern and south-eastern Asia is interesting as well.

While outward migration to other regions has been a constant feature of South Asian migration, so has been the movement of people within the countries in the region (Rajan, 2023a). Nepal to India is a major migratory corridor with an estimated 0.74 million Nepalese migrants in India in 2022 (United Nations, 2020). The migratory corridor from Bangladesh to India is also prominent with an estimated 2.48 million Bangladeshi migrants present in India

TABLE 1.1 International migration stock from South Asia, 1990–2020

<i>Destination regions for Migrants from South Asia</i>	<i>Number of emigrants (in millions)</i>						
	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.12	0.14	0.13
Northern Africa and Western Asia	4.45	5.00	5.73	7.52	12.43	15.79	18.83
Central and Southern Asia	17.81	13.72	13.35	11.81	12.19	11.57	10.95
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	0.23	0.35	0.52	0.89	1.36	1.83	1.99
Australia and New Zealand	0.14	0.17	0.21	0.33	0.62	0.87	1.16
Europe and Northern America	2.08	2.88	3.71	4.89	6.12	7.67	8.98

Note. Data compiled from the United Nations. 2020. International Migrant Stock 2020. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, United Nations, New York.

(the actual figure is likely to be even higher due to the undocumented nature of migration in this corridor.) The Migratory corridor from Afghanistan to Pakistan has an estimated 1.59 million Afghans in Pakistan in 2020, and here too, the figure is likely to be a gross underestimate due to a large number of undocumented Afghans in Pakistan fleeing the war and the dire socio-political atmosphere in Afghanistan. Although usually dominated by economic reasons, the drivers of migration are a confluence of different rationales. While South Asian migration outside the area is typically driven by economic factors, the distress nature of the internal migration within South Asian countries, especially in the Bangladesh to India and Afghanistan to Pakistan corridors is noticeable (Rajan, 2023a; 2023b)

The paucity of data makes it difficult to categorically examine migration trends after COVID-19 and assess the true impact of the pandemic on migration. However, the data of registered labour migrants in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India suggest that migration has picked up after the pandemic subsided (Rajan, 2020). As per the data from BMET, Ministry of Expatriate’s welfare and overseas employment, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, there has been an 83 percent increase in labour migrants in 2022 from 2020. As seen from Figure 1.1, the numbers have increased sharply after 2020, and in the case of Bangladesh and Pakistan, have surpassed the pre-COVID-19 levels. Similarly, the number of registered labour migrants from Pakistan has increased 73 percent in 2020 from the year 2020, as per data from the Bureau of emigration and overseas employment (BEOE) of the Pakistani government. The emigration clearance issued by the Indian government for labour migrants show an increase of 75 percent from 2020 to 2022. However, these numbers are likely to be an underestimate since this only includes registered labour migrants who require pre-departure clearances (typically required for low-skilled jobs and certain professions), but these figures suggest a resurgence of labour migration from South Asia after the COVID-19 induced slowdown in 2020.

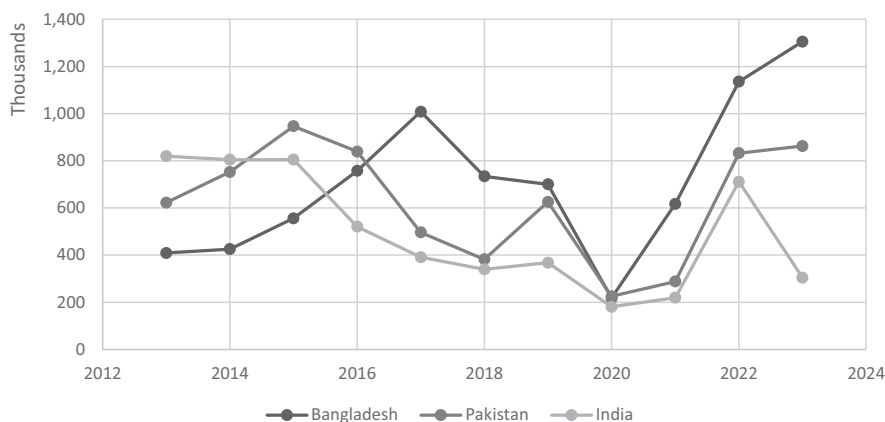


FIGURE 1.1 Emigration trends of registered labour migrants in South Asia, 2014–2023
 Note. The graph shows the migration trends of registered labour migrants in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India from 2013 to 2023. BMET, Ministry of Expatriate’s welfare and overseas employment, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, n.d.; Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan, 2024; Ministry of External Affairs, India, 2023.

COVID-19 and the Aftermath

The pandemic resulted in unprecedented immobility that drastically reduced cross border movements on a global scale (IOM, 2022; 2024). South Asia was crippled by COVID-19 (Figure 1.2), with the region collectively reporting more than five core active COVID-19 cases (Mathieu et al., 2020). A report by the IOM and the Migration Policy Institute in April 2021 analyses the international travel restrictions over the first 12 months of the crisis and classified them into Mobility lockdowns, Phased reopening as well as Responses to new outbreaks and virus mutations (Benton et al., 2021).

The mobility lockdowns from January to May 2020, which included nationwide lockdowns, were the harshest phase of travel restrictions and were introduced in reaction to rapidly escalating COVID-19 cases, but with little planning and coordination (Benton et al., 2021; Rajan et al., 2020). The phased reopening from June to September 2020 saw the progressive reopening of airports and other modes of transportation, as well as the implementation of an expanding pandemic management regime that included pre-departure tests, mandatory quarantines, and health declarations. This period also saw increasing indicators of international cooperation in pandemic control, such as the formation of ‘travel bubbles’. From October to December 2020, countries were hit by several waves and mutated variants of COVID-19. While a COVID-19 test result continued to be a necessary travel requirement, other forms of screening gradually faded in use.

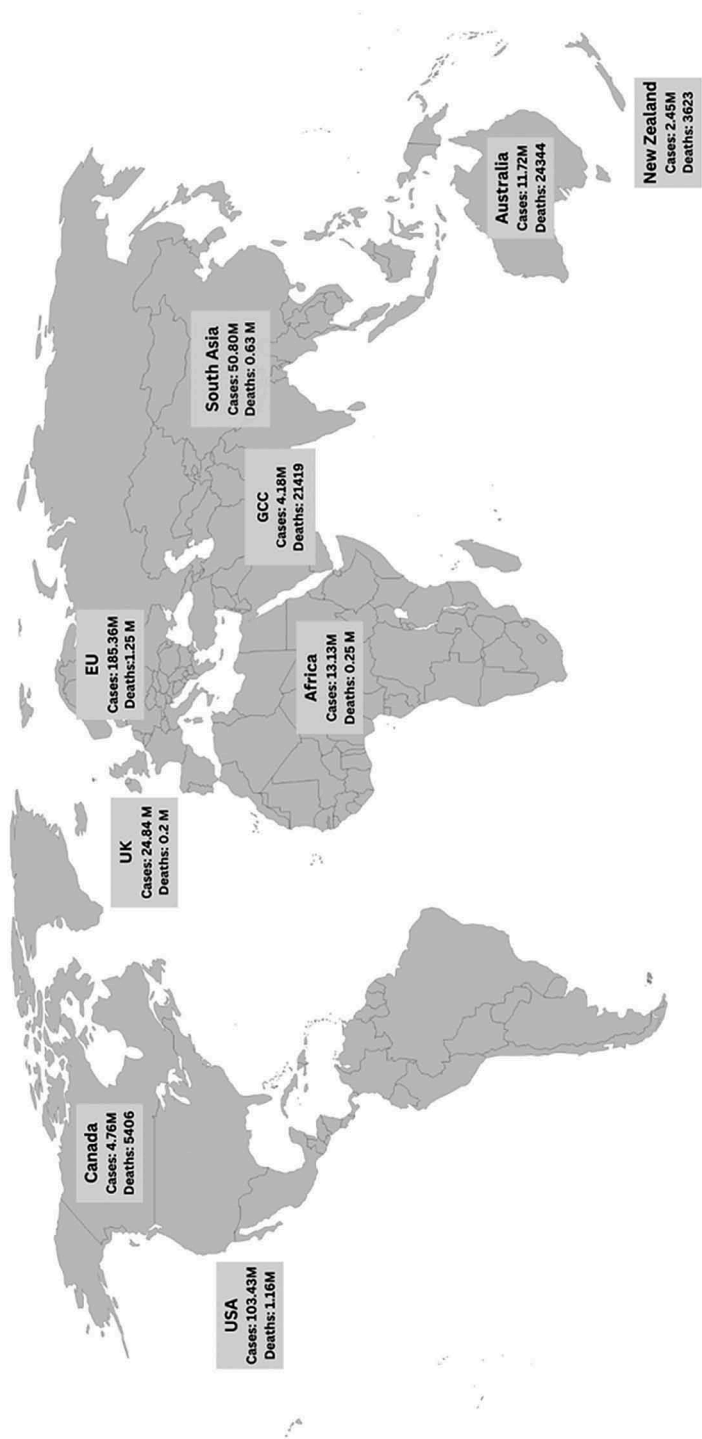


FIGURE 1.2 COVID-19 infections and deaths across the world, 2020
Note. Our world in data, Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19), (Mathieu et al., 2020). Figure created by the author.

The University of Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker recorded the wide range of government responses and policies towards tackling COVID-19 (Hale et al., 2021). The response of South Asian countries in terms of travel restrictions is plotted in Figure 1.3 and it captures the different phases of international travel restrictions imposed by countries in the region. It is pertinent to note that between 2020 and the end of 2021, a total border closure or ban on travel from all regions was a major COVID-19 strategy employed by countries in South Asia. During the tail of end of 2022, as pandemic management grew more robust and responsible, screening arrivals and unrestricted travel started dominating the strategies of South Asian countries.

Mobility of people was significantly impacted for a longer time than anticipated by these restrictions on international travel in addition to those on internal movement within nations (Rajan et.al, 2020; Rajan and Bhagat, 2020). The Loss of jobs, uncertainty of pay and fear of COVID-19 as well as the widespread return migration all contributed to changing the migration landscape in South Asia. However, mobility and migration from South Asia has proved itself to be extremely even against the exceedingly adversarial conditions of COVID-19 (World Bank, 2023). The post-COVID-19 migration recovery story of South Asia is described in the following sections by considering the cases of return migration, remittances and student migration.

Return migration

The rate of global return migration surged after late 2020, after an initial hiatus where migrants were stranded due to complete travel bans (United Nations Network on Migration, 2022; Rajan and Arokkiaraj, 2020). Several migrants returned to their home countries when economic opportunities dwindled due to the COVID-19 induced downturn and due to a lack of viable economic alternatives (Rajan and Arokkiaraj, 2022). Indian alone repatriated 1.83 crore Indians via flights and boats¹ through its Vande Bharat Mission (Ministry of Civil Aviation, India, 2021). A study by Farooq & Arif, (2023) noted that 0.3 to 0.4 million Pakistanis returned to the country from the Middle East alone during COVID-19. From March 1, 2020 to August 19, 2021, about 1.6 million undocumented Afghans returned to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan (Migration Data Portal, IOM, 2023). According to IOM, 2021, 0.4 million Bangladeshi migrant workers returned to the country between April 1 and December 31, 2020.

The absence of a comprehensive database makes it difficult to track the movement of these returnees. However, studies have shown that a significant section of the returnees do not plan to remigrate. A return migration survey conducted in the state of Kerala found that while 32 percent of the returnees wanted to re-emigrate, 61.2 percent of them wanted to settle in Kerala by starting a business or working a new job (Rajan & Pattath, 2022).

This exodus of migrants to home countries poses difficulties for both the countries of origin and destination. Apart from the direct loss in revenue from

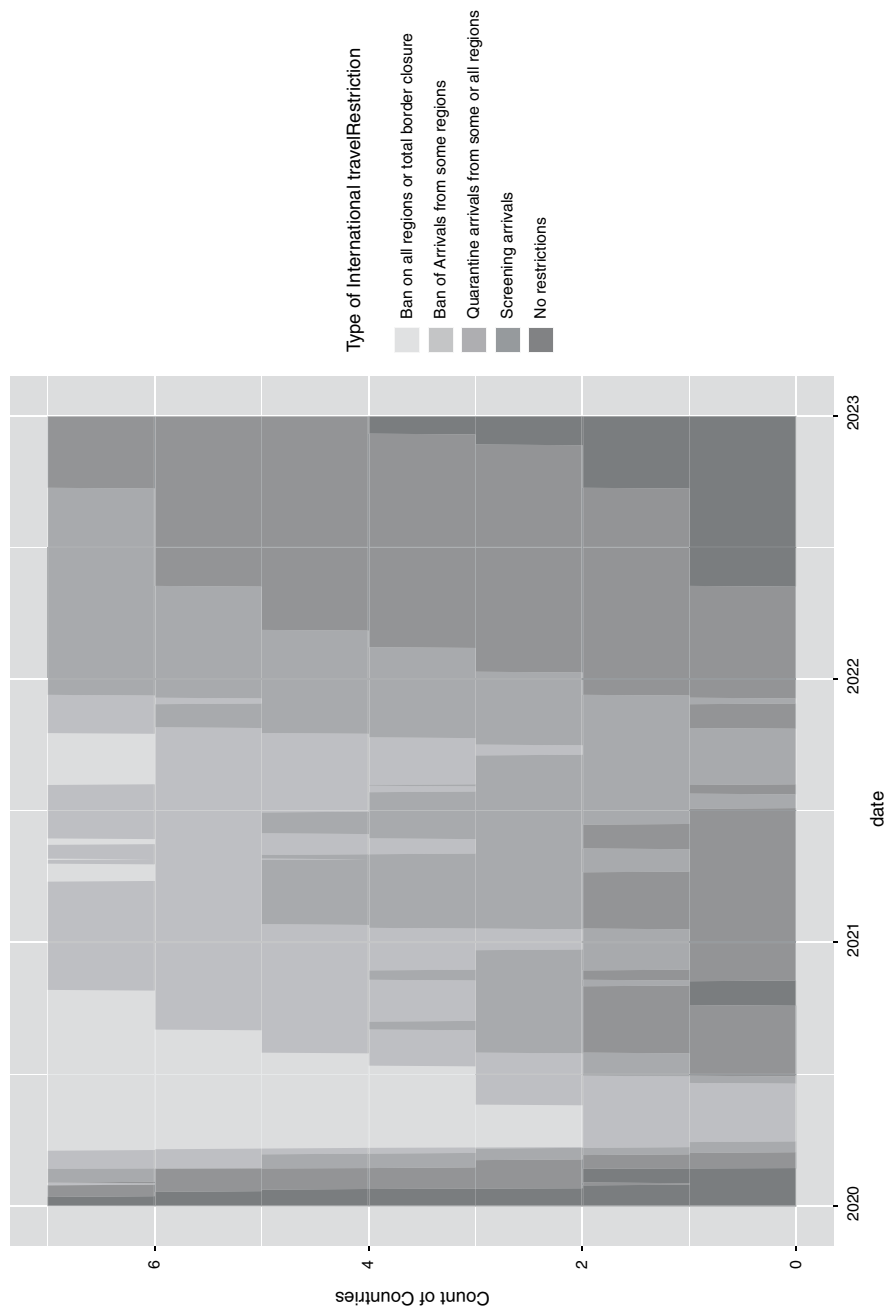


FIGURE 1.3 Evolution of international travel restrictions in South Asia
Note. The graph tracks the evolution of international travel restrictions by countries in South Asia from 2020 to 2023. Data from Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker by Hale et al., 2021. Graph created by the author.

remittances, studies have shown that the absence of remittance income result in increased health vulnerabilities (IOM, 2021c) and socioeconomic pressure (ILO, 2020). As far as the migrants were concerned, they found themselves in a vulnerable and alien landscape with access to minimal legal recourse and facing job cuts, risks of getting stranded, discrimination and wage thefts (Weeraratne, 2023).

Weeraratne (2023) studied the various dimensions of wage theft experienced by Sri Lankan return migrants during COVID-19, including ‘non-negotiable wage reductions, delays in payments of dues, non-payment of salary and non-provision of other benefits’ and the Kafala system. Among the 300 return migrants interviewed, 59 percent reported some form of wage theft (see also Rajan and Akhil, 2019; Rajan and Pattath, 2022). Moreover, the knowledge gap arising from the over-reliance of migrants on their employers for dissemination of information pertinent to safety, health, and economic welfare decreases their capacity for autonomous decision-making (Rajan & Arcand, 2023; Rajan and Akhil, 2022).

A significant number of those who emigrate from South Asia are economically vulnerable unskilled or semiskilled workers, whose difficulties were brought to the fore, as many struggled to find a way to return home during the pandemic. They had already spent a fortune to emigrate, along with the risks associated with recruitment and the often-harsh working environment they would face; a borrowed investment in terms of money and social capital that isn’t likely to be recouped without spending significant time in the destination country. According to a world bank report, migratory outflows from an average Indian household decreased by 25 percent in 2021 while migratory inflows increased by 50 percent due to return migration (World Bank, 2022b). The emigration rates have not picked up since COVID-19 suggesting the permanent nature of return for many of these return migrants (World Bank, 2022b). Countries in South Asia will need to urgently develop comprehensive integration policies for the return migrants, casting a net wider than merely treating them as economic subjects by including social, cultural and psychosocial aspects.

Remittances

Remittance is often the most important source of foreign inflow for the countries in South Asia, ahead of foreign direct investments and other capital inflows, and has contributed significantly to the region’s development. In fact, South Asia is the largest recipient of remittances for a sub-region in the world, with majority of them directed at India which is the largest recipient of remittances in the world by country (World Bank, 2022a).

Remittance flows are known to be countercyclical and resilient to economic shocks and is a more stable source than capital inflows which tend to decrease during a crisis (World Bank, 2022c). This seems to have happened during the COVID-19 pandemic as well, with remittances increasing in the year 2020 in all the countries in South Asia, except in Afghanistan

and Nepal (World Bank, 2022a). According to the world bank estimates, remittances to South Asia increased by 5.2 percent in 2020 (World Bank, 2022a). The rise in remittances could be due to migrants liquidating their savings while returning, a switch to formal channels of money transfer in the face of uncertainties in local informal networks or an inclination by the diasporic community to help their relatives or families back home to meet medical expenses or to compensate for a decrease in local household revenue (World Bank, 2022b).

Further, countries in South Asia rolled out renewed liberalized remittance schemes that lifted interest rate ceilings on NRI deposits or deployed interest incentives to attract more remittances. Bangladesh lifted interest rate ceilings on non-resident foreign country deposits, internet banking transfers and proof of income; Bhutan increased interest of remittance deposits from 1 percent to 2 percent; India removed caps on non-resident deposits and allowed free competition between banks to attract remittances; Nepal provided additional 1 percent interest on remittance deposits, increased daily cap on money remitted from around and allowed non-Nepalese to open foreign currency savings account; Pakistan introduced digital accounts, increased interest paid to dollar denominated deposits to 6–7 percent (World Bank, 2022b). In fact, in the second quarter of 2023, South Asia had the lowest average cost of sending remittance at 4.3 per cent compared to the global average of 6.2 percent (KNOMAD, 2023).

The robust growth of remittances has continued well into 2022 for the three major economies in South Asia: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Figure 1.4), Although, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives experienced a drop in remittances between 2020 and 2021. However, formal remittances are only the tip of the iceberg in South Asia, and the effect of the pandemic on remittance dependent households are brought out by household level surveys conducted in

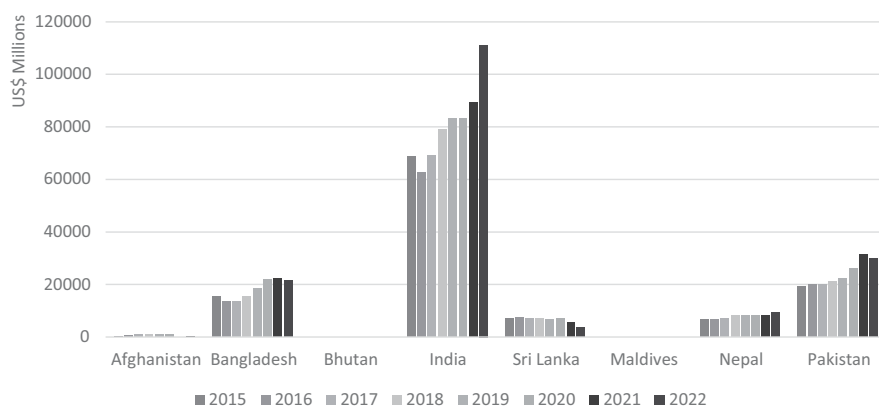


FIGURE 1.4 Inward remittances to countries in South Asia, 2015–2022

Note. The graph plots the trends of Inward remittances to countries in South Asia from 2015 to 2022. Personal Remittances, World Bank, 2022a.

Pakistan, India, Nepal and Bangladesh (World Bank, 2022b). According to the Consumer Pyramid Household Surveys (CPHS) panel data, remittances received by households in India that were receiving remittances before COVID-19 decreased by 50 percent (World Bank, 2022b). Panel Surveys in Bangladesh and Nepal suggest that the income of remittance receiving households decreased by 25 percent more than non-remittance receiving households during the same period (World Bank, 2022b).

Student migration

Student migration from South Asia has gained considerable traction over the last few decades. As per Migration Data Portal, IOM, 2023, India has the second highest number of student migrants in the world, only behind China. Other countries in the region, like Pakistan and Bangladesh, also have significant number of student migrants. The exodus of students from the region has been on such a scale that it has grabbed the attention of policymakers and has become a political issue in both the source and destination countries (Rajan, 2023b). COVID-19 put a break on the steady growth of the student out-migration from South Asia. As seen in Figure 1.5, the number of student visas issued to South Asians in United Kingdom, Australia and Canada experienced a sharp drop during 2020. Travel restrictions, COVID-19 induced economic slowdown and the general dysfunctionality of the visa regimes in host countries contributed many students postponing or even dropping the idea of studying abroad.

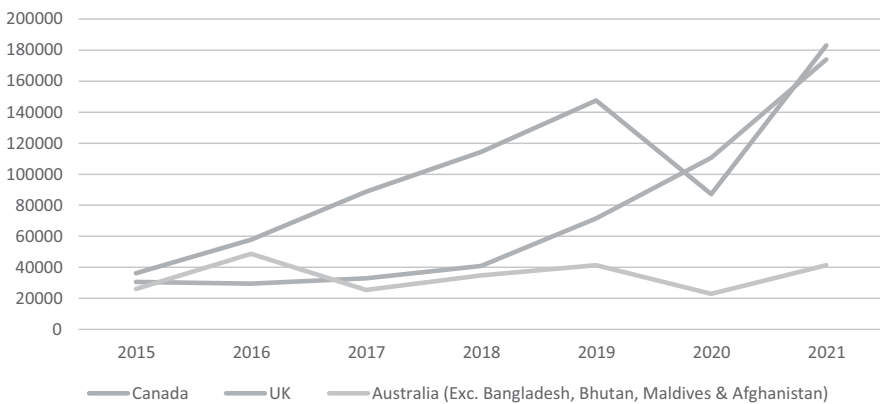


FIGURE 1.5 Student visas issued to South Asians in United Kingdom, Australia and Canada, 2015–2021

Note. The graph notes the trends of student visas issued to South Asians in UK, Australia and Canada from 2015 to 2021. Data from Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Canadian Government, 2023; Office for National Statistics, UK, n.d.

However, student migration from South Asia managed to pick up almost immediately after the headwinds of COVID-19 subsided. The case of India is explored in Figure 1.6, using the usage of outward remittances for studying abroad data from the Reserve Bank of India. After an initial slowdown in 2020, the amount paid (likely as fees in institutions abroad) have increased sharply in 2021, showcasing the post-COVID-19 recovery of student migration from India. The significant outflow of outbound remittances for studying abroad in 2021 might be because many students who were unable to relocate in 2020 owing to COVID-19 migrated in 2021. While COVID-19 certainly pushed the exodus of student migrants from South Asia, it has not been able to arrest the flow permanently. More than ever, students in South Asia aspire about studying abroad and their numbers are only likely to increase in the coming future. The growing presence of study abroad platforms and consultancies in South Asia is a testament to this growth (Mehrotra, 2023; Rajan, 2024).

This movement has also been aided by the growing political presence of South Asia countries and a growing number of migration partnerships involving South Asian countries. For example, France introduced plans to welcome 30,000 Indian students by 2030 as part of efforts to strengthen the cooperation between the two countries while a similar plan was rolled out by the United Kingdom for Indian students after a meeting between the prime ministers of both countries on the sidelines of the G20 summit (Bhattacharya, 2024; Badgamia, 2022).

South Asia Migration Report 2024

The *South Asia Migration Report (SAMR) 2024* seeks to provide a comprehensive volume on the many aspects of migration, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to earlier volumes on this subject (Rajan,

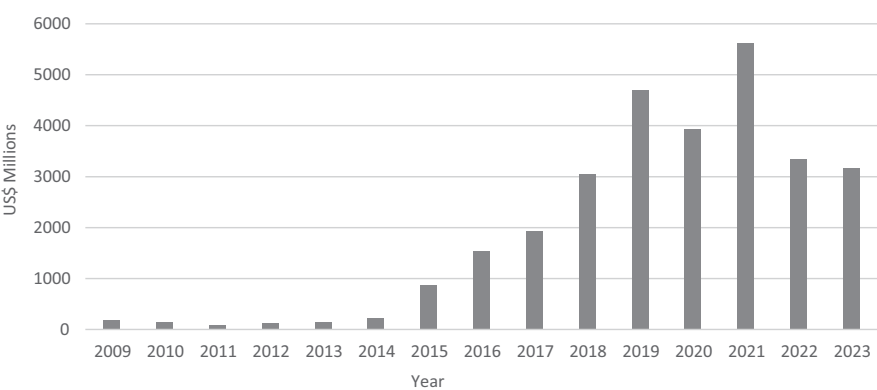


FIGURE 1.6 Outward remittances from India for studies abroad
Note. The graph shows the trend of outward remittances from India as spent for studies abroad. Reserve Bank of India, 2023.

2017; 2021) The SAMR 2024's subtheme is 'Remittances, Resilience, and Rehabilitation,' which is based on the stabilizing function played by remittances during COVID-19, the tremendous fortitude demonstrated by migrants and all their dependents, and the need for reintegration and rehabilitation of a significant number of returning migrants. Some of the chapters even go beyond this theme to include topics of social mobility, refugees, climate change and gendered perspectives.

Syed Naimul Wadood and Mehdi Chowdhury utilizes the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division data to study the trends of international migration in all the countries of South Asia. They also dive into the trends of migration between the countries in South Asia. The study finds that international migration from South Asia has consistently increased over the past few decades, however, the growth in international migrants from the region is low when compared to other geographical regions. The study calls for increased regional cooperation to better manage, regulate and improve the lives and migration experience of all migrants from South Asia.

Marta Bivand Erdal and Anu Abraham explores the relationship between migration and social mobility in South Asian from a decolonial perspective. The authors review the existing literature on the connections between migration and socio mobility, considering both the advantages and drawbacks. Subsequently, they also address the challenges in collecting data from the Global South and the complexities of dealing with definitions and theories mostly formulated in the Global North. The article also explores the utilization of quasi-longitudinal data to collect intergenerational information, which is essential for understanding the connections between social and spatial mobility over an extended period.

Nasrat Sayed and Katrin Marchand establishes the positive impact made by remittances and non-financial remittances from Afghan diaspora in the economic growth and development of Afghanistan. The Afghanistan diaspora have actively invested in health, education and humanitarian activities in rural Afghanistan, and capacity building and knowledge transfer to public and private institutions based majorly in Kabul. The article brings out specific policy recommendations for the Afghan diaspora, for locals and the government, for money transfer service companies as well as for international organizations, host countries of Afghan diaspora and donors.

Jagannath Adhikari, Mahendra Rai, Chiranjivi Baral and Mahendra Subedi traces the evolution of reintegration policies for return migrant workers in Nepal. They explore the legislative frameworks, programmatic strategies, and obstacles, emphasizing the disparities in mental health and gender among migrants who are returning home. The article stresses the need for a comprehensive approach to deal with return migrants and the need for efficient cooperation between governmental tiers; for more funding, they suggest including reintegration initiatives in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This in-depth deep dive into Nepal's reintegration policies also identifies policy shortcomings and offers prospects for long-term results in Nepal's reintegration efforts.

Padma Prasad Khatiwada studies the migration and integration policies in Nepal by considering the wide range of migration phenomena: internal and international, permanent and seasonal, including diaspora, student, family reunion, and tourism-related movements as well as distress migration due to climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters. The article compares existing policies at federal, provincial, and local levels, alongside robust institutional mechanisms to global migration policies and programs and suggest several policy recommendations.

Syeda Rozana Rashid examines the routes taken by young people migrating within Bangladesh, looking at examples from a variety of sociocultural and educational backgrounds. It offers a comparative study of the ways in which different youth groups use migration—through both legal and illegal channels—for work, further education, and settlement. Using Beck’s risk society and Bourdieu’s notions, the study reveals subtle differences in migration patterns within a non-egalitarian social field. Youths from less educated rural areas migrate locally in discrete, cyclical ways, while their more educated counterparts from metropolitan areas use resources to migrate abroad. The study highlights the of cross-cultural comparisons to comprehend migration dynamics and addresses the evolving challenges and potentials in South Asia, contributing novel insights to migration literature.

Sucharita Sengupta dives into the life of Rohingyas in Bangladeshi refugee camps, analyzing the elements of resource politics, visibility, and the impact of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as care providers in the camps. Through conversations with key stakeholders, the author traces the response and actions of NGOs towards the crisis. The article also delivers narratives of Rohingya activists from the camps and highlights key Rohingya organizations and explore their mobilization and demand for statehood. The article also examines the deteriorating conditions in the camps following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ilan Kelman critically examines the popular discourse on climate change induced migration and points out oversimplifications and a lack of integration with more extensive body of scientific research. It challenges the mindless reiteration of some themes, such as climate refugees and disappearing islands, and calls for careful examination of the subtleties, complexity, and judgments driving migration decisions. The paper casts doubt on the idea that population shifts are exclusively caused by climate change by highlighting the importance of choices and resources. It also recommends looking into non-human migration associated with climate change, broadening the viewpoint beyond human-centered concerns. The study promotes a thorough and thoughtful examination of the complex relationship between climate change, migration, and non-migration.

Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder, Selim Reza, Syed Nurullah Azad and Fard- een Hassan Anton explores the ways that COVID-19 affected internal migration in Bangladesh, highlighting the difficulties that migrants faced in maintaining their standard of living during lockdowns. The study also highlights the disparities in availability of economic recourse for mitigating the effect of the

pandemic. The necessity for thoughtful policy responses is emphasized in the conclusion, which promotes controlled internal migration and extensive social protection. The paper makes the case for broader global relevance and urges more research and analysis to help practitioners and policymakers deal with these difficult problems.

Anuradha Sen Mookerjee elucidates the story of normal women in the Sundarbans and thereby bringing out the gendered dimensions of circular internal migration in the Sundarbans. Through circular labour movement, the women demonstrate agency and resourcefulness in the face of hurdles, resulting in radical changes to gender patterns in households and communities. The study highlights how migration interacts with developmental therapies like Self-Help Groups to alter women's sense of belonging. Sen notes that the narratives emphasize the proletarianization of migrants, with female children being forced into wage labour as a result of gender dynamics. The research finds that gendered relational arrangements in the Indian Sundarbans are gradually shifting as a result of cyclical migration.

Note

- 1 A large number of them are likely to have been temporary visitors in their host countries but it does include a significant number of return emigrants as well.

References

- CSL_BIBLIOGRAPHY Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021, June 17). Migration, Australia, 2019–20 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/migration-australia/latest-release>.
- Badgama, N. (2022, November 16). UK confirms scheme for 3,000 visas to Indian nationals after Modi-Sunak meeting at G20 summit. <https://www.wionews.com/world/uk-confirms-scheme-for-3000-visas-to-indian-nationals-after-modi-sunak-meeting-at-g20-summit-534689>.
- Benton, M., Batalova, J., Davidoff-Gore, S. & Schmidt, T. (2021) COVID-19 and the state of global mobility in 2020. Grand-Saconnex and Washington: IOM and MPI.
- Bhattacharya, D. (2024, January 26). France to welcome 30,000 Indian students by 2030, Macron details 'ambitious' plan. <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/indian-students-study-in-france-30000-by-2030-emmanuel-macron-french-classes-visa-2493809-2024-01-26>.
- BMET, Ministry of Expatriate's welfare and overseas employment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. (n.d.). *Statistical Reports* [dataset]. Retrieved March 15, 2024, from <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/statisticalDataAction>.
- Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan. (2024). *Reports and Statistics* [dataset]. <https://beoe.gov.pk/reports-and-statistics>.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)(2021). *COVID-19 and the state of global mobility in 2020*. Migration Policy Institute.
- Farooq, S., & Arif, G.M. (2023). The facts of return migration in the wake of COVID-19: A policy framework for reintegration of Pakistani workers. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(20), 5190–5218. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/1369183X.2024.2268976>.

- Hale, T., Angrist, N., Goldszmidt, R., *et al.* (2021). A global panel database of pandemic policies (Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker). *Nature Human Behaviour*, 5(4), 529–538. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1038/s41562-021-01079-8>.
- ILO. (2020). *COVID-19 and child labour: A time of crisis, a time to act*. https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/Informationresources/WCMS_747421/lang-en/index.htm.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Canadian Government. (2023, November 1). Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada Overview – Quarterly IRCC Updates—Open Government Portal. <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/0186868b-a04d-4a0e-962e-bdffbac51bfb3>.
- IOM. (2021a). Returnee Sitrep: Number of Bangladeshi Migrants Returned Due To Covid-19, April–December 2020. <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/returnee-sitrep-number-bangladeshi-migrants-returned-due-covid-19-april-december>.
- IOM. (2021b). World Migration Report 2022. <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022>
- IOM. (2021c, January 6). National preparedness and response plans for COVID-19 and other diseases: Why migrants should be included. Migration Data Portal. <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/blog/national-preparedness-and-response-plans-covid-19-and-other-diseases-why-migrants-should-be>.
- IOM. (2024). World Migration Report 2024. <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024>
- KNOMAD. (2023). *Leveraging Diaspora Finances for Private Capital Mobilization*. <https://www.knomad.org/publication/migration-and-development-brief-39>.
- Mathieu, E., *et al.* (2020). Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19). *Our World in Data*. <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>
- Mehrotra, N. (2023, October 13). India’s ‘study abroad’ ecosystem Loan applications see 4x jump and number of international schools too goes up. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/society/india-study-abroad-boom-easy-finance-edu-consultants-international-schools-ib-cambridge-curriculum/article67402847.ece>.
- Migration Data Portal, IOM. (2023). Migration data relevant for the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/migration-data-relevant-covid-19-pandemic>.
- Ministry of Civil Aviation, India. (2021, November 29). More than 2,17,000 flights operated under Vande Bharat Mission. <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1776091>.
- Ministry of External Affairs, India. (2023). Emigration Clearances (ECs) obtained by RAs and Direct Recruitment by FEs [dataset]. <https://www.emigrate.gov.in/>.
- Office for National Statistics, UK. (n.d.). Visa journeys and student outcomes—Office for National Statistics. Retrieved March 17, 2024, from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/visajourneysandstudentoutcomes/2021-11-29>.
- Rajan, S.I. (Ed.). (2018). *South Asia migration report 2017: Recruitment, remittances and reintegration*. Routledge.
- Rajan, S.I (Ed.). (2021). South Asia Migration Report 2020: *Exploitation, entrepreneurship and engagement*. Routledge,
- Rajan, S.I. and Arcand, J.-L. (2023). COVID-19 return migration phenomena: Experiences from South and Southeast Asia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49 (20), 5133–5152. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/1369183X.2024.2268963>.
- Rajan, S.I, Sivakumar, P., & Srinivasan, A. (2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic and Internal Labour Migration in India: A ‘Crisis of Mobility.’ *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 63(4), 1021–1039. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41027-020-00293-8>.

- Rajan S.I., & Bhagat R.B. (2021). *Internal migration in India: Integrating migration with development and urbanization policies*. KNOMAD.
- Rajan, S.I. (2020). Migrants at a crossroads: COVID-19 and challenges to migration. *Migration and Development*, 9(3), 323–330. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/21632324.2020.1826201>.
- Rajan, S.I. (2023a). Migration in South Asia: Old and New Mobilities. In S.I. Rajan (Ed.), *Migration in South Asia: IMISCOE Regional Reader* (pp. 3–15). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-34194-6_1.
- Rajan, S.I. (2023b). Re-emerging from a Hiatus: Migrants and Migration in a Post-Pandemic World. *Migration and Development*, 12(1), 7–12.
- Rajan, S.I., and Arokkiaraj, H. (2022). Return Migration from the Gulf Region to India Amidst COVID-19. In A. Triandafyllidou (Ed.), *Migration and Pandemics* (pp. 207–225). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/doi:10.1007/978-3-030-81210-2_11.
- Rajan, S.I., & Pattath, B. (2022). Distress return migration amid COVID-19: Kerala's response. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal: APMJ*, 31(2), 176–189. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1177/01171968221115259>.
- Rajan, S.I and C.S. Akhil. (2022). Non-payment of Wages Among Gulf returnees in the First Wave of COVID-19. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003315124-13/non-payment-wages-among-gulf-returnees-first-wave-covid-19-irudaya-rajana-akhil>.
- Rajan, S.I. (2024). *India Migration Report 2023: Student Migration*. Routledge.
- Reserve Bank of India. (2023). *Outward remittances under the liberalised remittance scheme for resident individuals* [dataset].
- United Nations. 2020. *International Migration Stock*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. United Nations. New York.
- United Nations Network on Migration. (2022). Tackling the Socio-Economic Consequences of COVID-19 on Migrants and their Communities: Why Integration Matters. https://migrationnetwork.un.org/sites/g/files/tmzbd1416/files/resources_files/discussion_paper_why_integration_matters.pdf.
- Weeraratne, B. (2023). COVID-19 pandemic induced wage theft: Evidence from Sri Lankan migrant workers. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(20), 5259–5280. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/1369183X.2024.2268989>.
- World Bank. (2022a). Personal Remittances [dataset]. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=AF-BD-IN-MV-NP-BT-LK-PK>.
- World Bank. (2022b). South Asia Economic Focus: COVID-19 and Migration. <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/abs/doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1920-9>.
- World Bank. (2022c, December 6). Remittances are a critical economic stabilizer. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/remittances-are-critical-economic-stabilizer>.
- World Bank (Ed.). (2023). *Migrants, refugees, and societies*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2023>.

2

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OF SOUTH ASIA

Syed Naimul Wadood and Mehdi Chowdhury

Section 2.1: Background

The phenomenon of *international migration* has rapidly expanded worldwide since the end of the World War II. Even though international migration has been there in human history since the beginning of history, this has taken a strong institutional form only after the end of the World War II, the process of decolonization and the formation of newly independent countries (see IOM 2020, pp. 3–5). From the data provided on the *Migration Data Portal* run by the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2021), we can observe this expansion in numbers (this portal exhibits a collection of the *global international migrant stock* data for every five-year interval from 1990 to 2020). Whereas in 1990, the *global international migrant stock* stood at a total of 153 million persons, this number moved on to a total of 161.3 million by 1995, 173.2 million by 2000, 191.4 million by 2005, 221 million by 2010, 248 million by 2015 and the latest total number of 280.6 million by middle of 2020 (IOM 2021). Therefore, the *global international migrant stock* continued to expand throughout the succeeding years during the period of 1990 to 2020, achieved an increase of 83.4 per cent over the 1990 figure by the year 2020 (the growth rate was relatively moderate in the 1990s, it was quite spectacular during the 2000s but this to some extent reduced during the 2010s, after the Great Recession which occurred in between 2007 and 2009 (ILO 2011)).

The South Asian countries constitute a sizeable portion of the world population and also constitute a sizeable portion of the *world international migrant stock* (World Bank 2020; Chowdhury and Rajan, 2018; Rajan, 2018; 2021; 2023). Here in this chapter, we discuss the phenomenon of international migration of South Asia, by examining data from the abovementioned *Migration Data Portal*.

The South Asian countries contain around 24 per cent of the world population by the middle of 2020 (calculated from data of UN DESA PD, 2020). Within this 24 per cent of the global population, India alone contains 74.63 per cent, Pakistan contains 11.78 per cent and Bangladesh contains 8.78 per cent. These three large countries combined contain 95.19 per cent and the other five smaller countries combined contain the remaining 4.81 per cent of the total South Asian population, at present. On the other hand, in terms of total *international migrant stock*, the total number of international migrants from the South Asian countries stood at 42 million (2020), which was around 15 per cent of the total *world international migrant stock of 280.6 million*. This implies South Asian countries contained around 24 per cent of world population whereas they supplied approximately 15 per cent of the *global international migrant stock* in the middle of year 2020, therefore this region actually lags behind other regions in terms of share of *international migrant stock* worldwide.

The South Asian countries generally lag behind countries of other regions in terms of overall socio-economic development. This is evident in the Human Development Index (HDI) rankings of countries in 2020, as reported in the Migration Data Portal (a total of 188 countries, 1=Highest HDI, 188=Lowest) (data based on United Nations Development Programme's HDI reports (see UNDP (2019)). The most highly ranked country within South Asia in terms of HDI ranking is Sri Lanka (ranked 76), followed by Maldives (ranked 102). Out of the eight countries, only these two countries (Sri Lanka and Maldives) are classified as of *high human development*. India (130), Bhutan (135) and Bangladesh (136) cluster together after an interval, whereas Nepal (149) and Pakistan (150) form the following cluster. The five abovementioned countries (India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan) are classified as of *medium human development*. Afghanistan (ranked 169) is the least ranked within the South Asian countries and is classified as of *low human development*. Matching with the predictions of the theory of international migration, an expected *South-North movement* has been observed about international migration from South Asia, a movement of people from the (generally poorer) “*South*” to the (generally richer) “*North*”. Yet there has been substantial amount of *South-South movement* as well (poorer “*South*” to and from neighboring poorer “*South*”) (see Wadood (2021), pp. 4). Another observation from data is that the smaller countries (in terms of population) have been more active as source countries of international migration than the larger countries (in terms of population), if we examine the *data of number of international migrants per 1,000 population*). We note that some excellent reviews of theory of international migration is available, so that the reader can understand the theory behind this phenomenon of *international migration*, such as King (2012) and Chowdhury and Telli (2016).

The organization of the chapter is as follows. **Section 2.1** sets the background and **Section 2.2** discusses international migration data of the South Asian countries in the following order: India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan,

Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives (decreasing order in terms of the *total international migrant stock* in the outside world with origins from the country in question, in the middle of 2020). Section 2.3 summarizes discussions from Section 2.2 and Section 2.4 concludes with some policy recommendations.

Section 2.2: International Migration of the South Asian Countries

2.2.1 International Migration of India

Table 2.1 exhibits data for international migrant stock from India in the outside world, this increased by 2.69 times from 1990 to 2020. Whereas in 1990, the percentage of females was 43 per cent, this has reduced to 34 per cent of the total by 2020, this implies female percentage has reduced. The biggest concentration of the Indian international migrant stock is in the *Northern Africa and Western Asia* geographical region, and then in the *Europe and Northern America* region. This stock has actually reduced in the *Central and Southern Asia* region, again this has sharply increased in the *Australia and New Zealand* region. In terms of country income classifications, the vast majority of increases in the stock of the Indian international migrants has been in the *high-income countries*, whereas a very small amount is currently present in the *low-income countries*. As of middle of 2020, a total of 17.9 million international migrants from India were present in the world, which was about 6.4 per cent of the global total stock and this is the highest among all countries. Only 12.8 persons per every 1,000 Indians are international migrants (2020), which is quite small compared to the case of other, smaller South Asian countries, such as Afghanistan (see Section 2.2.4 of this chapter).

Table 2.1 exhibits number of India's international migrant stock to other South Asian countries. A highest 1.5 million Indian international migrant stock are present in Pakistan, and another 426,000 Indians are present in Nepal (2020).

Table 2.10 exhibits the number of international migrants from the outside world located in India. There has been a gradual decline in the number, such as, from a number of around 7.6 million in 1990, this has decreased to a number of 4.9 million in 2020, a reduction of 35 per cent. In 1990, the female percentage was 48 per cent, whereas in 2020, the female percentage within the international migrant stock from the world to India has been 53 per cent, which is actually an increase of 5 percentage points.

Summarily, the *Indian international migrant stock to the world* now amounts to 17.9 million persons in number, which has grown almost three times during the last thirty years (see Table 2.1), on the other hand, the *global international migrant stock to India* now amounts to about 4.9 million persons in total, which has reduced in number by approximately 35 per cent (see Table 2.10).

2.2.2 International Migration of Bangladesh

Table 2.2 exhibits the international migrant stock data from Bangladesh to the outside world, and by the year of 2020, the number of international migrants from Bangladesh stood at 7.4 million persons, whereas this was around 5.5 million persons in 1990, thereby the number grew by 34 per cent only (as compared to 169 per cent increase in the case of the Indian international migrant stock). Whereas in 1990, the percentage of females in the international migrant stock from Bangladesh was 42 per cent, this has reduced to 33 per cent by 2020, a nine-percentage point decrease. In 1990, the Bangladeshi international migrants numbered around 4.4 million in the *Central and Southern Asia* region, this has reduced to 2.5 million by 2020. On the other hand, the number of migrant stocks from Bangladesh increased from 0.87 million to almost four times, up to 3.46 million in the region of *Northern Africa and Western Asia*. The number of Bangladeshi migrant stock in the *Europe and North America* region increased about five times in between 1990 and 2020, from 156,000 to 781,000. On the other hand, the number of Bangladeshi migrant stock increased from a small number of 2,500 at 22 times up to 56,000 in the *Australia and New Zealand* region. In the *Eastern and South-Eastern Asia* geographical region, the number of Bangladeshi migrant stock increased 13.67 times as well. From the point of view of country income classifications: whereas in 1990, the international migrant stock from Bangladesh in the *high-income countries* stood at 1.04 million persons, this number increased 4.23 times to 4.4 million persons in 2020. Conversely, in the *middle-income countries*, this number decreased around 32 per cent from 4.4 million (1990) to 3 million (2020). We can also observe that, 44.9 persons per every 1,000 Bangladeshis are international migrants (2020), which is higher compared to the case of other, larger South Asian countries, such as India (see Section 2.2.1 of this chapter).

Table 2.9 exhibits the number of Bangladeshi international migrant stock in other South Asian countries. The number of Bangladeshi migrant stocks in India decreased sharply around 43 per cent from 4.4 million (1990) to 2.5 million (2020). Conversely, the number of Bangladeshi migrant stock in Maldives increased around 25 times from a small 1,600 (1990) to 40,000 (2020).

Table 2.10 exhibits the number of international migrant stock from the outside world to Bangladesh. Unlike the case of India, the number of the international migrant stock from outside world increased in Bangladesh about 2.41 times from 0.88 million (1990) to 2.12 million (2020) (much of this increase occurred in 2015 to 2020 interval, associated with the Rohingya refugee crisis, see Chowdhury et al. 2019).

Therefore, in summary, in 2020, Bangladesh has a total number of 7.4 million international migrant stock in the world (Table 2.2), whereas a total number of 2.1 million international migrant stock population from the outside world is in Bangladesh (Table 2.10).

2.2.3 International Migration of Pakistan

Table 2.3 exhibits international migrant stock of Pakistan to the outside world. Whereas in 1990, the number of international migrant stock of Pakistan to the outside world stood at 3.34 million, this has increased by around 90 per cent up to 6.33 million by 2020. The percentage of females in this international migrant stock from Pakistan decreased from 41 per cent (1990) to 34 per cent (2020), a seven-percentage-point decrease. In the *Northern Africa and Western Asia* region, international migrant stock from Pakistan increased 3.75 times, from 0.912 million (1990) to 3.42 million (2020). Conversely, in the *Central and Southern Asia* region, the number of Pakistani migrant stock decreased about 51 per cent from 1.942 million (1990) to 0.951 million (2020). In the *Europe and Northern America* region, the number of Pakistani migrant stock increased from 0.439 million (1990) to 1.579 million (2020), an almost 3.6 times increase. In the *Australia and New Zealand* region, the increase has been a remarkable 14.73 times, from a small number of 6,000 (1990) to 88,400 (2020). In terms of country income classification, the number of Pakistani migrant stock increased 3.82 times from 1.37 million (1990) to 5.24 million (2020), in the *high-income countries*. Conversely, in the case of the *middle-income countries*, the number of Pakistani migrant stock decreased about 50 per cent from 1.97 million (1990) to 0.982 million (2020). Additionally, about 105,000 number of Pakistani migrant stock remained in *low-income countries* in 2020, whereas in 1990, this number was only 9,000. We can also observe that, about 28.52 persons per every 1,000 Pakistanis are international migrants (2020), which is in between the number for Bangladesh (44.9) and that for India (12.8), the other two large South Asian countries (see Section 2.2.1 and Section 2.2.2 of this chapter).

Table 2.9 exhibits the number of international migrant stock from Pakistan to other South Asian countries. The number of Pakistani migrant stock in Afghanistan sharply increased from 8,100 (1990) at 12.7 times up to 103,000 (2020). Conversely, the number of Pakistani migrant stock in India sharply decreased by 57 per cent from 1.921 million (1990) to 0.833 million (2020).

Table 2.10 exhibits the number of international migrant stock from the outside world in Pakistan. Whereas in 1990, the number of international migrant stock in Pakistan was 6.2 million, this has been reduced to 3.28 million in 2020, a decrease by 47 per cent.

Therefore, by middle of 2020, the number of international migrant stock from Pakistan to the outside world was 6.3 million (Table 2.3), and the number of international migrant stock from the outside world to Pakistan was 3.28 million (Table 2.10).

2.2.4 International Migration of Afghanistan

Table 2.4 exhibits the international migrant stock of Afghanistan to the outside world. The total international migrant stock from Afghanistan has actually

decreased during the thirty years of 1990 to 2020 – this was 7.7 million in 1990, whereas in 2020, this has been 5.9 million, a decrease of around 23 per cent. The largest decrease occurred in between 1990 and 1995, and this was by about 3.4 million. The percentage of females has remained almost the same, and this was around 45 per cent of the total international migrant stock of Afghanistan origin. The number of international migrant stock from Afghanistan increased 3.4 times in the *Northern Africa and Western Asia* region. From 182,000 (1990) this has moved up to 617,000 (2020). On the other hand, this stock from Afghanistan decreased about 41 per cent from the initial 7.38 million (1990) to now 4.34 million (2020) in the *Central and Southern Asia* region. There have been rapid increases of Afghan international migrant stock in the *Australia and New Zealand* region (from 2,900 in 1990 to 65,000 in 2020). The Afghan international migrant stock also increased by seven times in the *Europe and Northern America* region (from 117,000 (1990) to 829,000 (2020)). With regards to country income classification, the Afghan international migrant stock increased by five times in the *high-income countries* (from 270,000 (1990) to 1.38 million (2020)), conversely this stock decreased by 39 per cent in the *middle-income countries* (from 7.4 million (1990) to 4.5 million (2020)), during the same time period, this has increased by 65 per cent in the *low-income countries* (from 8,500 (1990) to 14,000 (2020)). We can also observe that, the number of international migrants per 1,000 persons of Afghanistan is now about 152 persons, which is much higher compared to those numbers of other South Asian countries.

Table 2.9 exhibits bilateral migration of Afghanistan with other South Asian countries. The Afghan international migrant stock in Pakistan has decreased from about 3.37 million (1990) to about 1.60 million (2020), a decrease by about 53 per cent. Conversely, the Afghan international migrant stock has fluctuated in number in India, around 15,000 persons.

Table 2.10 exhibits the number of global international migrant stock to Afghanistan, this has fluctuated over time, and now Afghanistan has a global international migrant stock of 144,000 (in 1990 this number was about 58,000). Overall, by 2020, about 5.9 million Afghan population remains in the outside world (Table 2.4) and about 144,000 foreign persons remain in Afghanistan (Table 2.10).

2.2.5 International Migration of Nepal

Table 2.5 exhibits that, the international migrant stock from Nepal to the outside world increased about 3.48 times during the last thirty years (it was 748,000 in 1990 and now about 2.6 million in 2020). This implies international migration has expanded rapidly in Nepal, as compared to other South Asian countries. The percentage of females in the Nepal international migrant stock has remained close to about 45 per cent and has seen decline of about four percentage points. The Nepalese international migrant stock increased by about 4.5 times (from 182,000 (1990) to 813,000 (2020)) in the *Northern Africa and*

Western Asia region, this has also increased by 46 per cent (from 528,000 (1990) to 773,000 (2020)) in the *Central and Southern Asia* region. There have been rapid increases in the number of international migrant stock from Nepal in the *Australia and New Zealand* region (from only 476,000 (1990) to 83,000 (2020)), and the *Europe and North America* region (from 6,700 (1990) to 273,000 (2020)). With respect to country income classification, the number of international migrant stock from Nepal increased by 6.21 times in the *high-income countries* (198,000 (1990) to about 1.23 million (2020)) – whereas this has increased by 2.5 times in the *middle-income countries* (550,000 (1990) to 1.37 million (2020)). We see that, by 2020, about 89 persons are there for every 1,000 persons in Nepal, who are now international migrants, and this is now quite higher compared to those of other South Asian countries.

Table 2.9 exhibits bilateral migration of Nepal with other South Asian countries. The Nepal international migrant stock in Bangladesh has been increased from about 9,700 (1990) to about 38,000 (2020), an increase by 3.92 times. Nepal has always been able to secure a large migrant stock presence in India, and this has been increased by 42 per cent (from 518,000 (1990) to 734,000 (2020)).

Table 2.10 exhibits the number of global international migrant stock to Nepal, this has fluctuated over time, and now Nepal has a global international migrant stock of 488,000 (in 1990 this number was about 430,000).

Overall, by 2020, about 2.6 million Nepal population remains in the outside world (Table 2.5) and about 488,000 foreign persons remain in Nepal (Table 2.10). Nepal is the South Asian country with the highest growth rate of international migrant stock (grew by 3.48 times) in between the years of 1990 and 2020.

2.2.6 International Migration of Sri Lanka

Table 2.6 exhibits that, the international migrant stock from Sri Lanka to the outside world increased about 2.21 times during the last thirty years (it was 884,000 in 1990 and now about 1.96 million in 2020). This implies international migration has expanded rapidly in Sri Lanka, as compared to other South Asian countries, at a much higher growth rate compared to those of India and Bangladesh, whereas less than the case of Nepal. The percentage of females in the Sri Lanka international migrant stock has been reduced from about 48 per cent (1990) to 42 per cent (2020), about six percentage points. The Sri Lanka international migrant stock increased by about 2.83 times (from 322,000 (1990) to 912,000 (2020)) in the *Northern Africa and Western Asia* region, this has actually decreased by about 33 per cent (from 287,000 (1990) to 193,000 (2020)) in the *Central and Southern Asia* region. There have been some increases in the number of international migrant stock from Sri Lanka in the *Australia and New Zealand* region (from 49,000 (1990) to 154,000 (2020)), and the *Europe and North America* region (from 210,000 (1990) to 605,000 (2020)), and some rapid increases in the *Eastern and South-Eastern Asia* region (from 14,000 (1990) to 91,000 (2020)). By the year 2020, the largest concentration of Sri

Lankan international migrant stock has been in the *Northern Africa and Western Asia* region (912,000), then *Europe and North America* region (605,000). With respect to country income classification, the number of international migrant stock from Sri Lanka has increased by about three times in the *high-income countries* (571,000 (1990) to about 1.73 million (2020)) – whereas this has actually been decreased by 26 per cent in the *middle-income* countries (312,000 (1990) to 232,000 (2020)). We see that, by 2020, about 93 persons are there for every 1,000 persons in Sri Lanka, who are now international migrants, and this is higher compared to those of other South Asian countries.

Table 2.9 exhibits bilateral migration of Sri Lanka with other South Asian countries. The Sri Lanka international migrant stock in India has been decreased from about 282,000 (1990) to 184,000 (2020), a decrease by 35 per cent. Sri Lanka also has some migrant stock present in other South Asian countries, such as Maldives (7,000) and Pakistan (539). The major presence of Sri Lanka international migrants has been in India, but this has been reduced in recent decades.

Table 2.10 exhibits the number of global international migrant stock to Sri Lanka; this has been quite stable around 40,000 number. The percentage of females in the world international migrant stock to Sri Lanka has been around 47 per cent (2020).

Overall, by 2020, about 1.96 million Sri Lanka population remains in the outside world (Table 2.6) and about 40,000 foreign persons remain in Sri Lanka (Table 2.10).

2.2.7 International Migration of Bhutan

Table 2.7 exhibits that, the international migrant stock from Bhutan to the outside world increased by about 83 per cent during the last thirty years (it was 28,400 in 1990 and now about 52,000 in 2020). The percentage of females in the Bhutan international migrant stock has been stable around 50 per cent. The Bhutan international migrant stock increased by about 32 per cent (from 28,000 (1990) to 37,000 (2020)) in the *Central and Southern Asia* region. There have been tremendous increases in the number of international migrant stock from Bhutan in the *Australia and New Zealand* region (from only 25 (1990) to about 8,000 (2020)), and the *Europe and North America* region (from only 529 (1990) to 6,880 (2020)). By the year 2020, the largest concentration of Bhutan international migrant stock has been in the *Central and Southern Asia* region (37,000), then the *Australia and New Zealand region* (8,000) and the *Europe and North America* region (6,8750). With respect to country income classification, the number of international migrant stock from Bhutan has increased by about 25 times in the *high-income countries* (close to 600 (1990) to about 15 million (2020)) – whereas this has been increased by 32 per cent in the *middle-income* countries (28,000 (1990) to 37,000 (2020)). We see that, by 2020, about 67.44 persons are there for every 1,000 persons in Bhutan, who are now international migrants, and this is higher compared to those of other South Asian countries.

Table 2.9 exhibits bilateral migration of Bhutan with other South Asian countries. Bhutan has some international migrant stock present in India (9438 persons in 2020) and a higher number in Nepal (27502 persons in 2020), and Table 2.10

exhibits the number of global international migrant stock to Bhutan; this has increased over time, whereas in 1990, the number of foreign migrant stock present in Bhutan was about 24,000, this has increased by 125 per cent up to 54,000 in 2020. To note that only 15 per cent of the global international migrant stock present in Bhutan are females, and this has been so all these years since 1990.

Overall, by 2020, about 52,000 Bhutan international migrant stock remains in the outside world (Table 2.7) and about 53,600 foreign persons remain in Bhutan (Table 2.10). The net migration (equals emigration minus immigration) has been close to zero for this land-locked country.

2.2.8 International Migration of Maldives

Table 2.8 exhibits that, the international migrant stock from Maldives to the outside world increased by about 17 per cent during the last thirty years (it was 2192 in 1990 and now about 3715 in 2020). The percentage of females in the Maldives international migrant stock has been 53 per cent in 2020, although this was smaller in percentages during the 1990s. The Maldives international migrant stock increased by about 24 per cent (from 1,827 (1990) to 2,272 (2020)) in the *Central and Southern Asia* region. There have been increases in the number of international migrant stock from Maldives in the *Australia and New Zealand* region (from only 80 (1990) to 656 (2020)), and in the *Europe and North America* region (from only 224 (1990) to 643 (2020)). By the year 2020, the largest concentration of Maldives international migrant stock has been in the *Central and Southern Asia* region (2,272), then the *Australia and New Zealand* region (656) and the *Europe and North America* region (643). With respect to country income classification, the number of international migrant stock from Maldives has increased by about 7.6 times in the *high-income countries* (from 170 (1990) to 1293 (2020)) – whereas this has increased by 19 per cent in the *middle-income* countries (from 2,022 to 2,422 (2020)). We see that, by 2020, about 52.78 persons are there for every 1,000 persons in Maldives, who are now international migrants, and this is higher compared to other larger South Asian countries, such as India.

Table 2.9 exhibits bilateral migration of Maldives with other South Asian countries. Bhutan has some international migrant stock present in India (864 persons in 2020) and a higher number in Sri Lanka (1,408 persons in 2020).

Table 2.10 exhibits the number of global international migrant stock to Maldives; this has sharply increased in recent decades, whereas in 1990, the number of foreign migrant stock present in Maldives was about 8,700, this has increased by 8 times up to 70,000 in 2020. To note that only 12 per cent of the global international migrant stock present in Maldives are females, and this has been so particularly during the last decade.

Overall, by 2020, about 3,700 Maldives international migrant stock remains in the outside world (Table 2.8) and about 70,000 foreign persons remain in Maldives (Table 2.10). The net migration (equals emigration minus immigration) has been negative for this island country.

TABLE 2.1 International Migration from India

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/ Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>
WORLD	6.619.431	7.928.051	13.221.963	17.869.492
percentage of female in total	42.50	41.67	35.71	34.35
<i>Geographic Regions</i>	<i>by Geographic Regions</i>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	29.089	46.937	79.214	78.397
Northern Africa and Western Asia	1.980.275	2.772.595	6.484.297	9.606.150
Central and Southern Asia	3.263.013	2.739.271	2.503.940	2.130.862
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	109.230	221.313	355.186	427.386
Latin America and the Caribbean	6.121	8.254	13.182	19.415
Oceania (exc. Australia and NZ)	1.857	1.692	1.670	1.692
Australia and New Zealand (NZ)	79.220	111.009	385.583	701.770
Europe and Northern America	1.150.626	2.026.980	3.398.891	4.903.820
<i>Country Income Classification</i>	<i>by Country Income Classification</i>			
High income countries	3.225.478	4.973.124	10.431.756	15.419.860
Middle income countries	3.384.537	2.941.608	2.775.349	2.434.259
<i>upper middle income countries</i>	63.704	157.168	227.565	258.003
<i>lower middle income countries</i>	3.320.833	2.784.440	2.547.784	2.176.256
Low income countries	9.336	13.186	14.665	15.192
India: total population in mid-2020: 1.4 billion, HDI Ranking: 130 (1=High, 188=Low)				
<i>World total population in mid-2020: 7.8 billion, World total number of international migrant population: 280.6 million (3.6 percent)</i>				
total number of international emigrants from India in the World in mid-2020: 17.9 million (out of 280.6 million)				

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.2 International Migration from Bangladesh

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/ Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>
WORLD	5.450.443	5.441.094	6.319.871	7.401.763
percentage of female in total	41.98	41.32	35.08	32.83
<i>Geographic Regions</i>	<i>by Geographic Regions</i>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.648	1.569	19.779	24.352
Northern Africa and Western Asia	870.123	1.116.706	2.373.785	3.463.951
Central and Southern Asia	4.377.309	3.885.119	2.884.883	2.529.809
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	39.509	107.779	452.066	539.533

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/ Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>
Latin America and the Caribbean	71	52	166	5.528
Oceania (exc. Australia and NZ)	1.802	2.070	1.739	1.769
Australia and New Zealand (NZ)	2.567	9.645	31.013	55.559
Europe and Northern America	156.414	318.154	556.440	781.262
<i>Country Income Classification</i>	<i>by Country Income Classification</i>			
High income countries	1.038.977	1.478.681	3.030.045	4.401.976
Middle income countries	4.411.343	3.962.185	3.289.555	2.999.517
<i>upper middle income countries</i>	33.761	78.665	425.107	500.183
<i>lower middle income countries</i>	4.377.582	3.883.520	2.864.448	2.499.334
Low income countries	123	228	271	270
Bangladesh: total population in mid-2020: 164.7 million, HDI Ranking: 136 (1=High, 188=Low)				
<i>World total population in mid-2020: 7.8 billion, World total number of international migrant population: 280.6 million (3.6 percent)</i>				
total number of international emigrants from Bangladesh in the World in mid-2020: 7.4 million (out of 280.6 million)				

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.3 International Migration from Pakistan

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/ Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>
WORLD	3.341.086	3.406.434	4.790.584	6.328.400
percentage of female in total	41.06	39.51	34.53	34.47
<i>Geographic Regions</i>	<i>by Geographic Regions</i>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	3.432	6.875	16.145	17.772
Northern Africa and Western Asia	912.260	1.138.282	2.319.134	3.420.338
Central and Southern Asia	1.942.121	1.397.858	1.025.792	951.137
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	36.118	79.379	183.610	266.840
Latin America and the Caribbean	585	800	836	2.809
Oceania (exc. Australia and NZ)	1.294	1.456	1.771	1.867
Australia and New Zealand (NZ)	5.977	12.233	33.158	88.396
Europe and Northern America	439.299	769.551	1.210.138	1.579.241
<i>Country Income Classification</i>	<i>by Country Income Classification</i>			
High income countries	1.366.231	1.969.780	3.685.277	5.240.510
Middle income countries	1.965.766	1.408.657	1.055.027	982.605
<i>upper middle income countries</i>	35.046	45.625	90.833	140.624

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/ Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	1990	2000	2010	2020
<i>lower middle income countries</i>	1.930.720	1.363.032	964.194	841.981
Low income countries	9.089	27.997	50.280	105.285
Pakistan: total population in mid-2020: 220.9 million, HDI Ranking: 150 (1=High, 188=Low)				
<i>World total population in mid-2020: 7.8 billion, World total number of international migrant population: 280.6 million (3.6 percent)</i>				
total number of international emigrants from Pakistan in the World in mid-2020: 6.3 million (out of 280.6 million)				

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.4 International Migration from Afghanistan

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	1990	2000	2010	2020
WORLD	7.679.582	4.750.677	5.269.518	5.853.838
percentage of female in total	46.18	45.04	45.58	44.89
<i>Geographic Regions</i>	<i>by Geographic Regions</i>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	123	88	503	709
Northern Africa and Western Asia	181.679	192.588	308.341	617.110
Central and Southern Asia	7.378.245	4.333.987	4.594.364	4.337.681
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	57	851	1.708	3.776
Latin America and the Caribbean	92	83	174	316
Oceania (exc. Australia and NZ)	0	0	0	0
Australia and New Zealand (NZ)	2.885	13.294	33.154	64.706
Europe and Northern America	116.501	209.786	331.274	829.540
<i>Country Income Classification</i>	<i>by Country Income Classification</i>			
High income countries	269.913	391.058	647.610	1.380.793
Middle income countries	7.401.184	4.342.329	4.606.312	4.458.915
<i>upper middle income countries</i>	4.009.209	2.256.139	2.593.395	2.838.005
<i>lower middle income countries</i>	3.391.975	2.086.190	2.012.917	1.620.910
Low income countries	8.485	17.290	15.596	14.130
Afghanistan: total population in mid-2020: 38.9 million, HDI Ranking: 169 (1=High, 188=Low)				
<i>World total population in mid-2020: 7.8 billion, World total number of international migrant population: 280.6 million (3.6 percent)</i>				
total number of international emigrants from Afghanistan in the World in mid-2020: 5.9 million (out of 280.6 million)				

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.5 International Migration from Nepal

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	1990	2000	2010	2020
WORLD	748.053	977.396	1,712.697	2,599.701
percentage of female in total	47.96	46.30	48.99	43.77
<i>Geographic Regions</i>	<i>by Geographic Regions</i>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	152	92	258	349
Northern Africa and Western Asia	181.517	192.207	393.421	813.031
Central and Southern Asia	528.220	677.773	876.230	773.129
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	30.824	80.148	311.905	656.351
Latin America and the Caribbean	7	7	65	78
Oceania (exc. Australia and NZ)	156	239	140	124
Australia and New Zealand (NZ)	476	2,335	28,217	83,242
Europe and Northern America	6,701	24,595	102,461	273,397
<i>Country Income Classification</i>	<i>by Country Income Classification</i>			
High income countries	198,223	233,701	546,802	1,225,895
Middle income countries	549,830	743,695	1,165,895	1,373,784
<i>upper middle income countries</i>	21,409	64,442	287,599	598,091
<i>lower middle income countries</i>	528,421	679,253	878,296	775,693
Low income countries	0	0	0	22
Nepal: total population in mid-2020: 29.1 million, HDI Ranking: 149 (1=High, 188=Low)				
<i>World total population in mid-2020: 7.8 billion, World total number of international migrant population: 280.6 million (3.6 percent)</i>				
total number of international emigrants from Nepal in the World in mid-2020: 2.6 million (out of 280.6 million)				

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.6 International Migration from Sri Lanka

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	1990	2000	2010	2020
WORLD	883.684	979.093	1,454.292	1,960.025
percentage of female in total	48.12	46.37	43.34	42.44
<i>Geographic Regions</i>	<i>by Geographic Regions</i>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,701	1,554	3,176	3,941
Northern Africa and Western Asia	321,704	320,672	555,582	912,136
Central and Southern Asia	286,991	198,247	219,608	192,777
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	14,225	29,703	53,148	91,922

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/ Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>
Latin America and the Caribbean	31	21	42	45
Oceania (exc. Australia and NZ)	118	89	294	212
Australia and New Zealand (NZ)	48.958	64.211	104.996	154.372
Europe and Northern America	209.956	364.596	517.446	604.62
<i>Country Income Classification</i>	<i>by Country Income Classification</i>			
High income countries	571.106	741.845	1.187.825	1.727.976
Middle income countries	312.458	237.116	266.328	231.895
<i>upper middle income countries</i>	29.263	45.792	52.94	45.866
<i>lower middle income countries</i>	283.195	191.324	213.388	186.029
Low income countries	120	132	139	154
Sri Lanka: total population in mid-2020: 21.4 million, HDI Ranking: 76 (1=High, 188=Low)				
<i>World total population in mid-2020: 7.8 billion, World total number of international migrant population: 280.6 million (3.6 percent)</i>				
total number of international emigrants from Sri Lanka in the World in mid-2020: 2 million (out of 280.6 million)				

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.7 International Migration from Bhutan

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>
WORLD	28.461	120.183	91.934	51.998
percentage of female in total	51.09	48.9	48.9	49.43
<i>Geographic Regions</i>	<i>by Geographic Regions</i>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	0	0	0	1
Northern Africa and Western Asia	0	0	0	0
Central and Southern Asia	27.895	119.383	86.517	37.173
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	0	0	0	0
Latin America and the Caribbean	12	14	14	12
Oceania (exc. Australia and NZ)	0	0	0	0
Australia and New Zealand (NZ)	25	70	1.69	7.937
Europe and Northern America	529	716	3.713	6.875
<i>Country Income Classification</i>	<i>by Country Income Classification</i>			
High income countries	553	773	5.376	14.789
Middle income countries	27.908	119.41	86.558	37.208
<i>upper middle income countries</i>	13	27	41	35

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	1990	2000	2010	2020
<i>lower middle income countries</i>	27.895	119.383	86.517	37.173
Low income countries	0	0	0	1
Bhutan: total population in mid-2020: 771,600, HDI Ranking: 135 (1=High, 188=Low)				
<i>World total population in mid-2020: 7.8 billion, World total number of international migrant population: 280.6 million (3.6 percent)</i>				
total number of international emigrants from Bhutan in the World in mid-2020: 52,000 (out of 280.6 million)				

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.8 International Migration from Maldives

<i>Area of Destination</i>	<i>International Migrant Stock at Destination Areas/Countries (total number, by year)</i>			
	1990	2000	2010	2020
WORLD	2.192	1.216	3.643	3.715
percentage of female in total	22.58	42.6	51.68	53.03
<i>Geographic Regions</i>	<i>by Geographic Regions</i>			
Sub-Saharan Africa	56	25	79	104
Northern Africa and Western Asia	4	21	27	28
Central and Southern Asia	1.827	613	2.466	2.272
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	0	0	0	0
Latin America and the Caribbean	1	1	12	12
Oceania (exc. Australia and NZ)	0	0	0	0
Australia and New Zealand (NZ)	80	170	430	656
Europe and Northern America	224	386	529	643
<i>Country Income Classification</i>	<i>by Country Income Classification</i>			
High income countries	170	447	946	1.293
Middle income countries	2.022	769	2.597	2.422
<i>upper middle income countries</i>	191	135	104	122
<i>lower middle income countries</i>	1.831	634	2.493	2.3
Low income countries	0	0	0	0
Maldives: total population in mid-2020: 70,100, HDI Ranking: 102 (1=High, 188=Low)				
<i>World total population in mid-2020: 7.8 billion, World total number of international migrant population: 280.6 million (3.6 percent)</i>				
total number of international emigrants from Maldives in the World in mid-2020: 3.7,000 (out of 280.6 million)				

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.9 International Migration within South Asian Countries

SOURCE COUNTRY	DESTINA- TION COUNTRY	<i>International Migrant stock within South Asian Countries, Selected Years, total</i>			
		1990	2000	2010	2020
Afghanistan	India	14.159	12.794	18.085	16.094
	Pakistan	3,374.973	2,069.977	1,990.641	1,598.223
	Sri Lanka	0	31	129	132
Bangladesh	Bhutan	24	33	49	53
	India	4,375.155	3,879.114	2,855.334	2,488.471
	Maldives	1.623	5.286	28.598	40.39
	Nepal	500	522	244	222
	Sri Lanka	7	164	658	673
Bhutan	India	11.088	8.131	10.831	9.438
	Nepal	16.805	111.196	75.457	27.502
	Sri Lanka	2	56	229	233
India	Bangladesh	13.339	22.811	32.301	33.762
	Bhutan	20.841	28.128	42.383	46.974
	Maldives	951	11.427	13.568	14.596
	Nepal	369.37	543.594	461.186	426.941
	Pakistan	2,818.248	2,101.039	1,943.345	1,597.134
	Sri Lanka	39.329	31.618	10.529	10.837
Maldives	India	1.81	243	992	864
	Sri Lanka	17	370	1,474	1,408
Nepal	Bangladesh	9.67	13.051	33.308	38.301
	Bhutan	334	451	679	751
	India	518.212	664.187	841.906	733.734
	Sri Lanka	4	84	337	343
Pakistan	Afghanistan	8.107	26.343	47.984	102.5
	Bhutan	10	14	20	21
	India	1,921.278	1,353.231	956.166	833.314
	Maldives	79	100	203	329
	Nepal	2,371	2.47	1,296	1,212
	Sri Lanka	173	324	809	1,083
Sri Lanka	Bhutan	15	21	31	33
	India	281.72	189.85	212.022	184.78
	Maldives	4.289	7.72	6.85	7.383
	Nepal	78	87	42	42
	Pakistan	889	569	663	539

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

TABLE 2.10 International Migration towards South Asian Countries

<i>Destination Country</i>	<i>International Migrant stock from World to South Asian Countries (with female share)</i>			
	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>
Afghanistan	57.686	75.917	102.276	144.098
	0.44	0.44	0.44	0.52
Bangladesh	881.617	987.853	1.345.546	2.115.408
	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.48
Bhutan	23.807	32.137	48.42	53.612
	0.18	0.18	0.19	0.15
India	7.594.801	6.411.331	5.574.018	4.878.704
	0.48	0.48	0.52	0.53
Maldives	8.689	27.092	54.659	70.079
	0.45	0.45	0.24	0.12
Nepal	429.974	717.9	581.889	487.564
	0.71	0.66	0.67	0.7
Pakistan	6.208.204	4.181.912	3.943.681	3.276.580
	0.47	0.46	0.47	0.45
Sri Lanka	41.561	40.132	38.959	40.254
	0.44	0.45	0.47	0.47

Source: Migration Data Portal, <https://migrationdataportal.org>, accessed on 13.03.2021

Section 2.3 International Migration of the South Asian Countries, A Summary

Firstly, the international migrant stock from the South Asian countries to the outside world has increased for all the South Asian countries, except one country (Afghanistan), during the last thirty years (1990 to 2020). The international migrant stock to the outside world increased for India (171 per cent over base number of 1990), Bangladesh (35 per cent), Pakistan (90 per cent), Nepal (248 per cent), Sri Lanka (121 per cent), Bhutan (86 per cent) and Maldives (16 per cent). The only South Asian country where this stock has decreased is Afghanistan (23 per cent decline over the base year number of 1990). Therefore, South Asian countries match closely with the global tendencies of international migration, which is some increase for most countries during the last 30 years.

Secondly, the female percentage shares of international migrant stock of the South Asian countries have been mostly in the forties and in some cases, less than forties. There are tendencies of reduction of female percentage shares in the recent decade. The major three international migrant stock-source countries in South Asia have registered female percentage shares in the thirties (for example, India (34.35 per cent female), Bangladesh (32.83 per cent female) and Pakistan (34.47 per cent female)), by 2020.

Thirdly, in terms of geographical areas, the major destination region of South Asian migrants has been the *Northern Africa and Western Asia*. In the 1990s, one major destination region was the *Central and Southern Asia*, now this later one has been overtaken by the former one and also there has been reductions in the number of international migrant stock of South Asian countries to this later one region. Two other geographical regions that have registered large increases are the *Europe and Northern America* region and the *Australia and New Zealand* region. In the case of the *Australia and New Zealand* region, the number of migrant stocks were small in the 1990s but this has registered high growth in the recent two decades. There has been increases registered in the *Eastern and South-Eastern Asia* as well. Whereas thirty years earlier, international migration occurred mostly across borders over to neighbouring countries, now there has been a clear shift towards the Middle East, and to the South East and the Eastern Asia, and also large numbers of expatriates from South Asian countries are now settling in Europe and the Northern American countries, and they are also settling in Australia and New Zealand in very large numbers.

Fourthly, in terms of country income classification, the *high-income countries* have dominated in recent times, whereas the *middle-income countries* have seen moderate increases, if at all. There has been small number of international migrants of South Asia in the *low-income countries*. We can propose that, generally the potential migrant has searched to settle in countries whose human development index (HDI index) are higher than the HDI index of his/her own country (this applies in the cases where international migration has been a voluntary one, not a forced one).

Fifthly, given the large population of South Asia, the number of international migrant stock from the South Asian countries to the outside world has been actually small, compared to those for other countries and other regions of the world.

Section 2.4 Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In this paper, we have provided an empirical investigation of the South Asian countries, covering only international migration. The data analysis was descriptive in nature, however it was able to provide important insights on the migration situation.

There is scope for policy coordination and cooperation among the South Asian countries with regards to international migration, including search for new destination locations, labor contract negotiations, student study abroad and family unification rules. Further research may seek to identify the obstacles for South Asia of realising the benefits from international migration, specifically the migration of human capital. Studies are also required on how the South Asian countries can work together for channelling the remittances from international migration to economic development as well as increasing the inflows.

References

- Chowdhury M. and Telli, H. (2016), “Migration”, in Hölscher, J. and H. Tomann, (eds.), *Palgrave Dictionary for Emerging Markets and Transition Economics*, Chapter 19, pp. 372–393. Palgrave Macmillan, United Kingdom.
- Chowdhury M., Williams N., Thompson, K. (2019), “*The Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh: The Management and Involvement of Local Actors*”, BAFES28, Department of Accounting, Finance & Economic, Bournemouth University, United Kingdom
- Chowdhury, M and S I Rajan (ed). 2018. *South Asian Migration in the Gulf: Causes and Consequences*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- ILO (2011), “Global Employment Trends for the Youth: 2011 Update”, *International Labour Organization*, October, Geneva, Switzerland
- IOM (2020), *World Migration Report 2020*, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, Switzerland
- IOM (2021), “2021 Global Migration Data Portal”, web site run by IOM’s GMDAC (International Organization for Migration’s Global Migration Data Analysis Centre), Berlin, <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/> (accessed on 22. 04. 2021)
- King, R. (2012), “Theories and Typologies of Migration: An Overview and A Primer”, *Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations*, 3/12, Malmo University, Malmo, Sweden.
- Rajan, S.I. (Ed.). (2018). *South Asia migration report 2017: Recruitment, remittances and reintegration*. Routledge.
- Rajan, S. I (Ed.). (2021). *South Asia Migration Report 2020: Exploitation, entrepreneurship and engagement*. Routledge,
- Rajan, S.I (ed) 2023. *Migration in South Asia: IMISCOE Regional Reader*. Springer
- UN DESA PD (2020), *International Migration 2020 Report Highlights*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, New York, USA.
- UNDP (2019), *Human Development Report 2019, Beyond Income, Beyond Averages, Beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in Today’s 21st Century*, United Nations Development Programme, New York, USA
- UNDP, Bangladesh (2013), *Internal Migration in Bangladesh: Character, Drivers and Policy Issues*. Report Prepared by R. Marshall and S. Rahman, United Nations Development Programme, Bangladesh Office, Dhaka
- Wadood, S. N. (2021), “International Migration Theory and Bangladesh: A Brief Overview”, *ResearchGate Preprint*, March 2021, DOI:doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.22420.01924/6.
- World Bank (2020), *Towards Safer and More Productive Migration for South Asia*, Revised Draft, March 31, 2020, Social Protection and Jobs – South Asia Region, The World Bank Group, Washington D.C.

3

A METHODOLOGICALLY ORIENTED INTERROGATION OF CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MIGRATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY IN SOUTH ASIA

Marta Bivand Erdal and Anu Abraham¹

Introduction

More than the inhabitants of any other continent, Asia's population in recent decades has experienced astounding leaps, not just out of poverty, but into middle-classness (ADB 2010; Birdsall 2010; Kharas 2017; Rahman and Yong 2015). In fact, 90 percent of the global increase in the size of the middle classes is occurring in Asia (Kharas 2017). What is driving this remarkable middle-class expansion? It has long been understood that education and urbanization are crucial factors, as well as increases in female labour force participation, growing productivity, and environments supportive of entrepreneurship and business. It is also known that social mobility is affected by spatial mobility. Asian populations are highly mobile, both internally and internationally, illustrated e.g. by post-colonial migration from the Indian subcontinent, or labour migration to the Gulf states, or rural–urban migrations within national boundaries (Rajan 2023; Rajan and Bhagat 2021; IOM 2020; Massey 2019; Hasan 2010; Khadria 2005; Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003; Singh 1992).

Although spatial and social mobility are clearly linked, many mechanisms by which they are linked are poorly understood. Notably lacking is the recognition of the ties between those who migrate and those who stay behind, and their interaction across time and space. One often cited mechanism by which family members who migrate and those who remain behind stay connected is through remittances, the money that migrants send back home. One in seven people globally sends or receives remittances (IFAD 2017), and internal remittances, sent by rural migrants to cities who are the drivers of urbanization, can far exceed remittances sent by international migrants. But there are more channels through which migration affects social mobility and, knowing little about how migration affects the expansion of the middle classes means that migration has

been largely overlooked as a driver of middle-class growth. In other words, our understanding of how upward social mobility comes about is both skewed and incomplete in the absence of the recognition of the roles that migration—of varying distances and durations—plays over time.

In order to interrogate the connections between migration and social mobility in South Asia, there is a profound need for methodological innovation, and careful consideration of how migration and social mobility both might be measured, in order to enable a better understanding of their interactions. In this chapter we therefore offer a methodologically oriented interrogation of connections between migration and social mobility in South Asia.

Our perspective is decolonial, in the very basic sense that we interrogate the definition and operationalization of key elements of the landscape of mobility and immobility, and socio-economic and educational conditions, of relevance to the interface of migration and social mobility, taking as a point of departure the empirical realities of South Asian societies. This is an empirically and methodologically oriented approach to decolonizing the study of migration, taking inspiration from significant contributions to the broader decolonization agenda (Amelina 2022; Collins 2022; Mayblin & Turner 2020). Simultaneously, we also argue for a need to further foreground empirical realities in South Asia as contexts from within which salient theorisation within migration studies naturally should occur (see also Carling & Haugen 2021).

Our methodologically oriented interrogation furthers a decolonial lens also in heeding the call to address a persistent ‘destination bias’ in migration studies (de Haas 2021) through re-centering the salience of both internal mobilities (and immobilities), and regional movements across borders, alongside the existing attention to long-distance international migration. Through discussing specific operationalization of key terms, from a bottom-up perspective, grounded in South Asian societal realities, we propose an approach which abandons framing, concepts and explanatory models produced based on empirical realities in European or North American societies, but instead relating actively to local conditions, also as these continue in some regards to be shaped by post-colonial histories.

Our methodologically oriented interrogation with a decolonial perspective also offers innovation by taking a decolonial view of survey methods. The expansive growth of publications which address issues of decolonizing, also in relation to methods and approaches in research, are overwhelmingly dominated by qualitative methods, often focusing on participatory and other types of co-creative forms of knowledge production. Meanwhile, researchers working with face-to-face survey data collection, across societies in the Global South, are faced with very similar and real dilemmas and choices. This relates to how collaboration and knowledge production is navigated in ways that are attentive to local realities, as a route to high-quality measures and thus data. Simultaneously, this is equally about striving for equitable relations with collaborations, also in conducting face-to-face surveys, yet this perspective is far less often discussed explicitly in contexts of quantitative methods.

The chapter continues with a review of existing bodies of knowledge on the connections between migration and social mobility, as conceptual opportunities and stumbling blocks, for our methodologically oriented interrogation. The following section situates our perspective in (South) Asian (urban) realities. Thereafter we discuss avenues toward overcoming the methodological stumbling blocks identified and offer a concluding discussion where we revisit the salience of methodological efforts to move the decolonization of migration studies further, including as a promising basis to theorize from.

Conceptual opportunities and potential stumbling blocks?

Currently, specific conceptual and methodological challenges limit our understanding of how migration contributes to social mobility over time in South Asia. In this section, we discuss the state of the art of four distinct literatures, identifying limitations: (1) studies of remittances and the migration–development nexus, (2) the work on the expanding middle classes in Asia, and (3) the substantial existing scholarship on social mobility, before turning to (4) research that focuses on migration and aspects of social mobility.

Remittances and the migration–development nexus

Links between migration and development, and the roles of remittances therein, have received substantial attention (Carling 2008; Clemens and Postel 2018; de Haas 2005, 2010b; Gamlen 2014; Horst 2008; Skeldon 2008). The volume and salience of remittances is well-established: the total amount of migrant remittances is more than three times the amount of overseas development assistance globally (Maimbo and Ratha 2005; Ratha 2016). However, the long-term effect of remittances for families over-all is not properly captured in existing quantitative survey data that measure one point in time (Beauchemin 2014; Black and Skeldon 2009). Lacking significant information about families' trajectories of upward social mobility in the past, it is not possible to adequately explain change over time or the particular roles played in this change by migration, and specifically, remittances.

In the literature analysing effects of remittances, remittance-spending is often conceptualised as either consumptive or productive (Bashir 2014; Brown et al. 2014; Pugliese et al. 2016). This binary perspective obscures investments in human capital over time and treats issues of social capital superficially (Rahman and Fee 2012). However, in the recent past there have been origin-based studies that do describe the social roles of remittances (and social remittances) over time, but they rarely focus on social mobility (Abraham 2023a; Carling 2014; Erdal 2012, 2014; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2013; Åkesson 2011; Yeoh et al. 2013).

Further, research on internal migration, including urbanization (Finney and Marshall 2018; Gibson et al. 2010; Yankson et al. 2017), is largely disconnected from work on international migration (Beauchemin 2014; FitzGerald 2012; King and Skeldon 2010), despite the fact that both may be impelled by similar motives.

Research has treated migration simultaneously as both external to processes of social change and mobility in a given geographical context and as integral to them. This *endogeneity problem* is recognized (Bakewell 2010; de Haas 2010b), and it raises the questions of how to study migration as part of social change and how to study the roles of migration in trajectories of upward social mobility. To transcend limitations in existing research, conceptually and methodologically, there is a need for systematic engagement with a longitudinal perspective, by encompassing different types of geographic mobility within a single analytic framework, and by making the unit of analysis the family, which both evolves over time and may be spatially unbound.

Trajectories into middle-classness in Asia

Upward social mobility in Asia today, whether aspirational or actual, predominantly refers to becoming middle class, with dramatic leaps increasingly being made ‘into middle-classness’ (ADB 2010; Forsberg 2017; Gregson et al. 2016). The expanding Asian middle class is empirically observable in its various manifestations: housing developments, shopping malls, the proliferation of coffee shops (Banerjee and Duflo 2008; Brosius 2012). Precarity exists at the lower bounds of the middle classes in Asia, (Birdsall 2010; Ravallion 2009), whereas for increasing proportions of populations across Asia, partaking in middle-class lifestyles occasionally is possible (Kharas 2017). These facts vividly illustrate what indicators of economic and human development also show: many people across Asia have experienced upward social mobility in the last few decades.

Definitions of ‘middle classes’ vary across the Global South and differ from definitions in the Global North with regard to income levels (ADB 2010; Birdsall 2010; Kharas 2017; Melber 2016). In Asia, to be middle class is usually defined as living on \$4 to \$10, or even \$20, per person per day. But income alone does not define class status; a person’s self-identification matters too (ADB 2010; Melber 2016). Consumption plays a role in self-identification (Bourdieu 1986). Ownership of durable goods—refrigerators, TVs, mobile phones or motor bikes—and available leisure time shape people’s understandings (Gregson et al. 2016; Maqsood 2017). In sum, there is substantial knowledge about *what new middle-classness looks like* (Earl 2014; Jodhka and Prakash 2016; Mercer 2018).

Research in Asian and African countries points to the significance of occupation, education, housing, and ownership of durable goods as both drivers and outcomes of social mobility, with urban areas as key sites of actual and aspirational upward social mobility and middle-class attainment (de Haan 2007; Esson et al. 2016; Page and Sunjo 2018; Rigg 2007; Yankson et al. 2017). However, the role played by migration—internal or international, short-term or longer-term—as a driver of middle-class growth is *not* the focus of this body of work.

Additionally, this literature does not take into account the dimension of time. Many families only achieve significant upward social mobility—and middle-

class status—over two or more generations (Lehmann 2009; Toll 1983). To understand and explain better the underlying differences in the role migration plays in trajectories of upward social mobility, more attention must be paid to how the dynamic between social and geographic mobility plays out over time.

Upward social mobility and the (unrecognized) roles of migration

Upward social mobility, understood as the relative improvement in material living conditions and in social status, as experienced by individuals and families, has been studied both vertically and horizontally in societies, as well as inter-generationally and intra-generationally within families. These studies foreground the roles of social stratification, class, and inequality (Scott 1996; Torche 2014; van Leeuwen and Maas 2010). Whereas in the mid-20th century Max Weber focused on individuals' and families' opportunities for improved 'life chances' (1946), in the last 40 years, it is social stratification that has received considerable attention (Goldthorpe 1985; Henretta 1977).

The focus on *relative* improvement in studies of social stratification—and in much of the research on class—draws analytical attention to comparisons among groups of people or income strata. An implicit assumption is that social systems are bounded, usually within nation-states. Any movement—upward or downward—between layers or classes is understood as resulting from the movement of individuals (or families) between classes. Attention is thus paid to the relative size of classes in comparison to each other. 'Life chances' are framed as relative to those 'above' or 'below' in a social hierarchy. There is thus an implicit assumption that the social hierarchy exists within a bounded geographic space (i.e. a nation-state) (Beauchemin 2014; Wimmer and Schiller 2003).

The pioneering scientific work on social mobility in Europe brought to light key mechanisms for upward social mobility (including education, health improvements, and the structure of labour markets and wages) (Goldthorpe 1985; Henretta 1977; Weber 1946). However, it paid little attention to the vast European emigration to the United States, which we know had significant impacts on the 'receiving' regions in the US, as well as on 'sending' regions in Europe. When migration is the focus of analytical inquiry, as in Thomas and Znaniecki's seminal *The Polish peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an immigrant group* (1918), attention is on the 'immigrant' dimensions. This trend continues today, with the result that emigration, as well as circular migration, short-term migration, and return mobilities, are far *less* emphasised and understood, than is *immigration* (FitzGerald 2012; Ho 2018).

The 'mobilities turn' (Hannam et al. 2006; Urry 2000) has drawn attention to the sedentary bias (Kibreab 1999; Malkki 1995) in the social sciences, including in research on social mobility. Internal mobility and residential mobility (e.g. within cities) have become key topics of study, and international migration, especially the social mobility of the 'second generation' (descendants of migrants), is increasingly included in mainstream analyses of social mobility

(Borjas 1993; Crul 2000; Goodwin-White 2016; Jimenez et al. 2018; Rumbaut 2008; Tran et al. 2019; Zhou et al. 2008).

But despite the ‘mobilities turn’ and its pervasive reach (Adey and Bissell 2010; Hannam et al. 2006), the theorization of social mobility continues to be viewed largely through a sedentary prism (Miller and Ponto 2016). As Findlay and colleagues note, this is a far-reaching reality. Demographic studies of longitudinal change also continue to ‘adopt a sedentarist perspective and have ignored the role of human mobility’ (2015: 390). Thus, a key limitation in current theorization of social mobility remains the pervasiveness of a sedentary outlook, combined with national boundedness, impacted by the fact that the statistics are collected by—and within—nation-states, with very limited access to reliable international migration data that potentially could be drawn on (Beauchemin 2014; Black and Skeldon 2009).

Migration as a potential steppingstone to upward social mobility

Research on migration *and* social mobility, meanwhile, has largely clustered in two areas. First, there exist significant efforts to explore and theorize migration and class, predominantly inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s various forms of capital and capital conversion between economic and social capital, which may be facilitated through migration and remittances (Van Hear 2014; Waters 2006). Second, research has focused on how migration over time may lead to upward social mobility for the children of immigrants, the ‘second generation’ in Europe or the US (see e.g. Borjas 1993; Crul 2000; Tran et al. 2019). Overlooked in both strands of literature is the fate of families who *stay* in societies of origin; who are not *immigrants* in European countries, but who might still move, engaging in migration that is internal, circular, or involves return (Beauchemin 2014; Fitz-Gerald 2012) or stay behind while a member of the family has migrated in the hope of achieving social mobility for the family staying back.

The significant transnational turn in migration studies, with its emphasis on transnational ties, including remittances, has made visible the effects of migration on origin communities, but it has engaged to only a limited extent with social mobility (Levitt and Nyberg-Sørensen 2004; Levitt and Schiller 2004). Although research on chain migration, migration systems and the roles of migration networks acknowledges the interconnected nature of migration and its outcomes across contexts (Bakewell et al. 2016; Massey and Espinosa 1997), a majority of studies remain preoccupied with *transnational* connections. By implication, less attention is paid to the long-term developments locally in migrants’ origin communities (Toyota et al. 2007). Furthermore, when scholarly attention, often based on in-depth qualitative data, is paid to migrants’ families in their origin contexts in Asia (or Africa), it rarely engages empirically the issues related to social mobility or the scholarship on the growth of middle classes in those same locations (Abraham 2023b; Åkesson 2009; Pareñas 2005; Asis et al. 2004).

By contrast, in geography as well as in economics, it is well established that migration *can be a means* to achieving upward social mobility (de Haan 2007; Gibson et al. 2010; Stark and Bloom 1985; Thieme 2008; Zelinsky 1971). Theorizing migration and societies' economic development, Zelinsky (1971) hypothesized that societies go through *migration transitions* over time. Here, societal development in economic terms would both drive and be the outcome of migration, including in terms of families' upward social mobility. Zelinsky's theorization has rightly been criticized for the weight it gives to purely demographic factors, and testing of his theory empirically has produced highly diverging results (de Haas 2010a). However, we argue that its basic insight—that the dynamic between social and spatial mobility needs scrutiny over the longer-term—is analytically sound and a necessary step in order to move beyond the state of the art.

In sum, knowledge about the roles of migration in trajectories of upward social mobility, both in general and specifically with respect to present-day urban, middle-class families in Asia, is limited and fragmented as a result of four specific conceptual and methodological obstacles: (1) the national boundedness and largely sedentary outlook of social mobilities research; (2) the isolation of analysis of internal from international migration, exemplifying the fragmentation in approaches to different 'types' of migration; (3) the lack of engagement longitudinally with the impact of migration on social mobility beyond *immigration* contexts; all of which contribute to (4) the current impasse with respect to explaining and theorizing the roles of spatial mobility in producing social mobility outcomes, including, but not limited to, the empirical context of the unprecedented middle-class expansion in South Asia.

In this chapter we offer a methodologically oriented interrogation of connections between migration and social mobility in South Asia, as we turn to next. This is necessary not just at the theoretical or conceptual level, but also in relation to how we collect and analyze survey data more specifically.

Situating the perspective in (South) Asian (urban) realities

Based on our review of existing literature, it is clear that there is a gap in understanding the rapid rise of the Asian middle classes. One possible lacuna in research is the lack of attention given to the role of spatial mobility beyond the binaries of permanent emigration, on the one hand, and temporary migration associated with remittances, on the other. While the first strand tends to either have a transnational focus, and include social mobility in relation to a transnational field, or in relation to the destination society contexts (see e.g. Borjas 1993; Crul 2000; Tran et al. 2019), the second strand focusses on the role of remittances in improving the living standards of the migrants' households in the source region (Abraham 2023a; Van Hear 2014; Waters 2006).

However, there are several other types of spatial mobilities, some of which might be contributing to the upward social mobility of families in Asia. These

include (i) internal mobility and ‘settling’ in contexts within the national borders, often in urban areas – and the associated improvement of social position, which often-times may only become apparent across generations; (ii) internal migration of a family member and associated remittances creating social mobility for the family remaining in the place of origin – through human capital development, changes in consumption patterns, or productive investments of various kinds; or (iii) at a macro level, spatial mobility and associated social remittances that might affect social norms and values at the societal level, creating social mobility, in contexts impacted by migration, with both people leaving and settling.

Some of the aspects to keep in mind here are the intergenerational nature of social mobility and how migration in one generation can affect social mobility of future generations, the interactions of spatial mobility and social mobility which could either reinforcing each other as well as creating new forms or streams of spatial (im)mobilities. These aspects together point to the dynamic nature of the relation between spatial and social mobilities. Spatial mobility can affect the social position of an individual or a family which in turn can affect future decisions regarding whether to move or stay, and if moving, what type of move. There is a possibility that spatial mobility is a search for achieving social mobility and that once a certain social position is achieved, it could lead to return migration or immobility, which may be variously desired, also by different family members.

It is with these reflections in mind, we developed tools to conduct research aiming to understand connections between migration and social mobility in Asia. Examining this in Asian contexts brings the exciting prospect of gleaning insights from the Global South, focusing on the most rapidly rising middle class of the world.

As ADB (2010) indicates, middle classes are not just defined by a population falling within a certain income bracket, but also reflecting on certain common attributes such as – being more educated, having specific type of employment or occupations, as well as self-perception about social class. However, across different geographical and political boundaries, the perception of who belongs to the middle classes differs significantly – and though many attributes may remain of relative importance within a national context, they may vary significantly across different national contexts, again bringing to the fore, the challenge of cross-country comparisons. For example, though middle classes are more educated than the poorer segments of the population across different countries in Asia, the proportion of middle classes who have achieved higher education varies significantly (ADB, 2010). There are also significant differences in the standards of living and the required income needed in order to make the same thing possible across contexts, even for people with, for instance, similar educational levels.

Added to this complexity is the heterogeneity within Asia with its wide variation in development trajectories, across and within countries, as well as matters of social and family structures, traditions, norms and values, and colonial histories – all of which in turn affect what, beyond income, would come into

defining social mobility. The difference in development trajectories also significantly affects the rate of urbanization, as well as various structural factors such as key sectors of production, levels of average income, as well as the income distribution within societies. All these factors combined mean that the relative positions of middle classes differ quite radically across different societies – thereby also affecting their self-perception and aspirations which also are likely to act as drivers of social mobility in their own right.

Social and family structures are important aspects in conditioning the possibilities of social mobility. For example, in South Asian contexts, caste may play an important role in determining the social mobility of a family or an individual. Here spatial mobility might also provide a separation in geographical space (Gorringe et al 2017; Pankaj 2023), thereby enabling the individual or family to experience upward social mobility without the externally endowed identity dictating their social position.

Other types of norms and values can also affect the ability to move spatially, but also shape the (potential) outcome of such spatial mobility (de Haan 2000). For example, questions of being insiders, natives, or outsiders, aliens, which are more often discussed in relation to international migration, are also relevant to internal migration. Not least in countries in South Asia with a linguistic, ethnic, cultural, as well as religious diversity, which entails a high degree of heterogeneity, which can enable mechanisms of inclusion as well as exclusion. Another example are values and perceptions associated with the act of staying or leaving, in particular in relation to attachment to ancestral land, where there may be duties and obligations associated e.g. with returning, as well as with marriage practices tied to particular locations, and expectations of where life ought to be lived. These are matters that could play a role anywhere, in as far as they might be tied to land ownership and the location of immobile assets, but they might also take on more cultural meaning, which could play a role either in addition to or independent of the issue of immobile assets.

Family structures and kinship ties can also affect patterns of social mobility, especially when linked with spatial mobility. In societies where salience of kinship ties extends far beyond the immediate (nuclear) family, the effect of a family member's prosperity may be anticipated to positively affect the social mobility of even a distant relative may be seen as a real possibility. As a response to awareness of these realities, in our survey we included a question in our survey, asking: 'Is there a significant person, who was instrumental in the process of you and/or your family becoming middle class today?' The motive behind this question was to explore whether or how kinship ties beyond the immediate family played any role in upward social mobility, a theme which remains largely unexplored in research drawing on studies in societies in the Global North.

While there are many differences between Asian, and also South Asian contexts, there are more similarities across these contexts. Among these is first the very aspirational nature of middle classes and, second, the fact that there are always particular trajectories – often over the long-term, but at any rate over

time – for becoming middle class. In the next section we turn to the methodological stumbling blocks which emanate from the described conceptual and definitional challenges in this section, and their direct implications for the operationalization of measurement relevant to a study of connections between social mobility and migration, across diverse (South) Asian contexts.

Avenues toward overcoming the methodological stumbling blocks?

In this section we showcase the dilemmas encountered while developing a tool to capture and measure connections between social and spatial mobility. For some we offer possible solutions, for others we reflect on the challenges posed. Next, we shall attempt to conceptualize these methodological stumbling blocks and to describe some avenues toward overcoming them, drawing on empirical realities in South Asia.

Defining and identifying the middle class and social mobility

In order to understand the connections between social and spatial mobility, in our study we focused on respondents from middle class households, with the aim to trace both their social mobility and spatial mobility, if any, over time. Defining and identifying the middle classes in the context of four different field sites across Asia – Hanoi and Manila – and in South Asia: Karachi and Mumbai, was one of the major methodological challenges.

We now turn to reflect on some of the concrete challenges of conceptualizing and defining middle classes, and social mobility, in measurable terms, as these emerge in processes of operationalizing measures for field research in a survey. Many measurable definitions of middle classes are based on income calculations (e.g. ADB 2010). However, a major issue faced in the field while working on collecting primary data is that income data is seldom volunteered, and reported income is often not reliable. To overcome this issue, we therefore in our study used proxy expenditure measures to calculate approximate monthly expenditure from which the financial position of the household can be extrapolated.

In order to increase the scope of defining middle classes beyond income measures, another approach is to include aspects such as social and human capital, as well as ancestral wealth etc. which also determines socio-economic status and class position. In the case of South Asia, religious and caste-based structures within society also affect such positioning. Therefore, in our study we introduced questions that would reflect these aspects, not only focusing on the respondent, but also considering two previous generations, to establish the position of the family as middle class or not as well as to understand their social mobility, if any. A section was therefore included in order to try to capture the levels of education across two to three generations within the family of the respondent, aiming to capture the variations in educational achievements also as a proxy for human capital accumulation.

There is a variance in the perception of who is considered part of the middle classes, including variations in both more objective, subjective and perception-based perspectives on this matter. These perceptions of who might belong to the broadly defined middle classes in different cities, based on, say the cost of living, but also based on the current relative position of any given household in the social hierarchy, as well as the social mobility experiences of the household in the recent and not-so-recent past. To address this issue, our survey included measures in order to capture the social mobility of the respondent's household over two to three generations. We also included questions that reflect the social mobility in two more recent periods – the last 20 years and the last 10 years. Further, a section was added to ascertain the respondent's perception of who belongs to the middle classes in the city of residence, and what it takes to become a member of the middle classes in the city in which the respondent participated in the survey.

Our survey was to be conducted following a random sampling method. The first task was to create a process to identify households falling within a middle-class category to be included in the sampling frame. For this, we came up with an exhaustive list of external characteristics of dwellings which might reasonably be assumed to belong to the middle classes in a given city. Once these households were identified, the enumerators approached every 10th household to conduct the survey.

Defining and operationalizing 'migration'

As existing literature discusses there are multiple ways of defining and engaging with the terms 'migration' and 'the migrant', taking into account both the temporal and spatial aspects (Toney and Bailley 2014; Kok 1999; UN 1998; Massey et al 1993; Skeldon 1990; Shaw 1975). Often migrants are further categorized on the basis of duration of stay and short or long term and permanent or temporary as well as internal and international (and various other spatial categories), mainly on the basis of political boundaries crossed. As it was crucial for our study to capture all types of mobilities – across space and time, we deliberately opted to use the term 'migration' to include any moves – however short or long in time or distance, provided that there had been a change in residence (moving beyond the city where the survey was conducted).

The survey was structured in such a way that the duration of stay, and the distance moved could be captured over a series of questions. While this way of defining migration was conceptually more useful for the study, it made operationalizing the definition more difficult. One of the issues faced in the pilot was explaining to the respondents who a migrant actually might be. For example, people did not consider themselves or someone else to be 'migrant' if they had moved say, 30 years ago and settled with family in the city in which they were respondents to the survey. Too much time had passed, quite simply. For the children of migrants, similarly, even knowledge related to the migration of

parents or grandparents was often quite scarce. In some cases, there were also perception matters, or issues of definition or belonging, where due to stigmatization of migrants, not defining as a migrant, was a choice deliberately made. On the other end of this spectrum, we also had to operationalize whether someone was visiting or was a migrant – when the duration of stay was very short. While what is long and short varied across scenarios, these questions turned out to matter, and cut-off points of e.g. one year – or six months – or three months, all have particular challenges associated with them, notably often obscuring dynamics of mobility and immobility which may occur at intervals.

Further, there was also the question of which types of moves to consider as “migration”: Would moving from the suburbs to the city center constitute migration? If yes, would there be a minimum distance that was required to have moved? To overcome these issues, in our survey instrument questions were added to identify different moves based on change in residence irrespective of the spatial distance and duration of stay, which can later be categorized according to suitable and new data-driven definitions of migration. Similarly, while referring to moving or staying, the phrasing used was ‘move to another place/lived elsewhere’ rather than the phrase ‘migrated to’ in order to entirely avoid the previously mentioned stigma which might be associated with being ‘a migrant’ (which was reflected in the narrations during some pilot interviews, especially if the respondents had settled in a city a long time ago). Similar considerations had to be accounted for other family or household members who had migrated, as further discussed in the next section.

How to define and operationalize household and family and where to use them

Another methodological dilemma while developing the survey instrument was how to define a household, how to define a family and how to appropriately use both these terms. Going by conventional definitions, a household is a small group of persons who share the same accommodation, who pool some, or all, of their income and wealth and who consume certain types of goods and services collectively, mainly housing and food (United Nations, 1998). This holds true only partially when you are considering migrant households or households who have ‘members’ who are not currently living with them but may be using the same pool of income. In this case the question arises: what is a household or who are household members, if they are not currently staying under the same roof or eating from the same pot – but who, if not for the spatial separation, would have been a conventional household?

A related question is, if a person (say a son or daughter of the family) has been away for a duration of time, when do they cease to be part of the household? In this instance we decided to go with the idea that they still remain a part of the household as long as they are sharing from a common pool of resources or income. A similar definition was adopted for other members, such as parents or siblings if they have migrated or are living elsewhere than the respondent.

Defining the family was more complex in the study. As defined by the IOM (Perruchoud 2004), those members of the household who are related, to a specified degree, through blood, adoption or marriage was adopted as our approach. In our study, those with direct blood or marriage relations such as parents, siblings, children and grandparents were included in the definition of family, and as we wanted to incorporate anyone who the respondent considered as family, we have used this definition, but to also include relatives who may not be close blood relations but may have been closely associated with the respondent or his/her household during some time in the past.

Using a quasi-longitudinal approach

In our study we are using a quasi-longitudinal approach to try to understand spatial and social mobility over time. While this provides us with valuable information on the temporality of these mobilities, it also has some limitations of its own. One of the limitations that we have faced is that when respondents have to recollect facts about their grandparents, there are problems in remembering factual information accurately. Similarly, there can be incoherences in the timelines, that result from memory problems.

Another significant issue is when the respondent has been part of different households during the recall period for given questions. In our survey we collect information regarding not only the current socio-economic condition of the respondent's household, but also about asset accumulation over time as well as about the household they grew up in. While this seems pretty straight forward, it becomes tricky in some instances. For example, in the South Asian context, when the respondents are married women who have moved into the houses of their in-laws, there is a change in the household membership, which affects the continuum of the asset accumulation over their lifetime. Furthermore, an aspect that needs to be addressed is contextualizing the socio-economic realities while comparing social mobility over time – this is especially crucial not just because the survey is quasi longitudinal, but also because the respondents are of a wide age range (25–75 years of age), which makes their socio-economic realities during their life cycle different due to the differences such in the development trajectories across cities and national contexts over time.

Taking into account these stumbling blocks, our survey also draws on methodological insights regarding quasi-longitudinal micro-level data, including past experiences of such survey-data collection (Beauchemin 2014; Liu et al. 2016; Schoumaker and Beauchemin 2015), in order to overcome challenges with retrospectively collected data. Our survey focuses not primarily on past international migration, but rather on mobility and immobility overall, in families across the respondent's life-course, but also referring to their parents and grandparents, as part of gathering data to determine social mobility. Therefore, the survey was adjusted to systematically include questions about mobility (national as well as international) and immobility among respondents' close others. 'Close others' is

defined as current household members as well as respondents' parents, children, partners and siblings. Thus, the survey instrument adopted a definition of household that is malleable to capture changes over time in household composition (Liu et al. 2016; Schoumaker and Beauchemin 2015; van Geel and Mazzucato 2018).

The mobility/immobility biographical questionnaires collect families' housing biographies as well as key educational and livelihood data, building on and further refining the methodological tools used in the 'Migrations between Africa and Europe' project (MAFE) project (González-Ferrer et al. 2014; Schoumaker and Beauchemin 2015) and national level surveys from South Asia such as the Kerala Migration Survey Rajan, et.al, 2021 Limani and Arcand 2023). Questions about social mobility, and families' achievement of present middle-class status over time were developed on the basis of surveys conducted by the Asian Development Bank about middle-classness in present-day Asia.

Concluding discussion: Comparing migration and social mobility in Mumbai and Karachi?

While the previous section dealt with the different methodological stumbling blocks in developing a tool that could effectively measure social and spatial mobilities in South Asian cities, in this section we dwell on some of the opportunities and limitations of comparison across different contexts. Our two field sites in South Asia—Karachi and Mumbai—afford great scope for comparison due to a level of shared history, as well as similarities in cultural and geographical landscapes—both being coastal cities, centers of trade and cities that act as migration transition points, but mainly as primary destinations for many internal migrants (Bhagat and Mohanty 2009; Singh 2007; Hasan 2010; Hasan 2020). Both Karachi and Mumbai are also two of the most densely populated and fastest growing cities in South Asia.

However, there are also differences between Karachi and Mumbai, in terms of political context, developmental trajectories and the pace of urbanization, as also shaped by the respective nation-state and sub-national contexts they are situated within. The difference in the developmental path and pace of urbanization—not just in the cities, but also nationally, provides some challenges for comparing social mobility for families, at any given point in time between the two cities.

There are also social-economic differences which could affect the productivity in the economy, income levels of the population and thereby differences in who falls in the 'middle income' brackets. This also leads to differences in the standard of living and value of money—making it difficult to compare consumption or the value of remittances across households with the same level of income. Similarly, the geographical scope and size of the countries in which these cities are situated are also different making it difficult to compare internal migration in terms of distance moved from different places within the countries.

However, these cities have similarities both at the macro level such as increases in infrastructural development, the outward growth of the cities,

creating new and more planned urbanization, as well as at the more micro level, in terms of vehicle ownership, use of electrical appliances, use of smart devices and the internet among others, offering a rich canvass for comparative analysis. Here the fact that the study also collected in-depth interviews from middle-class households in these cities alongside survey data, adds to the potential for comparative analysis, through the use of a mixed-methods approach.

This methodologically oriented interrogation of connections between migration and social mobility in South Asia, reflecting on the methodological choices we have made in our study across Asian contexts, arguably both demonstrates the theoretical potential of data which is collected, with tools which are developed in and for, and tailored to the empirical realities of a given South Asian context. This offers potential for comparison, across South Asia and Asia, as well as contributing to conceptual development on the broader question of connections between migration and social mobility, based on the global contexts where the greatest leaps into the middle classes are currently occurring.

Meanwhile, challenges remain, because where the potential for comparison lies in holding still certain dimensions or axis, in order to enable the assessment of similarity or difference, there are also arguments for attention to unique features, to the dynamic nature of each place's own history and development, where comparison necessarily reduces complexity. Our ambition is to argue both for the value of in-depth qualitative approaches that delve into the unique and processual yet embedded. But at the same time to also argue for comparisons that are as grounded as they can be, starting with methodological foundations which are locally attuned and developed.

Further challenges lay ahead to advancing knowledge on the connections between migration and social mobility in South Asia, some of which are discussed as stumbling blocks in this chapter. We have offered our tentative solutions to some of them, and others might identify further improvements in the future. For instance, in relation to the question of how we define, operationalize and hence measure migration – across distances and durations. Another key challenge pertains to the definitions of households and their relationships with the family and broader kinship networks, and the ways in which these often quite complex, multi-sited, cross-generational entities can be captured in survey data collection in meaningful ways. Here it is important to balance considerations of the contextual, cultural and locally sensitive, while at the same time both being able to consider gendered experiences, and still remain attentive to the many risks which methodological individualism poses, not least in contexts like the South Asian, where a main risk is rendering data so context-alloof, the risk of irrelevance can become serious (Bakewell 2010).

Through a grounded approach, drawing on the practical dilemmas as revealed through field-based survey data collection, we also offer a decolonial perspective, shedding light on the ways in which methodological choices and approaches, are a fundamental part of the decolonization of migration studies (Amelina 2022; Mayblin & Turner 2020). We argue that this is needed in

particular in the context of survey-based research in the Global South, alongside the many efforts that are ongoing in research conducted using qualitative methods foregrounding co-creation of knowledge.

Note

- 1 This chapter draws on research conducted as part of the “Migration rhythms in upward social mobility in Asia” project, which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 948403). The chapter will be reposit-ed Open Access in an institutional repository and/or published Open Access, as per funder requirements.

References

- Abraham, A., 2023a. “Impact of International Migration on Intergenerational Mobility in Migrant Sending Households: Does Socio-Economic Status Matter?” *Journal of social and Economic Change*.
- Abraham, A., 2023b. Role of Household Socio-Economic Status in Determining the Impact of Remittances on Human Capital Investment in S. Irudaya Rajan (ed.) *India Migration Report 2023: Student Migration*. Routledge India.
- ADB. 2010. *Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2010 Report*. Asian Development Bank.
- Adey, P. and Bissell, D. 2010. “Mobilities, meetings and futures: an interview with John Urry.” *Environment and Planning D-Society & Space* 28: 1–16.
- Amelina, A. (2022). “Knowledge production for whom? Doing migrations, colonialities and standpoints in non-hegemonic migration research.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 45 (13), 2393–2415.
- Åkesson, L. 2009. “Remittances and inequality in Cape Verde: the impact of changing family organization.” *Global Networks* 9 (3): 381–398.
- Åkesson, L. 2011. “Remittances and relationships: Exchange in Cape Verdean transnational families.” *Ethnos* 76 (3): 326–347.
- Asis, M. M. B., Huang, S., and Yeoh, B. S. 2004. “When the light of the home is abroad: Unskilled female migration and the Filipino family.” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 25 (2): 198–215.
- Bakewell, O. 2010. “Some Reflections on Structure and Agency in Migration Theory.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36 (10): 1689–1708.
- Bakewell, O., Engbersen, G., Fonseca, M. L. and Horst, C. 2016. *Beyond networks: Feedback in international migration*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Banerjee, A. V., Duflo, E. 2008. “What is middle class about the middle classes around the world?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 22 (2): 3–28.
- Bashir, N. 2014. “The Drivers and Impacts of Family Obligations and Overseas Remittances Practices: A Case Study of Pakistani-Origin Individuals in the UK.” *Social Policy and Society* 13 (2): 177–188.
- Beauchemin, C. 2014. “A Manifesto for Quantitative Multi-sited Approaches to International Migration.” *International Migration Review* 48 (4): 921–938.
- Bhagat, R.B. and Mohanty, S., 2009. “Emerging pattern of urbanization and the contribution of migration in urban growth in India.” *Asian Population Studies*, 5(1), pp.5–20.
- Birdsall, N. 2010. *The (indispensable) middle class in developing countries*. The World Bank.

- Black, R. and Skeldon, R. 2009. "Strengthening Data and Research Tools on Migration and Development." *International Migration* 47 (5): 3–22.
- Borjas, G. J. 1993. "The intergenerational mobility of immigrants." *Journal of Labor Economics* 11 (1): 113–135.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1986. "The forms of capital." Pp. 241–258 in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J.G. Richardson. Greenwood Press.
- Brosius, Christiane. 2012. *India's Middle Class: New Forms of Urban Leisure, Consumption and Prosperity*. Routledge India.
- Brown, Richard P. C., Fransen, Sonja, Carling, Jørgen, Siegel, Melissa. 2014. "Measuring remittances through surveys: Methodological and conceptual issues for survey designers and data analysts." *Demographic Research* 31 (41): 1243–1274.
- Carling, J. 2008. "The determinants of migrant remittances." *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 24 (3): 581–598.
- Carling, J. 2014. "Scripting Remittances: Making Sense of Money Transfers in Transnational Relationships." *International Migration Review* 48 (1): 218–262.
- Carling, J., & Haugen, H. Ø. (2021). Circumstantial migration: how Gambian journeys to China enrich migration theory. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47 (12), 2778–2795.
- Clemens, Michael A., Postel, Hannah M. 2018. "Can Development Assistance Deter Emigration?" Center for Global Development.
- Collins, F. L. (2022). Geographies of migration II: Decolonising migration studies. *Progress in Human Geography*, 46(5), 1241–1251.
- Crul, M. 2000. "Breaking the Circle of Disadvantage. Social Mobility of second-generation Moroccans and Turks in the Netherlands." Pp. 225–244 in *Immigrants, schooling and social mobility*, by H. Vermeulen and J. Perlmann. Palgrave Macmillan.
- de Haan, Arjan. 2007. "Livelihoods and poverty: The role of migration - a critical review of the migration literature." *The Journal of Development Studies* 36 (2): 1–47.
- de Haan, A. 2000. Migrants, livelihoods and rights: the relevance of migration in development policies. Social development working paper. Department for International Development.
- de Haas, H. (2021). A theory of migration: the aspirations–capabilities framework. *Comparative migration studies*, 9 (1), 1–35.
- de Haas, H. 2005. "International Migration, Remittances and Development: myths and facts." *Third World Quarterly* 26 (8): 1269–1284.
- de Haas, H. 2010a. "Migration transitions: a theoretical and empirical inquiry into the developmental drivers of international migration." International Migration Institute working paper, University of Oxford.
- De Haas, H. 2010b. "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective." *International Migration Review* 44 (1): 227–264.
- Earl, C. 2014. *Vietnam's new middle classes: Gender, career, city*. Copenhagen: Nias Press.
- Erdal, M.B. 2012. "Who is the Money for? Remittances within and beyond the Household in Pakistan." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 21 (4): 437–457.
- Erdal, M.B. 2014. "The Social Dynamics of Remittance-Receiving in Pakistan: Agency and Opportunity among Non-migrants in a Transnational Social Field." Pp. 115–134 in *Migrant Remittances in South Asia Social, Economic and Political Implications*, by Md Mizanur Rahman, Tan Tai Yong and A.K.M. Ahsan Ullah. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Esson, J., Gough, K. V., Simon, D., Amankwaa, E. F., Ninot, O., Yankson, P. W. 2016. "Livelihoods in motion: Linking transport, mobility and income-generating activities." *Journal of Transport Geography* 55: 182–188.

- Findlay, A., McCollum, D., Coulter, R. and Vernon, G. 2015. "New Mobilities Across the Life Course: a Framework for Analysing Demographically Linked Drivers of Migration." *Population, Space and Place* 21 (4): 390–402.
- Finney, N., Marshall, A. 2018. "Is migration in later life good for wellbeing? A longitudinal study of ageing and selectivity of internal migration." *Area* 50 (4): 492–500.
- FitzGerald, D. 2012. "A comparativist manifesto for international migration studies." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35(10): 1725–1740.
- Forsberg, S. 2017. "Educated to be global: Transnational horizons of middle-class students in Kerala, India." *Environment and Planning A* 49 (9): 2099–2115.
- Gamlen, A. 2014. "The new migration-and-development pessimism." *Progress in Human Geography* 38 (4): 581–597.
- Gibson, K., Cahill, A., McKay, D. 2010. "Rethinking the dynamics of rural transformation." *Transactions of the British Institute of Geographers* 35 (2): 237–255.
- Goldthorpe, J. H. 1985. "On economic development and social mobility." *British Journal of Sociology* 36: 549–573.
- González-Ferrer, A., Baizán, P., Beauchemin, C., Kraus, E., Schoumaker, B. and Black, R. 2014. "Distance, Transnational Arrangements, and Return Decisions of Senegalese, Ghanaian, and Congolese Migrants." *International Migration Review* 48 (4): 939–971.
- Goodwin-White, J. 2016. "Is Social Mobility Spatial? Characteristics of Immigrant Metros and Second-Generation Outcomes: 1940–1970 and 1970–2000." *Population Space and Place* 22 (8): 807–822.
- Gregson, N., Crag, M., Ahamed, F., Akhter, N., Ferdous, R. 2016. "Following things of rubbish value: End-of-life ships (...) and the Bangladeshi middle-class consumer." *Geoforum* 41 (6): 846–854.
- Gorringe, H., Jodhka, S.S. and Takhar, O.K., 2017. Caste: experiences in South Asia and beyond. *Contemporary South Asia*, 25(3), pp.230–237.
- Hannam, K., Sheller, M., and Urry, J. 2006. "Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings." *Mobilities* 1 (1): 1–22.
- Hasan, A., 2010. Migration, small towns and social transformations in Pakistan. *Environment and Urbanization*, 22(1), pp.33–50.
- Hasan, A., 2020. The changing nature of informal settlements in the megapolis in South Asia: the case of Karachi, Pakistan. In *Communities, land and social innovation*, pp.91–108. Elgar online. Edited by Pieter Van den Broeck, Asiya Sadiq, Ide Hiergens, Monica Quintana Molina, Han Verschure, and Frank Moulaert.
- Henretta, J. A. 1977. "The study of social mobility: Ideological assumptions and conceptual bias." *Labor History* 18 (2): 165–178.
- Ho, E. L. E. 2018. *Citizens in Motion: Emigration, Immigration, and Re-migration Across China's Borders*. Stanford University Press.
- Horst, C. 2008. "The role of remittances in the transnational livelihood strategies of Somalis." Pp. 91–110 in *Global migration and development*, edited by T. van Naerssen, E. Spaan and A. Zoomers. Routledge.
- IFAD. 2017. *Sending Money Home: Contributing to the SDGs, one family at a time.* International Fund for Agriculture and Development.
- IOM. 2020. *World migration Report 2020*. International Organisation of Migration.
- Jimenez, T. R., Park, J., Pedroza, J. 2018. "The New Third Generation: Post-1965 Immigration and the Next Chapter in the Long Story of Assimilation." *International Migration Review* 52 (4): 1040–1079.
- Jodhka, S. S., Prakash, A. 2016. *The Indian middle class*. Oxford University Press.
- Kharas, H. 2017. "The unprecedented expansion of the global middle class." *GED Working Paper Volume 100*. Brookings Institution.

- Khadria, B., 2005. Migration in South and South-West Asia. Global Commission on International Migration, Geneva.
- Kibreab, G. 1999. "Revisiting the debate on people, place, identity and displacement." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12 (4): 384–410.
- King, R. and Skeldon, R. 2010. "'Mind the Gap!' Integrating Approaches to Internal and International Migration." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36(10): 1619–1646.
- Kok, P., 1999. The definition of migration and its application: Making sense of recent South African census and survey data. *Southern African Journal of Demography*, 7(1), pp.19–30.
- Lehmann, W. 2009. "Becoming middle class: How working-class university students draw and transgress moral class boundaries." *Sociology* 43 (4): 631–647.
- Levitt, P. and Lamba-Nieves, D. 2013. "Rethinking social remittances and the migration–development nexus from the perspective of time." *Journal of International Development* 10 (1): 11–22.
- Levitt, P. and Nyberg-Sørensen, N. 2004. "The transnational turn in migration studies." *Global Commission on Migration Studies*.
- Levitt, P. and Schiller, N. G. 2004. "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society." *International Migration Review* 38 (3): 1002–1039.
- Limani, D., & Arcand, J. L. (2023). Remembrances of things past: evidence from a twenty-year Kerala panel. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(20), 5305–5321.
- Liu, M. M., Creighton, M. J., Riosmena, F., Baizan, P. 2016. "Prospects for the comparative study of international migration using quasi-longitudinal micro-data." *Demographic Research* 35: 745–782.
- Maimbo, S.M., Ratha, D. 2005. *Remittances: Development impact and future prospects*. The World Bank.
- Malkki, L. 1995. "Refugees and exile: from 'refugee studies' to the national order of things." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 495–523.
- Maqsood, A. 2017. *The New Pakistani Middle Class*. Harvard University Press.
- Massey, Douglas S. 2019. "The perils of seeing twenty-first century migration through a twentieth-century lens." *International Social Science Journal*, 68(227–228), 101–104.
- Massey, Douglas S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kovaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Edward Taylor, J. 1993. "Theories of international migration: a review and appraisal." *Population and Development Review*, 19, 431–466.
- Massey, Douglas S., Espinosa, Kristin E. 1997. "What's Driving Mexico–U.S. Migration? A Theoretical, Empirical, and Policy Analysis." *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (4): 939–999.
- Mayblin, L., & Turner, J. (2020). *Migration studies and colonialism*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Melber, H. 2016. *The rise of Africa's middle class: myths, realities and critical engagements*. Zed Books.
- Mercer, Claire. 2018. "Boundary work: Becoming Middle Class in Suburban Dar es Salaam." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*: 1–16.
- Miller, B., Ponto, J. 2016. "Mobility Among the Spatialities." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 106 (2): 266–273.
- Page, B., Sunjo, E. 2018. "Africa's middle class: building houses and constructing identities in the small town of Buea, Cameroon." *Urban Geography* 39 (1): 75–103.
- Pankaj, A.K., 2023. Caste and Migration: The City—A Site for "Inclusion" and Emancipation. In *Dalit Migrants: Assertion, Emancipation, and Social Change* (pp. 85–103). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

- Pareñas, R. 2005. "Long distance intimacy: class, gender and intergenerational relations between mothers and children in Filipino transnational families." *Global Networks* 5 (4): 317–336.
- Perruchoud, Richard. 2004. *International Migration Law: Glossary on Migration*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- Pugliese, A., Ray, J. and Esipova, N. 2016. "Do remittances differ depending on migration pathway and length of stay?" *Remittances Review* 1 (1): 105–118.
- Rahman, M. M., Yong, T. T. 2015. *International migration and development in South Asia*. Routledge.
- Rahman, M.M. and Fee, L.K. 2012. "Towards a Sociology of Migrant Remittances in Asia: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38 (4): 689–706.
- Rajan, S.I. 2023. "Migration in South Asia: Old and New Mobilities." In: Rajan, S.I. (eds) *Migration in South Asia. IMISCOE Regional Reader*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-34194-6_1.
- Rajan S. I., and Bhagat R. B. 2021. "Internal migration in India: Integrating migration with development and urbanisation policies" [Policy Brief No. 12]. KNOMAD.
- Rajan S. I., K. C. Zachariah and Ashwin Kumar. 2021. "Large Scale Migration Surveys: Replication of the Kerala Model of Migration Surveys to India Migration Survey 2024" Chapter 1, Pp. 1-22. in: Rajan, S.I. (eds) *India Migration Report 2020: Kerala Model of Migration Surveys*. Routledge.
- Ratha, D. 2016. "Migration and remittances Factbook 2016." The World Bank.
- Ravallion, M. 2009. "The developing world's bulging (but vulnerable) 'middle class'." The World Bank.
- Rigg, J. 2007. "Moving lives: migration and livelihoods in the Lao PDR." *Population, Space and Place* 13 (3): 163–178.
- Rumbaut, R. G. 2008. "The Coming of the Second Generation: Immigration and Ethnic Mobility in Southern California." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 620: 196–236.
- Schoumaker, B. and Beauchemin, C. 2015. "Reconstructing trends in international migration with three questions in household surveys: Lessons from the MAFE project." *Demographic Research* 32: 983–1030.
- Scott, J. 1996. *Stratification and power: Structures of class, status and command*. Polity Press.
- Shaw, R.P. 1975. *Migration theory and fact*. Bibliography Series No. 5. Philadelphia: Regional Science Research Institute.
- Singh, D.P., 2007. Migration in Mumbai: Trends in fifty years. *Demography India*, 36(2), pp.315–327.
- Singh, J. P. 1992. "Migration in India: A Review." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 1(1), 168–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/011719689200100107>.
- Skeldon, R. 1990. *Population mobility in developing countries: A reinterpretation*. London: Belhaven
- Skeldon, R. 2008. "International Migration as a Tool in Development Policy: A Passing Phase?" *Population and Development Review* 34 (1): 1–18.
- Srivastava, R. and Sasikumar, S.K., 2003. An overview of migration in India, its impacts and key issues. In *Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia* (pp. 22–24). Dhaka: Eldis Document Store.
- Stark, O. and Bloom, D. E. 1985. "The new economics of labor migration." *The American Economic Review* 75 (2): 173–178.

- Thieme, S. 2008. "Sustaining Livelihoods in Multi-local Settings: Possible Theoretical Linkages Between Transnational Migration and Livelihood Studies." *Mobilities* 3 (1): 51–71.
- Thomas, W. I. and Znaniecki, F. 1918. *The Polish peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an immigrant group*. University of Chicago Press.
- Toll, W. 1983. *Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry over Four Generations*. SUNY Press.
- Toney, M.B., Bailey, A.K. 2014. "Migration, an Overview. In: Michalos, A.C." (eds) *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*. Springer, Dordrecht. http://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_1804.
- Torche, F. 2014. "Intergenerational Mobility and Inequality: The Latin American Case." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40 (1): 619–642.
- Toyota, M., Yeoh, B. S. and Nguyen, L. 2007. "Bringing the 'left behind' back into view in Asia: a framework for understanding the 'migration–left behind' nexus." *Population, Space and Place* 13 (3): 157–161.
- Tran, V. C., Lee, J. and Huang, T. J. 2019. "Revisiting the Asian second-generation advantage." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42 (13): 2248–2269.
- United Nations, 1998. "Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, Revision 1," Statistical Papers, Series M, No.58, Rev.1. Sales No. E.98.XVII.14.
- Urry, J. 2000. *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. Routledge.
- van Geel, J. and Mazzucato, V. 2018. "Conceptualising youth mobility trajectories: thinking beyond conventional categories." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44 (13): 2144–2162.
- Van Hear, N. 2014. "Reconsidering Migration and Class." *International Migration Review*, 48: S100–1021.
- Van Leeuwen, M. H. D. and Maas, I. 2010. "Historical Studies of Social Mobility and Stratification." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (1): 429–451.
- Waters, J. L. 2006. "Geographies of Cultural Capital: Education, International Migration and Family Strategies between Hong Kong and Canada." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31 (2): 179–192.
- Weber, M. 1946. "Class, Status, Party." Pp. 180–195 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* edited by H. H. Girth and C. Wright Mills. Oxford University Press.
- Wimmer, A. and Schiller, N.G. 2003. "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology1." *International Migration Review* 37 (3): 576–610.
- Yankson, P. W., Gough, K. V., Esson, J., Amankwaa, E. F. 2017. "Spatial and social transformations in a secondary city: The role of mobility in Sekondi-Takoradi, Ghana." *Danish Journal of Geography* 117 (2): 82–92.
- Yeoh, B. S., Leng, C. H., Dung, V. T. K. and Yi'en, C. 2013. "Between two families: the social meaning of remittances for Vietnamese marriage migrants in Singapore." *Global Networks* 13 (4): 441–458.
- Zelinsky, W. 1971. "The hypothesis of mobility transition." *Geographical Review* 61 (2): 219–249.
- Zhou, M., Lee, J., Vallejo, J. A., Tafoya-Estrada, R. and Xiong, Y. S. 2008. "Success Attained, Deterred, and Denied: Divergent Pathways to Social Mobility in Los Angeles's New Second Generation." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 620: 37–61.

4

THE AFGHAN DIASPORA REMITTANCES: A LIFELINE FOR FAMILIES AND (POTENTIAL) CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT

Nasrat Sayed and Katrin Marchand

1. Introduction

Globally, diaspora communities have been known for their contribution to the development of their host and home countries (e.g., United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2021; McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021). Their contributions to their home countries are largely through remittances. Remittances can be financial and non-financial, where the latter can be further distinguished between in-kind and social remittances (e.g., knowledge, skills, and ideas) (Coffie, 2022). Available data show that global financial remittance inflows reached a new high, with USD 831.1 billion, in 2022 (World Bank-KNOMAD, 2023).

Evidence has shown that these international financial remittances have played a positive role in many people's lives worldwide and have contributed to the economic growth of many developing countries. For instance, a study conducted in Pakistan found that households receiving international remittances have a 16.7 percent lower likelihood of falling below the poverty line than non-recipient households (Awan et al., 2017). In a study on 80 developing countries, Francois et al. (2022) found that "on average, a one percent increase in remittance is associated with a small but positive increase (i.e., 0.066 percent) in real GDP in the long run" (p. 3).

In addition, diaspora have contributed to the development of their home countries not only through financial remittances but also through non-financial remittances. Non-financial remittances can be at collective and individual levels (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2010). The significance of non-financial remittances has been researched in the context of many developing countries, such as India (Tejada, 2016), Morocco (Boukharouaa, 2014), Somalia (Omar, 2020), Ghana (Tettey, 2016), and Mexico (Gómez-Flores et al., 2022).

The Afghan diaspora are no exception, and they hold immense potential to support their families and contribute significantly to Afghanistan's development through remittances. According to the latest data by UNHCR on the Afghanistan situation in 2023, 8.2 million Afghans with varying statuses were residing in Iran (4.5 million) and Pakistan (3.7 million) (UNHCR, 2023). Considering Afghans residing in neighboring and other countries such as Turkey, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, North America, Australia, and European countries, the total number of Afghan diaspora (documented and undocumented) could be approximately ten million. Among Western countries, Germany hosts the largest number (377,240) of Afghan nationals (Destatis, 2023). Afghans have migrated in different waves (e.g., see Nasrat, 2020), and the latest wave happened in August 2021 – when the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan. The main reasons for the forced migration of Afghans include more than four decades of war and conflict, persecution and human rights violations, as well as economic issues.

Simultaneously, Afghan diaspora members, particularly from Western countries, were often viewed with suspicion by some locals (e.g., members of political parties, social activists, and youths) in Afghanistan during the Western-backed government (2001–2021). Upon their return to contribute to the country's development, especially in government institutions, they were often perceived either as guests or individuals holding dual passports, and even some of them were denoted as *Tommy* boys by some locals.¹ One of the reasons for this perception was that they were often seen by the locals as people who had migrated or left the country at the most difficult time, rather than staying and contributing to improve the situation in Afghanistan. However, some of them held top positions during the previous Afghan government (2001–2021) and received high salaries (see Section 3.2.2). Nonetheless, it can also be argued that Afghans who have migrated, for whatever reason, have made a better choice than staying in Afghanistan. This is primarily due to the country's inability to protect and provide sufficient and good jobs for its citizens due to war, conflict, political instability, and corruption before and during the NATO's involvement in Afghanistan, as well as the current situation. However, the Afghan diaspora (or those who have migrated or left the country) have substantially contributed to their families and Afghanistan's development in various sectors such as health, education, and telecommunications (see Section 3). This is evident through their financial and non-financial remittances from their host countries. For example, between 2008 and 2022, the total inflow of financial remittances officially remitted to Afghanistan by the Afghan diaspora was USD 6.47 billion (World Bank-KNOMAD, 2022). In terms of non-financial remittances, the Afghan diaspora have also made significant contributions to the development of Afghanistan. These contributions were made collectively through Afghan Diaspora Organizations (ADOs), diaspora experts return programs of some International Organizations (IOs), and also individually in public, private and civil society sectors (for more details, see Section 3.2).

However, no single study has yet examined and provided an integrated overview of the different forms of remittances to Afghanistan, both collectively (through ADOs and IOs) and individually (by members of the Afghan diaspora). To fill this research gap, this chapter examines and provides an integrated overview of the different forms of remittances transferred by the Afghan diaspora at the collective and individual levels as well as the development of the sectors to which they have contributed. The chapter concludes by discussing ways in which this could be further strengthened. This study is important to contribute to the knowledge and literature on remittances in the context of Afghanistan. It also suggests to stakeholders in host countries, as well as in Afghanistan, the importance of engaging the Afghan diaspora in designing and improving their socio-economic development policies in and towards Afghanistan.

This study is based on available data from KNOMAD-World Bank, available literature on Afghan diaspora remittances, information from ADOs websites, and the authors' expertise in studying the Afghan diaspora engagement (Meshkovska et al., 2019; Sayed, 2021; Marchand et al., 2014). It also draws on the first author's observations as a former refugee, a member of the Afghan diaspora and a member of an ADO in the Netherlands, and networks and contacts with the Afghan diaspora worldwide. Additionally, he provided research assistance for the CD4D1 (Connecting Diaspora for Development) project, focusing on the case study of Afghanistan (see Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019). He participated in two conferences on the Afghan diaspora in the EU: one in Denmark in 2019 and the other in Belgium in 2022.

2 Diaspora and remittances

The definition of the concept of diaspora encompasses various features, including immigration or dispersal, community, transnationalism, and location outside the homeland (see Grossman, 2019). In this regard, diaspora may be broadly defined as “any population that is considered ‘deterritorialized’ or ‘transnational’—that is, which has originated in a land other than that in which it currently resides, and whose social, economic, and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe” (Vertovec, 1997, p. 277). Notably, there is no universally accepted definition for the term diaspora. Thus, for the sake of this chapter, we use the definition by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) because it fits well with the situation of the Afghan diaspora, as the DRC has also used the term refugees compared to the definition of diaspora by the IOM (IOM, 2019). DRC defines diaspora as “migrants and refugees – and their descendants – who maintain ties with their former or ancestral homeland - and with compatriots living elsewhere” (DRC, n.d.). These ties can be both material and immaterial. Diaspora or migration literature shows that migrants often maintain interactions and ties with their countries of origin (see, e.g., Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004; McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou, 2021). Because of their ties and interactions, migrants send remittances to their home

countries. Remittances are not always the transfer of money or goods by migrants but also immaterial goods transferred to their countries of origin. The latter is primarily called social remittances (see Migration Data Portal, 2023). Levitt (1998) conceptualized social remittances as “the ideas, behaviors, identities and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities” (p. 927). Social remittances include innovative ideas, knowledge, policy reforms, valuable transnational networks, political values, and new technological skills (Migration Data Portal, 2023).

Knowledge transfers are among the most common aspects of social remittances in the context of diaspora communities (Kuschminder, 2011). According to the UNDP (2010), “[k]nowledge, or literally what people know, underpins their capacities and hence capacity development” (p. 21). The UNDP states that knowledge plays a vital role in capacity development. Knowledge, institutional arrangements, leadership, and accountability are the four pillars UNDP uses to measure capacity development (UNDP, 2010). Knowledge can be divided into tacit and explicit knowledge (Havens and Knapp, 1999; see also Kuschminder, 2011). According to Havens and Knapp (1999), “[e]xplicit Knowledge is what has been written or otherwise recorded” (p. 6). Explicit knowledge includes books, reports, manuals, policies, databases, and procedures. Explicit knowledge is easy to identify, share, and use (Havens and Knapp, 1999). On the other hand, tacit knowledge is “[p]ersonal, hard to formalize and communicate to others. Tacit knowledge often takes the form of a mental model: beliefs and perspectives so ingrained that they are difficult to articulate” (Havens and Knapp, 1999, p. 6). Examples of tacit knowledge include face-to-face conversations, teamwork, mentoring, etc. (Goh, 2002). Diaspora experts transfer explicit and tacit knowledge to their countries of origin (e.g., Kuschminder, 2011; Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019).

3 Remittances to Afghanistan

3.1 Financial remittances

In 2022, the global financial remittance inflows reached USD 831.1 billion (World Bank-KNOMAD, 2023). Of this amount, USD 350 million was formally remitted to Afghanistan² by the Afghan diaspora in 2022, almost the same amount as in 2013 (USD 347 million) and 2015 (USD 349 million), as seen in Figure 4.1. The most recent amount of financial remittances shows a considerable decline compared to the years between 2016 and 2020, where the number was even above USD 800 million between 2017 and 2019 (see Figure 4.1). The recent decline can be attributed to several reasons, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the political changes in Afghanistan in August 2021. Because of the latter, many Afghans migrated to neighboring countries (mainly Iran and Pakistan) and received remittances there. Another reason could be the increase in *hawala* (informal money transfer, see details below Figure 4.2) by the Afghan

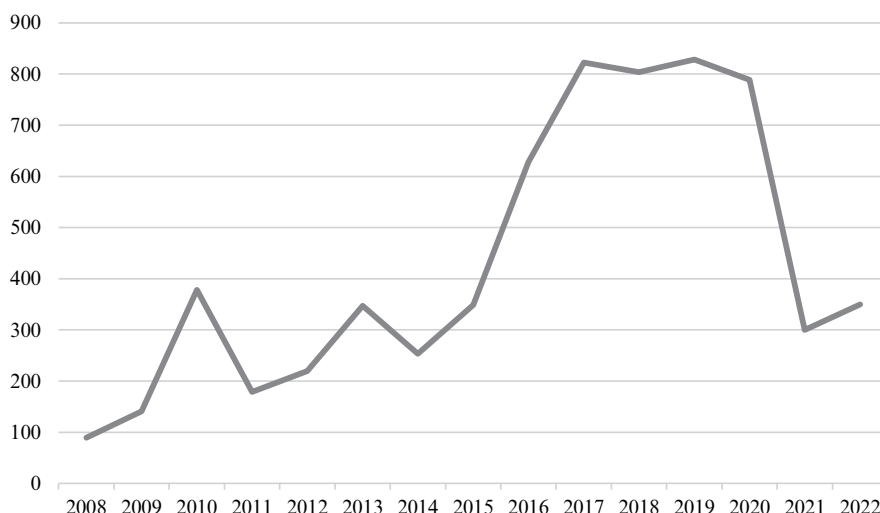


FIGURE 4.1 Financial remittances to Afghanistan 2008–2022 (USD million)
Source: World Bank-KNOMAD (2023)

diaspora due to policy changes that limited the amount of money that could be withdrawn from banks, and the long wait in front of banks when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan (Mackenzie, 2021). Other reasons for the decline include political instability, economic crisis, devastating floods in Pakistan in 2022 (World Bank, 2023), and low economic growth and high inflation in Iran in 2022 (Rome, 2022). These factors negatively impacted the economic situation of Afghans in Pakistan and Iran to remit money to Afghanistan.

As most Afghan diaspora reside in neighboring countries, these are also the countries from which most remittances are sent to Afghanistan. It is worth noting that the Afghan diaspora sent by far the most remittances from Iran, amounting to nearly USD 123 million in 2021 (see Figure 4.2 and the bilateral matrix note for methodology).

The data presented in Figure 4.2 capture estimated transfers made through official banks or, in countries where available, through money transfer companies such as Western Union, MoneyGram, and Ria. However, as in other countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Somalia, financial remittances to Afghanistan also occur through an informal channel known as the Hawala system (Battiston, 2022). Many Afghan diaspora in Western and non-Western countries use the Hawala system. It is based on trust, and according to the first author, the Hawala system generally works as follows: a client (e.g., a diaspora) pays money to a broker (*hawaladar* or *sarafi*) in the host country – the broker can be a reliable person, usually a shopkeeper/entrepreneur, who transfers the money to his contact/the second broker (*hawaladar*) in the country of origin (e.g., Afghanistan). The first broker gives the client a receipt (which contains

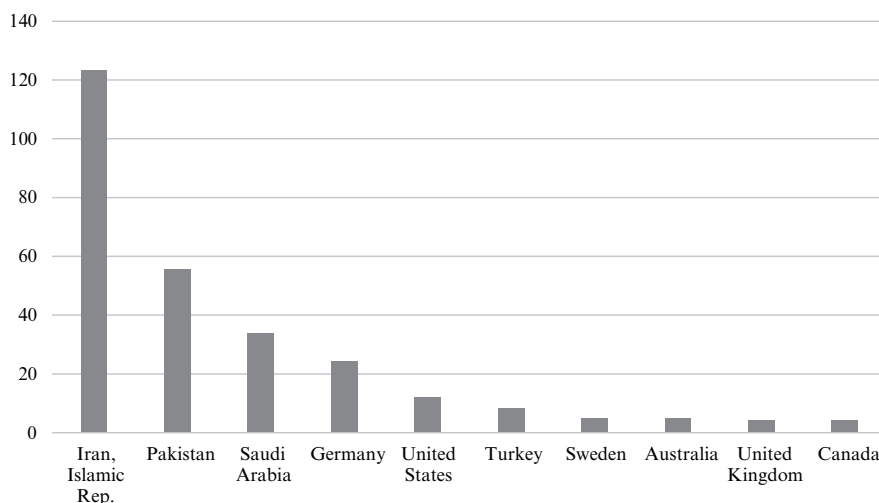


FIGURE 4.2 Estimated bilateral remittances to Afghanistan from the top 10 countries (USD million)

Source: KNOMAD-World Bank, Bilateral Remittance Matrix 2021 (2022)

important information such as the sender's name, recipient, amount, and a code). The client sends the same receipt or information to the recipient in the receiving country (e.g., Afghanistan). The first broker also sends the same information/receipt online (e.g., via mobile phone or WhatsApp) to the second broker, from whom the recipient collects the money after proving his/her ID, minus a commission. It is also a fast process as a recipient receives money from the second broker on the same or the next day. Those who are unfamiliar with or do not have access to official money transfer services or who find Hawala easier, use the Hawala system. In the West, it is mainly used by those who are (partially) dependent on social benefits or receive wages/income in cash to avoid problems with welfare and tax authorities. As money transfer companies such as MoneyGram, the Western Union, and Ria have limited locations in Afghanistan, the Hawala system is much more accessible (see also Battiston, 2022).

3.1.1 Remittance sending costs

The SDGs, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, include a target under Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) to reduce the average global cost of financial remittances to less than 3 percent by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). High remittance-sending costs can significantly impact the amount of money the recipients receive, particularly in developing countries like Afghanistan, where remittances are a vital source of income, as outlined in subsection 3.1.2. Several factors contribute to the costs of sending remittances, including regulatory compliance, operational expenses, foreign exchange conversion fees, and agent networks. In

the case of Afghanistan, where the financial infrastructure and access to formal banking services are limited in some provinces, remittance costs can be relatively higher. Looking at formal channels, South Asia has the lowest remittance costs of all regions globally, but they are still well above the SDG target of three percent. According to the World Bank, the average cost of sending USD 200 to South Asia, which includes Afghanistan, was around 4.1 percent in the second quarter of 2022, a decrease compared to previous years. Specific corridors between countries of destination and Afghanistan showed an increase of 72 percent (from USD 9.00 to 15.45) in the cost of remitting from the United Kingdom. In comparison, the cost of remitting USD 200 from Germany to Afghanistan declined by 16 percent between 2021 and 2022 (World Bank, 2022). The transfer fees through money transfer companies to Afghanistan depend on the amount of money and sending countries. For example, on June 19, 2023, based on the authors' search, the estimated fees by MoneyGram for 1,000 EUR to Afghanistan from the Netherlands was almost 4 EUR, and almost 4 GBP from the UK, while from Germany, it was almost 18 EUR and from the US, approximately 30 USD. There is also a maximum limit for money transfers, which depends on the sending country. The fee difference among money transfer companies (e.g., Western Union, MoneyGram, and Ria) is almost the same. The amount and frequency of remittances depend on the economic situation of the diaspora in the host countries and their families in the country of origin. However, many Afghan diaspora members send money every month.

The cost of sending money through the Hawala system is usually higher than through formal channels. For example, for 1,000 EUR, Hawala from Europe (e.g., Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France) costs at least 50 EUR or at least a transfer fee of 5 EUR per 100 EUR. There are no fixed transfer fees, but it depends on various factors such as the amount of the money, the sending country, the hawaladars deal, and the recipient's location in Afghanistan.

3.1.2 The importance of financial remittances at the micro- and macro-levels in Afghanistan

Sending and receiving financial remittances is common for most Afghans living in and outside Afghanistan. Even before the recent crises and the Taliban takeover, remittances were crucial for Afghan households (micro level) and the country's economy (macro level). As shown in Figure 4.2, the Afghan diaspora from Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, the Gulf, Australia, Europe, the United States and elsewhere have been sending money to meet the needs of their families and relatives especially in Afghanistan, for many years.. These needs include healthcare and education expenses, weddings and funerals expenses, construction of houses, vehicle purchases, buying household items, paying house rent, repaying loans, and even financial support for family members seeking migration opportunities abroad. Generally, this is the case in other countries, such as the Philippines (Eversole and Johnson, 2014) and Nepal (Bhandari, 2020).

Therefore, these remittances are a lifeline for poor Afghan households with no or limited income in Afghanistan as well as in other countries such as Iran and Pakistan. Research has shown that financial remittances help rural households avoid loan sharks, send their children to school, and buy necessary winter goods (e.g., see Ross and Barratt, 2022). Often, remittances support extended families of up to 30 persons (Ross and Barratt, 2022). According to the 2016–2017 Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS), “remittances provide some monetary relief: Afghans living in households with remittances (about 5 percent of the total population) as a main income source are relatively better-off with poverty rates of 43 percent” (Central Statistics Organization [CSO], 2018, p. 114).

In addition to the impact of financial remittances on households, they have also contributed to a vast financial ecosystem. For example, in 2020, the amount of formal financial remittances to Afghanistan was USD 789 million (World Bank-KNOMAD, 2022), about 4 percent of Afghanistan’s total GDP, as Ross and Barratt (2022) reported. Although formal financial remittances to Afghanistan significantly declined to USD 350 million in 2022 (see Section 3.1 for the reasons), it was 2.1 percent of the total GDP (World Bank-KNOMAD, 2022).

3.2 Non-financial remittances

As explained in section 2, non-financial remittances can be divided into social and in-kind remittances. However, their implementation usually involves a monetary component (see the following sections). Non-financial remittances have taken place in Afghanistan, both collectively (through ADOs and diaspora return programs of some IOs) and individually (through individual members of the Afghan diaspora). For the purpose of this chapter, the term “diaspora organizations” is used broadly to include cultural associations, umbrella organizations, and volunteer networks of Afghan diaspora.

3.2.1 *Non-financial remittances by ADOs to Afghanistan*

Despite the increase in the size of the Afghan diaspora and ADOs (see, e.g., Meshkovska et al., 2019), Afghanistan does not yet have a diaspora engagement policy. However, in 2018, the former Afghan government started drafting the Afghan National Diaspora Engagement Policy (ANDEP) (Meshkovska et al., 2019; Sayed, 2021). This effort was in line with objective 19 of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), which calls on States to “[c]reate conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries” (United Nations, 2019, p. 6). Despite the lack of a policy, several ADOs, mainly from Europe, have sent non-financial remittances to contribute to Afghanistan’s development, mainly in the health, education, and humanitarian/relief sectors, with the help of their local partners or supporters.³ Decades of conflict have severely degraded these critical sectors for access to basic services and development in the country.

The level of engagement of ADOs in Afghanistan varies from country to country, depending on the experience, education, and links or familiarity of ADO members with Afghanistan. However, their support focuses on short-term and temporary projects ranging from knowledge transfer and capacity building to constructing schools and libraries and providing essential equipment in the following sectors.

3.2.1.1 Health and education

The study on mapping and engagement of the Afghan diaspora in Europe shows that more ADOs from Germany were engaged in the health sector in Afghanistan compared to those from the UK and Denmark (Meshkovska et al., 2019). The contributions of ADOs to the health and education sectors include material and social remittances. For example, the Umbrella Association of Afghan Medical Professionals (DAMF) contributed to Afghanistan's development through knowledge transfer and in-kind support. A founding member of DAMF is the *Ärzteverein für Afghanische Flüchtlinge* (Afghan Refugee Medical Association) (AFAF). Established in Germany in the 1980s, the AFAF has had several projects in Afghanistan. For instance, it has transferred knowledge by teaching Afghan doctors, supplied medicines and medical equipment to Afghanistan, and built a school in the Khewa district of Nangarhar province.

In the education sector, one of the active ADOs based in Germany is *Freundeskreis Afghanistan* (Friends of Afghanistan). It was founded in the early 1980s and has contributed to the development of the education sector, especially in Central Afghanistan. *Freundeskreis'* activities in Afghanistan include constructing schools, financing/procuring learning and teaching materials and supplying energy to their schools via solar panel systems.

In addition to Germany, some ADOs from the Netherlands have also contributed through non-financial remittances to the development of Afghanistan's health and education sectors. One of the active ADOs engaged in health sector development in Afghanistan is the Keihan Foundation. Established in 2005, the Keihan Foundation has been engaged in Afghanistan for several years, mainly through academic exchanges and training programs. For example, in 2013, an anatomist from the Kabul University of Medical Sciences (KUMS) trained for ten months in the anatomy department of the Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC). As a result, this helped improve the anatomy curriculum at the KUMS (see Sayed, 2021). Additionally, the Netherlands-based Solidarity Committee Afghanistan Netherlands (SCAN) ADO has contributed to the education sector in Afghanistan by building several schools and providing school equipment, computers, and books to students in some provinces of Afghanistan.

In the UK, Arian Teleheal was founded by Dr Waheed Arian – an Afghan who came to the UK as a refugee in the 1990s. Arian Teleheal's activities include enabling local hospitals or doctors with limited resources and countries in conflict, including Afghanistan, to consult with expert clinicians worldwide

using smartphones, video chat, and instant messaging technologies. In addition, it offers consultancy and advising support to doctors or hospitals to help people in Afghanistan, Uganda, India, South Africa, Syria and Yemen. Furthermore, in the UK, there is the Association of Afghan Healthcare Professionals (AAHP), established in 2011, which has contributed to the development of the health sector in Afghanistan, including through social remittances. In the education sector, Rahela Trust, established in 2015, supports rural Afghan women to access education by providing them with scholarships and mentoring programs. So far, Rahel Trust has provided 35 Afghan women with higher education scholarships and mentoring programs.

From Denmark, ADOs focus primarily on education-related activities in Afghanistan (see Meshkovska et al., 2019). For example, the Katib Cultural Association (KCA), founded in 2007, has undertaken several projects to improve the quality of education in Afghanistan, particularly in the Jaghori district of Ghazni province. KCA's projects in Afghanistan include building a school and library, capacity building for female teachers, and providing furniture for a library.

In addition, the Afghan Youth Association in Denmark (AYAD), founded in 2009, had projects in Afghanistan that focused mainly on the education sector. Its activities included a project called Digitization of Monographs at Kabul University to improve research ethics and prevent plagiarism.

Like Denmark, ADOs based in Austria focus primarily on education-related activities in Afghanistan (see Ahmad, 2020). For example, one of the most active ADOs in Austria is the Afghanistan Culture, Integration and Solidarity Association (Afghanischer Kulturverein – AKIS). AKIS was established in the 1990s and began development activities in Afghanistan in 2004. AKIS activities include education sector support, such as constructing a protection wall and a sunshade at Bibi Sarwari Sangari School, Khair Khana, Kabul School in Kabul, providing education to children working on the streets, and others. Help Afghan School Children Organisation (HASCO) in Austria also supports the education sector in Afghanistan. For example, it has transferred school supplies through different education kits (e.g., notebooks, pens, calculators) to needy children in grades six and above. It has also set up a sponsorship program to help Afghan orphans and low-income families keep their children in school. In France, one of the most active ADOs is the *Enfants d'Afghanistan et d'ailleurs* (Children of Afghanistan and Elsewhere). Its activities include helping the education of Afghan children, boys and girls, in Afghanistan.

In the United States, the Afghan Medical Professionals Association of America (AMPAA) is one of the ADOs working in the health sector in Afghanistan. In addition to its activities in the US, AMPAA's activities in Afghanistan include the provision of training and webinars to doctors and healthcare professionals. For example, during COVID-19 in Afghanistan, AMPAA, in cooperation with the Global Watch Group, provided training and webinars via Zoom with a focus on the topics related to “prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of COVID-19”.

In Australia, the Afghan Australian Development Organisation (AADO) was established by Dr. Nouria Salehi in 2002. The AADO aims to offer educational and training opportunities in Afghanistan, specifically targeting individuals with limited prospects, particularly women and their families, to promote sustainable livelihoods and foster professional skills development. A sizable diaspora of Afghan Australians guides the AADO. In addition, the Australian Rehabilitation Development Organization (AARDO) was established in 2013, by a group of professional Afghan Australians to support health, education and other sectors in Afghanistan.

Notably, in late 2021, a two-day conference organized by the World University Service (WUS) in Germany brought together Afghan diaspora academics from various countries, including Germany, Austria, and Canada, to discuss the establishment of the first online university (The Afghanistan Online University) (Ahmad, n.d.). The AOU, which is in the process of being established, aims to provide high-quality education and research opportunities by Afghans for Afghans in Afghanistan and for those keen on studies related to Afghanistan.⁴ This remarkable achievement shows the contribution of the Afghan diaspora from various countries in fostering the development of Afghanistan through education.

3.2.1.2 Humanitarian aid

In addition to health and education, many ADOs have provided humanitarian aid or relief to Afghans in Afghanistan. It is important as “humanitarian assistance saves lives, alleviates suffering and maintains human dignity” (von Schreeb, 2018, p. 612). Humanitarian aid provided by ADOs is mostly in the form of in-kind assistance, usually during acute crises (e.g., harsh winters, floods, and earthquakes) and sometimes during *Ramadan* (a month of fasting by Muslims) to help those in need. Many ADOs (including those mentioned in subsection 3.2.1.1) working in Afghanistan’s health and education sectors also have some humanitarian aid or relief projects. For example, AFAF, based in Germany, has helped IDPs in Mazar-e-Sharif by distributing warm clothes and medicines. The AAHP from the UK also engaged in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. For example, with the help of their local partners, the AAHP conducted or supported medical camps in several provinces (e.g., Ghor, Panjshir, Badakhshan) and also distributed hundreds of highly nutritious food packages for needy families in different provinces (e.g., Nangarhar, Kapisa, Panjshir, etc.). However, some ADOs have engaged primarily in humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. For example, the Nang Foundation, based in the Netherlands, has successfully implemented several projects in Afghanistan, including the distribution food packages to low-income families.

It is worth mentioning that in some cases, humanitarian aid also includes funding small development projects, such as the construction of a small bridge, a well for drinking water, a small protection wall, etc. During the COVID-19 pandemic, several ADOs, besides providing knowledge and information, have

provided essential goods (e.g., hand sanitizers and face masks) to help Afghans in need in Afghanistan (Sayed, 2021).

Overall, there are significant differences in the level of engagement of ADOs from different countries in Afghanistan's development and humanitarian or relief efforts. For example, a study conducted by Meshkovska et al. (2019) on the Afghan diaspora in four European countries (the UK, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark) found that while over 60 percent of ADOs from Germany were involved in Afghanistan, only 7 percent of organizations in Sweden reported the same. The UK also had a very high proportion of ADOs activities that focused on Afghanistan (40 percent) compared with Denmark and Sweden (Meshkovska et al., 2019). Similarly, ADOs from the Netherlands showed a level of engagement in Afghanistan that was approximately similar to those in the UK (Sayed, 2021).

One of the main obstacles for almost all ADOs in Afghanistan is limited access to funding from donors or IOs to acquire and implement more and longer-term projects. This is mainly due to capacity issues such as inadequate proposal writing, project and grant management skills of many ADOs, and their level of networking with the donor agencies or IOs. In addition, due to the voluntary nature of ADO members' work, they cannot attract technical staff (Meshkovska et al., 2019).

3.2.2 Diaspora engagement programs of international organizations

In addition to ADOs, International Organizations (IOs), namely UNDP, World Bank, Center for International Migration and Development (CIM)/GIZ and IOM, have also facilitated and supported national development in Afghanistan through the return of Afghan diaspora experts.

UNDP initiated the TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals) program in the 1970s. It aimed to facilitate diaspora volunteerism for short-term voluntary assignments by expatriates from their countries of residence to their countries of origin, typically for three to six months. It was implemented in various regions of the world in nearly 50 countries, including Iran, Pakistan, Brazil, China, Nigeria, Rwanda, Egypt, and Afghanistan (Terrazas, 2010). In late 2001, TOKTEN was launched in Afghanistan by the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) under UNDP at the beginning of the reconstruction process. The objective of the TOKTEN program in Afghanistan was to help build the Afghan Interim Government's capacity and the subsequent government's administration. By March 2006, 29 Afghan diaspora volunteers joined the TOKTEN program, with positions in various fields, including health, education, curriculum development, and civil engineering (Kuschminder, 2011).

In 2002, the World Bank initiated the Afghanistan Expatriate Program (AEP) to tackle the scarcity of skilled personnel within public institutions and start development programs. The AEP was a temporary (six months to two years) and merit-based recruitment system that matched the needs of the Afghan key ministries and agencies with Afghan diaspora expertise (World Bank, 2006).

This program recruited Afghan diaspora experts as senior advisors to assist key line ministries and agencies in Afghanistan in formulating and managing priority development programs, human resource development, and institutional reforms (World Bank, 2009). The program was funded up to USD 10 million in two parts in 2003 and 2006 (World Bank, 2006). By the end of 2006, 76 Afghan diaspora experts were placed through the AEP within 20 ministries (Kuschminder, 2011). By mid-2009, as reported by the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), a total of 98 diaspora experts (including three women) were placed through the AEP in more than 20 ministries and agencies (World Bank, 2009), which was relatively higher than the original plan to place about 60 Afghan diaspora experts (World Bank, 2006; Kuschminder, 2011). The salaries of the Afghan diaspora experts in this program depended on their positions and level of experience. However, it is worth noting that their salaries were considerably higher (USD 7,000 per month) than those of civil servants in Afghanistan (Kuschminder, 2011).

In addition to the UNDP and the World Bank programs, the CIM/GIZ began supporting the development of Afghan ministries and administrative systems at the national and subnational levels in 2010 through the return of Afghan diaspora experts. The primary objective of this program was to improve the administrative efficiency and sustainability of public services by providing support and mentoring to Afghan public officials in various ministries, particularly in the areas of good governance and security (see Gatter et al., 2016). As Holterhus (2019) stated, approximately 70 diaspora experts returned to Afghanistan in different government institutions and agencies (including the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation).

Compared to the above-mentioned international organizations, the IOM implemented several temporary return programs to Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021. As shown in Table 4.1, all programs had a similar overarching objective: to contribute to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan through the knowledge and skills of Afghan diaspora experts. The target countries are mixed, but IOM had three specific programs from the Netherlands. This shows that the target countries were not selected based on the size of the Afghan diaspora, as Iran, Pakistan in Asia (UNHCR, 2023), and Germany in the West host the largest number of Afghan diaspora (Meshkovska et al., 2019; Destatis, 2023).

There are also differences between programs in terms of project duration. The programs from a single country of destination, such as the Netherlands and Iran, were designed to be shorter than those from multiple countries of destination (see Table 4.1). In addition, unlike TOKTEN, AEP, and the CIM/GIZ program, these IOM programs support not only government institutions but also public and private institutions or organizations (see, e.g., Kuschminder, 2011; Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019).

Between 2001 and 2018, IOM facilitated the return of more than 1,600 Afghan diaspora experts from 29 countries through its temporary return programs to Afghanistan to build up the capacity of government and non-government

TABLE 4.1 Summary of IOM Temporary Return Programs to Afghanistan

<i>Program</i>	<i>Countries of residence</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>End date</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>	<i>Number of Applications</i>	<i>Duration of assignment (planned)</i>	<i>Duration of assignment (actual)</i>
Reconstruction, Capacity Building and Development of Afghanistan Through the Transfer of Qualified and Highly Qualified Afghan Nationals from European Union Member States (RQA- EU/ Global)	UK, Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, France, Finland, Denmark, Austria, Belgium	2002	2005	Health, Education, Public Administration, Public Infrastructure	To contribute to the recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan	150	715	6–12 Months	
Reform Implementation Management Unit – Technical Assistance Project (RIMU-TAP)	Northern America, Europe, Australia, Africa, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Afghanistan	2007	2009	Ministry of Education- Reform Information Management Unit	To assist in developing the Ministry of Education into an effective, accountable, fully funded and functioning public institution that facilitates education for all.	5		12 Months	6–24 Months
Return of Qualified Afghans from Neighbouring Countries (RQN-NC)	Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Europe, North America, Australia	Nov 05	October 08	Education and health, construction and transport, rural development and agriculture, and commercial development	To contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan through the capacity building in the country's administration, restoration and development of essential social services, such as education and health, construction and transport, rural development and agriculture, and commercial development.	210 (and 750 family members)		12 Months	

Program	Countries of residence	Start date	End date	Priority	Objective	Number of participants	Number of Applications	Duration of assignment (planned)	Duration of assignment (actual)
Placement of Afghan Expatriate Professionals from EU Countries into the Public Administration of Afghanistan (PAEP-EU)	EU	Mar-05	Sep-08	Public Administration	To enhance the contribution of Afghan expatriate professionals residing in Member States of the European Union (EU) in the reconstruction efforts of Afghanistan by enhancing policy and institutional capacities within the public administration.	14	156	12 Months	12-18 Months
Temporary Return Of Qualified Nationals Project 1 (TRQN 1)	Netherlands	Apr-06	Jun-08	Education, health, infrastructure		37	309	6 Months	6 Months
Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals Project 2 (TRQN 2)	Netherlands	Jul-08	Jun-11	Education, health, infrastructure		68		3 Months	3-6 Months
Return and Reintegration of Qualified and Skilled Afghans from Iran	Iran	Mar-10	Dec-10	Industrial skills, mechanical qualifications, construction and renovation skills	To contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan through capacity building.	300 (target)		7 Months	
CD4D1	Netherlands	2016	2019	Health, Education, Infrastructure	To contribute to the development of Afghanistan via knowledge transfer and capacity building	11			

Source: Adapted from Kuschminder (2011) and updated by the authors based on Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019

institutions, and the private sector (IOM, 2018). Between 2016 and 2019, as a continuation of its return of diaspora experts' initiative, IOM implemented the CD4D1 project in Afghanistan and other targeted countries (Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019; IOM, 2020). In this period, IOM Netherlands indicated that it had supported around 22 assignments in Afghanistan through the CD4D1 project (see Sayed, 2021). According to the CD4D1 final evaluation report, the number of assignments to Afghanistan was higher than in Iraq (10) but lower than in other CD4D1 target countries: Somalia (FGS & Somaliland) (86), Sierra Leone (42), and Ethiopia (25) (Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019). However, it is still difficult to identify successful or unsuccessful countries or institutions in this project. This is because knowledge transfer is not only considered a difficult task, but its long-term impact is also difficult to measure, and its success pivots on several factors (Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019).

In all of the Afghan diaspora return programs, some ADOs and/or individual Afghan diaspora had assisted the international organizations in their program outreach. For example, for the CD4D1 project, the IOM selected the Netherlands-based Keihan Foundation as the appropriate ADO for the project's outreach. On the other hand, UvAViN (Union of Afghan Associations), an umbrella organization based in the Netherlands, assisted the IOM with returning Afghan diaspora experts to Afghanistan before the CD4D1 project (Sayed, 2021).

Notably, based on the first author's nearly four years of work experience in a ministry and a civil society organization in Afghanistan, there were some criticisms within some of the public institutions in Afghanistan about the advisory positions. This included some of those who held advisory positions as part of the diaspora experts return programs for receiving very high salaries and benefits (see also World Bank, 2006; Kuschminder, 2011). In addition, expatriates in Afghanistan and beyond are "often considered outsiders, who are seen to benefit from preferential treatment and paid many times over the local salary" (World Bank, 2006, p. 2). Within the context of a CD4D1 evaluation study encompassing Afghanistan and other countries, it was revealed that among the 63 respondents surveyed, 25 percent believed that diaspora experts were overpaid in contrast to local staff, and such disparity could contribute to tensions within the workplace (Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019).

However, returned diaspora experts generally contributed to the development of Afghanistan in various sectors, including health, education, governance, and infrastructure, through their skills and knowledge. There was a need for them, especially those who had a high familiarity with the context of Afghanistan, because decades of war and out-migration created the demand for skilled and professionals to take part in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan between 2001–2021. For example, an Afghan diaspora expert who was an Engineer in the Netherlands returned to Bamyan province through IOM's temporary return program. As part of his assignment in Bamyan Province, he created a master plan for the province and the city of Bamyan. He also worked with Bamyan University. He designed new buildings for the University,

including a dormitory for both boys and girls. In addition, by establishing a satellite Internet system, he fixed the Internet problems of Bamiyan University, which made the internet more cost-efficient and much faster to offer virtual learning. After his return to the Netherlands, this diaspora expert continued teaching an engineering course for the same University through virtual learning (for more cases, see Kuschminder, 2011). In addition, based on the first author's information, a diaspora expert returned through the CIM/GIZ program from Germany and was working in a ministry as a consultant. He significantly contributed to drafting an Afghan National Diaspora Engagement Policy (ANDEP) for the first time.

From all the programs by international organizations, some returnees continued to be engaged in Afghanistan directly or indirectly after their assignments or contracts ended. They engaged because they found a high-salary job within governmental or non-governmental organizations through their network they established in Afghanistan or continued their engagement through another return program. For example, six of the nineteen participants who returned to Afghanistan through IOM's temporary return program remained in Afghanistan to work for host organizations after their IOM contract ended (Kuschminder, 2011).

3.2.3 Individual Afghan diaspora members

In addition to the ADOs and diaspora return programs of international organizations, there are many cases of non-financial remittances transferred or sent by individual members of the Afghan diaspora.. Like financial remittances, non-financial remittances at the individual level are also usually have sent to or shared with family members, relatives, and friends according to their needs or demands in Afghanistan or those living as refugees in other developing countries.

Non-financial remittances at the individual level by the Afghan diaspora typically include the transfer of goods such as health equipment and electrical tools from the West because of their high quality. They have also transferred social remittances to their family members, relatives or friends in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, or other countries. Their social remittances generally involve transferring knowledge or ideas or sharing information in various fields, including health, education, migration, and entrepreneurship. For example, as an Afghan diaspora member, the first author has heard and observed that some Afghan diaspora have shared with their family members, relatives, or friends in Afghanistan the idea of opening a shop or a Kindergarten similar to the one in the West. In addition, some Afghan diaspora have provided information to their family members, friends or others in Afghanistan about studying opportunities and the availability of scholarships in Europe and other countries. There are also many instances of Afghan diaspora members sharing ideas or information with their family members, relatives, or friends about how, when and where to migrate to Europe, for example, from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan or Turkey.

Governance plays an essential role in a country's development (World Bank, 2017). Afghan diaspora members have supported their families or relatives in Afghanistan, and many of them have contributed to improving the country's governance system through their knowledge, skills, and experience. During the two decades of the international community's presence in Afghanistan (2001–2021), many former senior Afghan government officials were members of the diaspora. A number of them returned individually based on their social or political connections. Some of them were given very important and top positions in the Afghan government, especially during President Ghani's tenure. When the security and economic situation deteriorated, they were criticized and alleged by many locals for hogging government positions, being ineffective, and corrupt. Among the individuals subjected to substantial criticism were Hamdullah Mohib, Dr. Fazal Mahmood Fazli (see. e.g., Nawandish, 2022), and Ajmal Ahmady, as reported by Hasht-e-Subh (2021). Mohib's most recent position in Afghanistan was as National Security Advisor to former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. He holds British citizenship and a PhD in computer systems engineering from the UK. Fazli, a doctor by profession and a specialist in family medicine – based in Sweden, was Head of the Administrative Office of the President in his last position in the previous Afghan government. In his latest position, Ajmal Ahmadi was the Acting Governor of the Central Bank of Afghanistan (DAB). He studied at top universities, including Harvard University in the US. He was criticized in Afghanistan by many locals (including his employees, journalists, and media) for mismanagement and illegal hiring and firing of the staff in DAB (Hasht-e-Subh, 2021). These and other government officials have denied these criticisms and any allegations.

Not only in the public sector but also in the private sector, many Afghan diaspora members returned individually during 2001–2021. Alongside money, they also transferred skills, knowledge and ideas from various host countries to Afghanistan. They invested in various sectors in Afghanistan, including education, health, banking and telecommunications. One example is Ehsan Bayat – an Afghan diaspora who returned and started taking part in the development of Afghanistan in 2002. He founded Afghan Wireless in 2002 – the first telecom provider in the history of Afghanistan. Afterwards, he founded Ariana Television and Radio Network (ATN) in 2005, followed by the Bayat Foundation in 2006. The Bayat Foundation has helped the poorest Afghans in different provinces in Afghanistan through various projects in the health, education, water, poverty reduction and women empowerment sectors. In addition, Saad Mohseni is an Afghan-Australian media entrepreneur who also began investing in Afghanistan after the fall of the first Taliban regime. He is the founder and CEO of the MOBY Group, which has operated various media outlets in the country, including Tolo TV. Not only those from the West, but also Afghan refugees who returned from neighboring countries, especially Iran and Pakistan, have made numerous contributions to Afghanistan's development by investing in various areas such as education, health, construction, food, and beverages.

4 Conclusion and policy recommendations

The Afghan diaspora have actively contributed in Afghanistan's development through financial and non-financial remittances. The Afghan diaspora's financial remittances have been mostly used for consumption and investment in human capital rather than for business investments in Afghanistan. These remittances have positively impacted households and also contributed to the country's economic growth and development.

In addition, the Afghan diaspora (have) participated in the development of Afghanistan through non-financial remittances, such as the engagement of ADOs, temporary returns through IOs, and individual returns. The ADOs have mainly engaged in three sectors: health, education, and humanitarian activities, largely in rural Afghanistan, with the help of their local partners and supporters. While diaspora experts returned through IOs focused on knowledge transfer and capacity building of public and private institutions mainly based in Kabul in more than three sectors, as they have more capacity and funding. Moreover individual diaspora returnees from Western and non-Western countries (have) contributed to Afghanistan's development including that of the private sector. However, the locals neither criticized nor warmly welcomed the Afghan diaspora in the private sector.

In terms of types of knowledge transfer, both explicit and tacit have used by the Afghan diaspora. Nonetheless, the use of tacit type of knowledge transfer (e.g., through teamwork, mentoring, face-to-face conversations, and discussions) have seen more than the explicit type.

The Afghan diaspora, especially the ADOs involved in Afghanistan's development voluntarily, without receiving payment. They do so largely because they feel a responsibility to give something back to their homeland, Afghanistan (see also Ahmad, 2020). As the Afghan diaspora grow in number (see UNDESA, 2020) and gain human capital (e.g., knowledge and skills) in their host countries (see, e.g., Meshkovska et al., 2019; Mueller and Kuschminder, 2019; Sayed, 2021), they become more valuable resources for ADOs, Afghanistan, host countries, and IOs. To strengthen the engagement of the Afghan diaspora in the development of Afghanistan (with an internationally recognized government) at both individual and collective levels, we recommend the following points for various stakeholders.

For ADOs/Afghan diaspora

- Focus on employment and income-generating activities in Afghanistan to help reduce poverty and unemployment, in addition to healthcare, education, and humanitarian assistance or relief activities. Either support existing businesses in the country or provide training or funding opportunities for young graduates and vulnerable women to start new businesses and find markets for their products. This could be done with the help of

various actors, such as Afghan and Afghan diaspora entrepreneurs and the private sector in the host countries, relevant NGOs, and the Afghan government (e.g., Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Economy).

- Establish and use platforms for communication and collaboration among ADOs, other CSOs, and IOs in the host countries that are already promoting sustainable development in Afghanistan. Such a platform can be a good source for learning lessons, sharing or exchanging experiences, and exploring potential partnerships. In addition, such a platform can be used as an entry point for the rest of the ADOs wishing to contribute to Afghanistan's development. IOs (e.g., IOM, DRC, and GIZ) with experience and knowledge of ADOs/Afghan diaspora can support this.
- Ensure to have updated websites on the organisation's activities and promote transparency and accountability in funding. This will help ADOs build trust in their host countries and in Afghanistan.

For locals and a recognized Afghan government

- Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of the Afghan diaspora to Afghanistan's development. Recognize outstanding achievements and success stories to inspire others and showcase the positive impact of diaspora engagement. This can be done through media, including social media.
- Finalize and implement the Afghan National Diaspora Engagement Policy (ANDEP). This will help ADOs/Afghan diaspora members to access information on opportunities, support, and cooperation from the Afghan government to engage in Afghanistan's development.
- Promote investment opportunities in Afghanistan to attract diaspora members interested in financially contributing to the country's development. This may include providing information on investment policies, supporting initiatives to reduce barriers to investment, and offering incentives to encourage diaspora investment, such as tax reduction or easy access to business support services.

For money transfer services companies

- Reduce the costs associated with financial remittances sent by the Afghan diaspora to their families and communities in Afghanistan and increase their locations across different provinces. These actions will encourage the diaspora to utilize official channels rather than relying on an informal system – *Hawala*.

For IOs, host countries and donors

- Actively support, facilitate, and provide capacity-building courses and workshops for ADOs and diaspora volunteers in various host countries. These courses and workshops should focus primarily on areas such as

grant writing, project management, and financial management. By increasing the skills and knowledge of ADOs, these initiatives will create greater opportunities to secure funding and implement impactful projects for Afghanistan's development.

- Broaden the focus from solely transferring knowledge and skills for human capital or capacity-building investments through Afghan diaspora experts to investing in production activities in Afghanistan, thereby promoting job creation and income generation.
- Offer partnership opportunities to engage ADOs in the country's development (including humanitarian or relief projects). These partnership opportunities can be prioritized based on the alignment of their respective areas of interest or expertise. This approach can facilitate the development of collaborative projects and programs between IOs and diaspora organizations, fostering effective joint initiatives for the benefit of Afghanistan.
- Involve Afghan diaspora members and ADOs in designing strategies or policies with Afghanistan to leverage their knowledge, skills and experience. They should also involve ADOs and Afghan diaspora experts in monitoring their humanitarian and development cooperation activities in Afghanistan.

Notes

- 1 Examples of this can be found on social media, especially on Facebook in Pashto and Dari languages (e.g., see here <https://www.facebook.com/khalidnajeem.khalidkhan/posts/pfbid02wsLHyzPPvDBGxCSoGGTJu9mb89FmB4kTPyMBTN4RqndMSt5r2dg9F1m6RStSFBkFl>; <https://www.facebook.com/RasekhJ/videos/10200157338477117/>; <https://www.facebook.com/ismael.yoon1/posts/pfbid0Hu7VCR4Cn85zHxeww5LTpk8Uix9Zd7nEiQHowLzx9LVm5N58EffCrCpydmiXbKTxl>) and YouTube (e.g., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRp_AX7O_i4).

The term *Tommy boys* has occasionally been used to refer to certain members of the Afghan diaspora employed by the former Afghan government, who were believed to have been influenced by Western culture and worked for their interests.

- 2 Note: Many Afghan diaspora members have been sending remittances to their families and relatives living as refugees in neighboring countries, especially Iran and Pakistan, for years, but it is not possible to get these data.
- 3 Note: ADOs that are engaged in Afghanistan are also involved in activities in their host countries in various fields such as integration, culture, advocacy, etc. (see, e.g., Meshkovska et al., 2019; Ahmad, 2020; Sayed, 2021).
- 4 For more information, see <https://afghan-online-university.org/>

References

- Ahmad, A. (2020). *A Guide to Afghan Diaspora Engagement in Europe*. VIDC. Retrieved from: https://www.fatt.at/Portals/0/BlogItems/PDF/a_guide_to_afghan_diaspora_engagement_in_europe_.pdf.
- Awan, R. U., Waqar, F., Rahim, S., & Sher, F. (2017). Impact of Remittances on Expenditures and Poverty at Household Level in Pakistan. *Pakistan Economic and Social Review*, 55(2), 415–434.

- Ahmad, A. (n.d.). *Afghan Diaspora to launch online university in Europe*. VIDC. Retrieved from: <https://www.vidc.org/en/detail/afghan-diaspora-to-launch-online-university-in-europe> (accessed June 12th, 2023).
- Battiston, G., 2022. *The Afghan Diaspora: Partners in the Crisis Response*. International Organization for Migration (IOM). Rome.
- Bhandari, P. (2020). Productive vs. consumptive uses of remittances by households: Evidence from Chitwan Valley of Nepal. In *South Asia Migration Report 2020* (pp. 58–84). Routledge, India.
- Boukharouaa, N. E., Berrada, M., Chaibi, A., Dinia, S., El Ftough, A., El Maliki, A., ... & Ouadirhi, Y. (2014). The Moroccan diaspora and its contribution to the development of innovation in Morocco. *The Global Innovation Index 2014: The Human Factor in Innovation*, 123–131.
- Central Statistics Organization [CSO]. (2018). *Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016–17*. Kabul
- Coffie, A. (2022). Channels for Financial and Non-financial Remittances from the Ghanaian Diaspora toward Development. In *Governing Migration for Development from the Global Souths* (pp. 111–132). Brill Nijhoff.
- DRC. (n.d.). Who are the diaspora ? Retrieved from: <https://pro.drc.ngo/what-we-do/civil-society-engagement/diaspora-programme/#:~:text=Diaspora%20can%20be%20defined%20as,and%20with%20compatriots%20living%20elsewhere> (accessed June 10th, 2023).
- Destatis. (2023). *Foreign population by selected citizenships and years*. Retrieved from: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/foreigner-citizenship-time-serie.html> (accessed June 24th, 2023).
- Dadush, U. (2015). *Diaspora, development and Morocco*. OCP Policy Center.
- Eversole, R., & Johnson, M. (2014). Migrant remittances and household development: An anthropological analysis. *Development Studies Research. An Open Access Journal*, 1(1), 1–15.
- Francois, J. N., Ahmad, N., Keinsley, A., & Nti-Addae, A. (2022). Heterogeneity in the long-run remittance-output relationship: Theory and new evidence. *Economic Modelling*, 110, 105793.
- Goh, S. C. (2002). Managing effective knowledge transfer: an integrative framework and some practice implications. *Journal of knowledge management*, 6(1), 23–30.
- Holterhus, T. P. (2019). *The Law Behind Rule of Law Transfers*. Nomos, Germany.
- Gatter, P., Schlumberger, O., Panissié, D., & Herbert, S. (2016). *State-building in a fragile environment: strengthening Afghan Institutions through the work of returning and integrated experts: programme for supporting the development of Afghan Ministries and administrative systems at national and sub-national level*. Bonn Eschborn Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.
- Gómez-Flores, P., Morales-Salgado, V., Maza, A., Villarreal, A., Lara-Jacobo, L. R., Jiménez-Córdova, M. I., ... & Hernández-Mondragón, A. C. (2022). Mexican Scientist Diaspora in North America: A Perspective on Collaborations with México. *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics*, 7.
- Grossman, J. (2019). Toward a definition of diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(8), 1263–1282.
- Havens, C., & Knapp, E. (1999). Easing into knowledge management. *Strategy & Leadership*, 27(2), 4–9.
- Hasht-e-Subh. (2021, July 14). *Crisis at the Heart of the Financial System; What Did Ajmal Ahmadi Do with the Central Bank?* Retrieved from: <https://8am.media/eng/crisis-at-the-heart-of-the-financial-system-what-did-ajmal-ahmadi-do-with-the-central-bank/> (accessed June 8th, 2023).

- IOM. (2018, April 19). *IOM Afghanistan Recognises Contributions Of Afghan Diaspora From Iran*. Retrieved from: <https://afghanistan.iom.int/news/iom-afghanistan-recognizes-contributions-afghan-diaspora-iran> (accessed May 16th, 2023).
- IOM. (2020). *Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D)*. Retrieved from: <https://iom-nederland.nl/en/migration-and-development/connecting-diaspora-for-development-cd4d> (accessed May 16th, 2023).
- IOM. (2019). *Glossary on Migration*. International Migration Law No. 34. Retrieved from: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf.
- Kuschminder, K. (2011). The role of the diaspora in knowledge transfer and capacity building in post-conflict settings: The temporary return of qualified nationals to Afghanistan. *Migration policy Report*, 10.
- KNOMAD-World Bank. (2022). *Bilateral Remittance Matrix 2021*. Retrieved from: <https://www.knomad.org/data/remittances> (accessed May 27th, 2023)
- Levitt, P. (1998). Social remittances: Migration driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion. *International migration review*, 32(4), 926–948.
- Levitt, P., & Lamba-Nieves, D. (2010). It's not just about the economy, stupid—Social Remittances revisited. *Migration Information Source*, 21, 1–9.
- McAuliffe, M. and A. Triandafyllidou (eds.) (2021). *World Migration Report 2022*. International Organization for Migration (IOM). Geneva.
- Migration Data Portal. (2023). *Remittances*. Retrieved from: <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/remittances> (accessed May 27th, 2023)
- Meshkovska, B., N. Sayed, K., Koch, I., Rajabzadeh, C., Wenger and M. Siegel. (2019). *Afghan diaspora in Europe: mapping engagement in Denmark, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom*. UNU-MERIT. Maastricht, the Netherlands.
- Mackenzie, J. (2021, September 1). *New era for Afghanistan starts with long queues, rising prices*. Reuters. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/new-era-afghanistan-starts-with-long-queues-rising-prices-2021-09-01/> (accessed May 27th, 2023)
- Marchand, K., Siegel, M., Kuschminder, K., Majidi, N., Vanore, M., & Buil, C. (2014). *Afghanistan Migration Profile 2020*. International Organization for Migration.
- Waldinger, R., & Fitzgerald, D. (2004). Transnationalism in question. *American journal of sociology*, 109(5), 1177–1195.
- Mueller, C., & Kuschminder, K. (2019). *Connecting Diaspora for Development (CD4D) Final Report*. Maastricht University. Maastricht.
- Nawandish, E. (2022, September 25). I WATCHED THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT COLLAPSE UNDER THE WEIGHT OF ITS OWN GREED. *The Intercept*. Retrieved from: <https://theintercept.com/2022/09/25/afghanistan-withdrawal-corruption/> (accessed June 27th, 2023).
- Nasrat, S. (2020). Social capital and the labour market integration experiences of Afghan refugees in the Netherlands. *Migration and Development*, 11(3), 600–617.
- Omar, Y. S. (2020). Knowledge and skills transfer as peace-building mechanisms: A study of the Somali diaspora. In *Multidisciplinary issues surrounding African diasporas* (pp. 245–264). IGI Global.
- Rome, H. (2022). *Iran in 2022: Volatile Economy*. USIP. Retrieved from: <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2022/dec/21/iran-2022-volatile-economy> (accessed June 5th, 2023)
- Ross, N., & Barratt, S. (2022). *Remittances to Afghanistan are lifelines: They are needed more than ever in a time of crisis*. Migration Data Portal. Retrieved from: <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/blog/remittances-afghanistan-lifelines> (accessed June 12th, 2023).

- Sayed, N. (2021). *Diaspora Engagement in Afghanistan [policy brief]*. Cordaid. Retrieved from: <https://www.cordaid.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2022/11/210330-Policy-Brief-Diaspora-Sustainable-Development-Afghanistan.pdf>.
- Tettey, W. J. (2016). Regenerating scholarly capacity through diaspora engagement: the case of a Ghana diaspora knowledge network. *Diasporas, Development and Governance*, 171–186.
- Tejada, G. (2016). Knowledge transfers through Diaspora transnationalism and return migration: a case study of Indian Skilled migrants. *Diasporas, Development and Governance*, 187–203.
- Terrazas, A. (2010). Connected through service: Diaspora volunteers and global development. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. (2021). *Leveraging diaspora for Innovation for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from: <https://unece.org/media/news/357433> (accessed June 2nd, 2023).
- UNHCR. (2023). *Operation Data Portal: Afghanistan Situation*. Retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/afghanistan> (accessed June 24th, 2023).
- United Nations. (2019). *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*. Retrieved from: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/451/99/PDF/N1845199.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed June 2nd, 2023).
- UNDP. (2010). *Measuring capacity*. Retrieved from: https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/downloads/pn_measuring_capacity.pdf.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html> (accessed June 12th, 2023).
- UNDESA. (2020). *International Migrant Stock*. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock> (accessed May 10th, 2023).
- Vertovec, S. (1997). Three meanings of “diaspora,” exemplified among South Asian religions. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 6(3), 277–299.
- von Schreeb, J. (2018). Humanitarian assistance in crisis. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 2(9), 612–612.
- World Bank-KNOMAD. (2022, November). *Remittance inflows (US\$ million)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.knomad.org/> (accessed March 20th, 2023).
- World Bank-KNOMAD. (2023, June). *Remittance inflows (US\$ million)*. Retrieved from: <https://www.knomad.org/data/remittances> (accessed June 24th, 2023).
- World Bank. (2023, April 4th). *The World Bank In Pakistan*. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/pakistan/overview> (accessed June 22nd, 2023).
- World Bank. (2006). *What Role for Diaspora Expertise in Post-Conflict Reconstruction? Lessons from Afghanistan, and West Bank and Gaza*. Retrieved from: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/174831467995085966/pdf/368940SDN02501PUBLIC1.pdf>.
- World Bank. (2009). *Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund 1387 Annual Report (March 21st, 2008 to March 20th, 2009)*. Kabul.
- World Bank. (2017). *Improving Governance Is Key to Ensuring Equitable Growth in Developing Countries*. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/01/30/improving-governance-is-key-to-ensuring-equitable-growth-in-developing-countries> (accessed June 27th, 2023).
- World Bank. (2022). *Remittances Brave Global Headwinds*. Retrieved from: https://www.knomad.org/sites/default/files/publication-doc/migration_and_development_brief_37_nov_2022.pdf.

REINTEGRATION OF NEPALI RETURNEE MIGRANTS: AN ANALYSIS OF POLICIES, APPROACHES AND PRACTICES

Jagannath Adhikari, Mahendra Kumar Rai, Chiranjivi Baral and Mahendra Subedi

Background

Foreign labour migration has become a main livelihood strategy for a majority of Nepali households. They have taken this strategy as a way to improve their economic and social status. Foreign labour migration, and remittances generated from it, is also a significant contributor to sustainable development and a critical driver for Nepal's socio-economic change (MoLESS, 2022; NIDS, 2010). The outflow of Nepali youths has been increasing over time, ranging from 221,427 in 2008/09 to 519,638 in 2013/14 and 630,089 in 2021/22 (MoLESS, 2022). At the same time, the high outflow of foreign labour migration has generated the counter stream in the form of return migration. Therefore, it is certain that population of returnee migrants has grown significantly over time. The number of migrant workers who returned through the Tribhuvan International Airport was 203,934 in 2020/21 and 470,978 in 2021/22 (MoLESS, 2022). The past evidence shows that the volume of Nepali returnee migrants increase drastically during humanitarian crisis like COVID-19. Nepal received over NPR 1,007 billion as remittances (ca. USD 8.33 billion) in 2021/22 (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2023). The remittances accounted for 22% share of the GDP in Nepal in 2022 (World Bank, 2023). Among the low- and middle-income countries, Nepal ranked 10th in terms of remittance as the percentage of GDP in 2022 (Ratha et al., 2022).

Despite having significant contributions of migrants to the country's socio-economic development, the government of Nepal lacks specific plans, programs and strategies for speedy and sustainable development by utilizing the knowledge, skills, technology, capital and experiences of returnee migrants. The returnee migrants want specific economic, social and psychosocial supports in their reintegration process at home and in their efforts to utilize their skills and experiences. However, after the return of Nepali migrants, they do not find

proper and adequate support for their reintegration in family, community and market economy. Even though Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS) has recently developed the reintegration directives, namely the Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers, 2022 (GoN, 2022), the practice of reintegration at local level is not as effective at an expected level. Despite the fact that ever-increasing remittances have entered Nepal's economy with the increase in the outflow of working age population, there is hardly any concrete initiation to enable migrants to invest the remittance in productives sector that could create the platform for returnee migrants for their easy reintegration process. Similarly, the earned and learned knowledge, skills, competencies and experiences of returnee migrants are not fully utilized in Nepal which could contribute for national building process in an efficient way (MoLESS, 2018).

One of the reasons for not utilizing the financial and social remittances and skills and knowledge of returnee migrants is that there is not any systematic, regular and complete record of earned and learned skills and experiences of these returnee migrants, which has also affected their effective reintegration (MoLESS, 2018). So, it is most essential to keep systematic record of skills, knowledge and experiences of returnee migrants for formulating concrete plans, policies and strategies and implementing them for successful and dignified reintegration of returnee Nepali migrants. At the same time, the government is now trying to understand different approaches for sustainable reintegration and bring in effective policies and programs. As a result, there is some evolution in such policies in recent times.

Sustainable return and reintegration of returnee migrants

Nepal is now facing overwhelming population of returnee migrants. About half a million of Nepali migrants returned to Nepal last year just via international airport in Kathmandu (only one international airport until then). Many others working in India are not recorded, who return to Nepal overland. Many of these migrants return home at the end of their migration cycle. Because of the age, they are unwilling to return to foreign countries for work. Some of them want to stay on in Nepal if there is some chance of generating income for sustained livelihood. These migrants often undertake return migration if they do not find any alternative employment or occupation to stay on in Nepal. There is also a growing realization that the skills and experience of the returnee migrants need to be used for the benefit of migrants' family, society and nation as a whole.

COVID-19 and its impact on migrants' unexpected return led to a realization that proper reintegration policies and programs are needed for the returnee migrants. A study conducted during the Covid period by the authors among 3,000 migrants (current, returnee and potential migrants) had revealed that about 52% of the migrants still staying in destination countries (current migrants) had expressed an interest in returning to Nepal. More males (51.9%) expressed a desire to return home, while comparatively fewer females (46.2%)

expressed that desire. About 40% of the current migrants expressed a desire to start their own business after returning to Nepal. About 30% of them wanted to continue traditional agriculture and 20% to pursue modern farming. Only a few migrants opted for entrepreneurship (IOM & NIDS, 2020).

The survey also revealed that migrants expected helps from the government so that they could stay on in Nepal after their return. About 55% of them expected the Government helped them in financial matters (soft loans, seed money and grants), about 34% expected a conducive environment (appropriate law, policy and easy procedures) and network development for business and entrepreneurship (about 9%). The major areas of work that returnee migrants prioritized included agriculture, services, daily wages, driving, construction work, and tailoring.

Within the agriculture, the desired enterprises included: goat farming (18%), poultry farming (14%), fruit farming (9.35%), cattle farming (8.3%), vegetable and tea farming (7.1%), fishery and beekeeping (1.1%), pig farming (0.9%) and turkey farming (0.2%). Of those returnee migrants who wanted to be involved, most (65.6%) wanted to join tourism-related jobs including restaurants, catering, fast-food shops and travel agencies. Other major priority areas of jobs include the Government jobs and teaching. Security guards (6.4% respondents) and beauty parlours (3.2%) were other jobs within the service sector that the returnees wanted to undertake. The highest proportion of returnee migrants from India (43.8%) aspired to join the service sector; whereas, returnees from other countries chose agriculture (45%). This also shows the differences among the returnee migrants from different countries.

In another study (IOM, 2021c), it was revealed that out of total 708,453 returnee migrants in Nepal, 39% of male returnee migrants opted for general work, followed by factory work (10.19%), cleaning (10%) and security guard (8%); on the other hand, a majority of women returnee migrants (49%) opted for cleaning, followed by housekeeping (17%) and factory work (9%). Similarly, about 69% male and 66% female learned some skills and knowledge during work at destination. Of the total returnees, majority of returnee were involved in factory work (23%), followed by hotel/restaurants (15%), housekeeping (7%), engineering works (3%) and other professional jobs (10%). Likewise, only 22% of the total returnees used the earned skills (IOM, 2021c). This picture on different skill levels is also indicative of what type of re-integration programs are suitable, especially to address the economic aspect of reintegration.

It is not that migrants were not returning before the Covid pandemic, but the disaster triggered an attitude that the reintegration of returnee migrants is important. Reintegration of migrants is also a development phenomenon that contributes to the national economy through the returnees' engagement in economic activities and also ensures a robust domestic supply chain of goods and services, making the country less reliant on imports. Moreover, there will be many more returnee migrants as the time passes. But then the question came as to what is meant by sustainable return and sustainable reintegration of migrants.

Nepali migrants have been regularly returning home and then are remigrating to the destination countries until their cycle of migration is complete, which usually happens when a migrant reaches to about 50 years of age (based on discussions with returnee migrant workers). This, of course, depends on the type of jobs and the destination country. But for countries where a majority of Nepalis go for work (Gulf states, Malaysia and India), a migrant would not return to destination country after 50 years of age.

Recent policies in Nepal make it clear that migration should be a choice rather than compulsion. A commitment to facilitate safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration, has also been reiterated under the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Regular, and Orderly Migration¹. Objective 21 of the Compact includes a commitment “to create conducive conditions for personal safety, economic empowerment, inclusion and social cohesion in communities, in order to ensure that reintegration of migrants upon return to their countries of origin is sustainable”. From this perspective a returnee migrant needs to find a condition in the home country so that there is no compulsion for her/him to undertake irregular migration for survival. On this account, IOM (2017) defines sustainable reintegration as:

- returnees reaching levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial wellbeing that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers.
- the ability of returnees to make further migration decisions as a matter of choice, rather than necessity.

The IOM approach, thus, emphasizes that reintegration is a multi-dimensional process and aims at ensuring returnees’ economic, social and psychosocial wellbeing in their origin country. Like any other concept of well-being, sustainable return has both objective and subjective dimensions to sustainable reintegration. As Koser and Kuschminder (2015) define return as sustainable when the individual has reintegrated into the economic, social and cultural processes of the country of origin and feels that he/she is in an environment of safety and security upon return. But again, there are questions on how to measure the whether the reintegration is sustainable. Sustainable reintegration must therefore be a multi-level concept, since “sustainability of reintegration is not only dependent on the returning individual, but also on the local community and the structural situation of the environment of return” (IOM 2017). When communities perceive return positively, it allows the migrant to return without the risk of being stigmatised, enabling them to re-establish social ties, and facilitating re-insertion into society. This is more likely when return migration positively influences – rather than worsens – conditions in the community of return. Sustainable reintegration therefore has an individual level, which addresses the specific needs of beneficiaries and households; a community level, which addresses specific needs and concerns of families and communities; and a

structural level, which ensures access to basic services and safety for returnees and the non-migrant population alike (IOM, 2019). An integrated approach to reintegration, which includes economic, social and psychosocial dimensions, is sustainable when the reintegration supports are provided at each of these three levels — structural level, community level and individual level.

Nepal as a signatory country of the Global Compact for the Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) has committed to facilitate migrant workers in dignified return, repatriation and sustainable reintegration. The GCM covers major dimensions of international migration in a border perspective though this is a non-binding framework for cooperation. It lays emphasis on collaboration, dialogue and collective efforts by focusing on the opportunity to improve migration governance by considering the human rights perspective as well. It builds on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and consists of 23 goals and 10 cross-cutting and interdependent guiding principles. It presents a significant opportunity to improve the governance of migration, to address the challenges associated with today's migration, and to strengthen the contribution of migrants and migration to

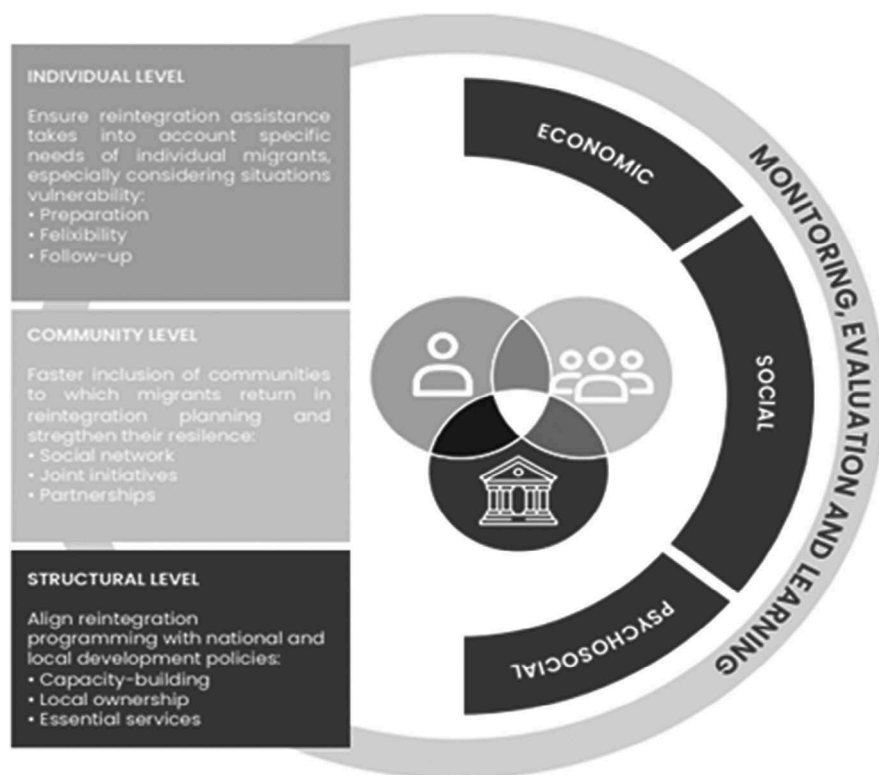


FIGURE 5.1 An integrated approach to reintegration

Source: IOM (2019, p. 14)

sustainable development. The Global Compact is framed in a way consistent with target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in which Member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration.² As a state party, Nepal has shown its interest as well as commitment to provide the returnee migrant workers for equal access to social protection and services. However, government does not have any specific plan and program for enhancing all aspects of effective reintegration of returnee migrants..

The recent policies in Nepal are also guided by this multi-level concept of sustainable reintegration. However, there are gaps in policies. In particular, there are many shortcomings in the practices that the government has now followed in reintegration process. Implementation of these policies and practices have become complicated as the roles and responsibilities have been segregated at different levels of governance (central/federal, provincial, and local) with overlaps and contradictions.

Existing legal and policy provisions for reintegration of returnee migrants:

Nepal has initiated some legal and policy provisions on reintegration since the late 2000s, but these provisions were not taken seriously then. It is only after the COVID-19 pandemic that concerns were raised for effective actions on this front. For example, the Constitution of Nepal (2015), the fundamental law of Nepal, envisions the utilization of capital, skills, knowledge and experiences earned at destination countries by returnee Nepali migrants for socio-economic development of Nepal (GoN, 2015). Similarly, Foreign Employment Policy 2012, National Population Policy 2015 and National Youth Policy 2015 have provided the basis for reintegration of returnee Nepali migrants. Recently, the government of Nepal has promulgated the Reintegration Program (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrants Workers, 2022 for facilitating and managing the reintegration of returnee Nepali migrant workers (MoLESS, 2022). The significant legal and policy provisions that play a crucial role for successful and sustainable reintegration of returnee migrants are:

Legal provision of reintegrations

Fundamentally, the Constitution of Nepal has provided the sufficient ground for return and reintegration of Nepali migrant. On the one hand it has envisioned safe and systematic foreign employment whereas on the other hand it envisions the utilization of the capital, skill, knowledge, experience and technology gained by migrant in productive sectors. Article 50, under directive principles and policies of the Constitution, has the provision of encouragement to mobilize the capital, skills, technology and experience gained from foreign employment in productive sectors in the country (GoN, 2015). So, the return and reintegration are the constitutional as well as human rights of each and every Nepali migrant.

The Foreign Employment Act, 2007 is one of the most important laws for making foreign employment safe, regular, managed, decent with full protection of rights and interest of migrant workers. In terms of reintegration, section 32 and 33 provide the significant basis for reintegration of returnee migrants in Nepal. Section 32 of the Act has the provision of establishment of “foreign employment workers fund” for the social security and welfare of the workers who have gone for foreign employment and returned from foreign employment (GoN, 2007a; GoN, 2007b). Section 33 (c) has given ample basis for launching employment-oriented programs for returnee migrant workers. So, directly this Act is the law that has provided the ground for creating fund not only for welfare activities but also for creating the income generating activities for returnee migrants (GoN, 2007a; GoN, 2007b). Similarly, Foreign Employment Regulations, 2008 has the provisions of mobilization and use of deposit fund for the welfare as well as reintegration programs of returnee migrants in Nepal. At present, this fund (‘foreign employment workers’ fund), which was established in 2008, has collected contributions from over 4 million Nepali migrant workers who had received their labour approval to migrate overseas. An individual worker’s contribution is US\$ 13. By 2020 this fund was accumulated to US\$ 50 million. A large proportion of this fund has remained unutilized, and it has been used mainly for bringing in deceased migrants from overseas countries. The Regulation (rule 26 (e)) clearly states that while setting the program from this fund, returnees’ interest and needs should be prioritized for successful reintegration process (GoN, 2008a; GoN, 2008b). However, this has not been so until now.

Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007 also provides a basis for rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of human trafficking for their reintegration and reunion in family and society. The provision of social, economic and psychosocial reintegration in family and society through shelter-based approach or community approach can be adopted for successful and sustainable reintegration in which either comprehensive composite model or regular model can be employed for returnees (GoN, 2007b). After the ratification of Palermo Protocol by the government of Nepal, the cases of human trafficking have significantly increased due to its changed definition, and most of the victims of human trafficking due to foreign labour migration can be reintegrated under this provision.

The Local Government Operation Act, 2017 is another benchmarking Act for reintegration of returnee migrants in Nepal. Under the jurisdiction of collection of unemployment data, the local levels have the right to collect the data related to internal and external workers and to manage data as well as information related to foreign employment and migrant workers. Furthermore, Article 11.1 (q) of this Act has significant provisions related to reintegration of returnee migrants from foreign employment and maximum utilization of knowledge, skills and entrepreneurship earned during foreign employment (GoN, 2017).

The Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers, 2022 is an important instrument, brought in the aftermath of Covid pandemic, for effective and sustainable reintegration of

returnee migrants in Nepal. The directives have a motto to conduct social and economic reintegration programs by using capital, skills, technology and experience brought by returnee migrants in Nepal. On the one hand it has provided the basis for promoting entrepreneurship and skills, whereas on the other hand it contributes to socio-economic development of the nation. Basically, three main programs of reintegration viz. socialization program, employment program, and entrepreneurship promotion program have provided the practical basis for sustainable reintegration. The secretariat has the provisions of call for proposals and also has the right to approve the proposals based on the examination of program coordination committee. The directives, furthermore, have included the provisions of conducting the reintegration programs by national NGOs, foreign countries or organizations, Nepal's federal, provincial and local level governments (MoLESS, 2022).

Policy provisions of reintegration

The Foreign Employment Policy, 2012 has provisions related to reintegration of returnee migrants. The policy considers foreign employment as a tool for transferring new skill and technology. It also gives priority to returnee migrants as development partners for nation's socio-economic development and poverty reduction. The policy has many provisions as effective social and economic reintegration packages, utilization of returnees as trainers for orientation and skill trainings, enhancement of entrepreneurship, investment and capital formation.

This policy envisions the strategy to reintegrate Nepali migrant workers in a successful and sustainable manner. On the one hand it emphasizes mobilizing the skills, experiences and technical knowledge of returnee migrants, whereas on the other hand, it facilitates by developing social and economic reintegration packages at origin places of returnees. The policy also has an especial provision of establishment of psycho-social counselling and rehabilitation centers to those needy returnee migrants who face traumatic situations at destinations.

Similarly, National Population Policy, 2015 of Nepal also envisions safe, orderly and regular migration. The policy envisions the management of migration including returnee migrants. Similarly, the National Youth Policy, 2015 has the provision of utilization of funds generated for the welfare of migrants (foreign employment workers fund) for the youth returned from foreign employment and aspires to start entrepreneurship in the country. The policy also envisions creating a proper as well as conducive environment for maximum utilization of skills, experiences, competence and capital of the non-resident Nepali youth (GoN, 2015). The policy states that social and economic reintegration of returnee youth migrants through capacity building, soft loan, including start, up support is crucial.

Reintegration policies of local governments also provide sufficient grounds for successful and dignified reintegration at local level. The reintegration policy of Dhankuta Municipality (Dhankuta Municipality, 2021), is an exemplary

policy, which was introduced before the Reintegration Programme (Management and Operation) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers, 2022. Gaur Municipality had also developed a reintegration policy, albeit incomprehensive (Gaur Municipality 2021). The national guidelines have recognized that local levels have an ample role in reintegrating the returnees of their territories.

Gaps in legal and policy provisions

The existing legal and policy provisions have provided ample ground for reintegration of returnee migrants in Nepal. However, some loopholes in legal and policy aspects are still prevalent in the sphere of reintegration. The notion of changed federal context (i.e., formation of three layers of governance – central, province and local – as promulgated in the new Constitution of 2015) is not captured by reintegration directives and there is an anomaly as well as a gap in terms of developing reintegration policy at a local level. Likewise, the Reintegration directive is silent on the India returnee migrant workers as well as victims of human trafficking and the special attention should be provided to returnee women migrants (RMWs).

The provincial level, till date, does not have reintegration plans as well as policy. There is lack of coordination among and between the reintegration packages implementing partners, which should be streamlined by reintegration directives. There are no composite packages as well as strategy for successful and sustainable reintegration of returnee migrants. The federal level reintegration directives should guide the forthcoming reintegration policy of both provincial and local level. Only a few local governments have already promulgated the reintegration policy but the situation of allocating budget for reintegration program is mysterious (based on the information from a KII with Mayor of Dhankuta Municipality). The role of local level could be crucial for the reintegration of returnee migrants; however, a majority of local governments do not have a reintegration plan as well as or policy.

Institutional mechanisms for reintegration of returnee migrants in Nepal

Realizing that there are now increasing number of migrants returning from the countries of destination and the need to address their needs, Nepal has introduced the Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returning Migrant Workers 2022 (GoN, 2022). The directives have given the authority to Foreign Employment Board to conduct programmes for socialization, programmes for involvement in employment, and programmes to promote entrepreneurship.

In 2019, the Government of Nepal unveiled the Prime Minister Employment Programme to offer paid work to unemployed persons between the ages of 18–51 years, the major age group of migrant workers. Applicants were assigned jobs based on their qualifications and received skills training. The government ensured

30 days of work in a year to the selected ones. However, it was not specific to the returnees and migrant women. During the pandemic, the government allocated NPR 4.34 billion to create 700,000 employment opportunities for people who need them, including returning migrants.

In Nepal, the MoLESS is the key government agency working in the overall domains of foreign labour migration. There is the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) to manage, coordinate and monitor the labour migration issues.

The Foreign Employment Board (FEB) is also a federal government's entity to provide welfare to migrants and their families. The FEB has its ambit for skills development, pre-departure orientation, returnee's integration, and compensation for injuries and deaths of migrants at their workplace. In the meantime, the FEB, in coordination with National Skill Testing Board, supports returnee migrant workers in getting certified their skills and experiences gained during foreign employment without any cost (MoLESS, 2022).

The recently unveiled Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returning Migrant Workers 2022 has arranged two institutional mechanisms. The "Programme Coordination Committee" at the federal level is led by the executive director of the FEB which seeks to coordinate all reintegration programmes in the country with the sole hope of (i) Eliminating overlaps across programmes, (ii) Keeping real-time database of reintegration programmes, and (iii) Conducting proper monitoring and evaluation of the programmes (Bhusal, 2022). The "Programme Implementation Committee" at the local level is led by the deputy mayor in urban municipalities and vice-chair in rural municipalities which aims to manage the actual implementation of reintegration programmes regardless of diverse funding sources, size, modality and collaboration (*ibid.*). Although there seems to be a lack of any similar committee at the provincial level in the policy, both the coordination and implementation committees are expected to coordinate with provincial governments to ensure proper coordination in the design and delivery of reintegration services to returnee migrant workers (Bhusal, 2022).

More importantly, civil society organizations, development partners, the private sector and community-based organizations (CBOs) are also brought on board through the framework as their interventions for the reintegration are channelized in the government's activities.

Similarly, the province-level governments of Nepal have also instituted the Ministry of Social Development to carry out province-level interventions. Likewise, all 753 local levels are also sovereign entities conducting different programmes in regard to reintegration, though challenges galore there.

Even though governments at different levels (central, province and local) have some institutional structure to support reintegration of returnee migrants, challenges have been identified in implementation of policies and programs. For example, implementing plans at the local level for the creation of centres for comprehensive psychosocial counselling for the needy returnees remains a big

challenge. This has happened for lack of promptness on the part of the local level as well as their sustainability is always under a question due to limited resources. Preparing a communication and information dissemination strategy to unite the returnees and use their expertise for the promotion of startups, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and community development initiatives remains a challenge in our context. Likewise, capacity building of the local levels in policy formulation and sensitizing the issue is also a challenging job given that the local authorities are not convinced to implement intervention programmes on reintegration. Moreover, there is a huge gap in developing a supply chain and ensuring a market to sell the goods and services of the returnees for their sustainable reintegration.

Approaches/practices of reintegrating returnee migrants: some evidence

Of a wide array of approaches initiated by civil society (NGOs) and development partners like UN agencies and INGOs, two approaches are observed for successful and dignified reintegration of returnee migrants in the context of Nepal. The first approach is related to programmatic approach whereas another one is related to self/personal effort approach.³ The programmatic approach is found more effective and sustainable as it encompasses the proper plan with grant support, working modality, timeframe, proper and effective network, formation of formal group, value and supply chain and continuous and rigorous monitoring and feedback systems. The start-up fund as a form of grant, business incubation training, capacity building training, training related to business plan and financial literacy enhance capacity and confidence of returnees which ultimately contributes for successful and sustainable reintegration. The comprehensive package viz. economic, social and psychosocial packages are possible only through this approach that could ensure the reintegration of returnee migrants.

The self/personal effort approach is less effective in comparison to programmatic approach. The components like network building, group formation, value and supply chain, business incubation training and capacity building trainings are very limited in this approach. In this approach, the background characteristics including capacity and personal network of returnees work in an effective way for reintegration process. So, the success of reintegration of returnee migrants is less. The personal effort does not properly work in the landscape of Nepali society, as group effort with specific program could be the best.

Local governments in Nepal now have implemented 387 programmes on their own as part of reintegration in 2021/22 (IOM, 2022). Developing migration profiles and keeping the records of returnees during the pandemic, financial support, skill-based training, loan, enterprise development, agriculture support, among others are common initiatives among the local levels with regard to reintegration of returnees (IOM, 2022).

Structural level

Nepal has a dedicated institutional mechanism, namely Foreign Employment Board, to carry out the activities associated with the reintegration of migrant workers (MoLESS, 2022). At the local government level, there is an employment service centre in each of the 753 municipalities, with the placement of employment coordinators to facilitate workers in employment, including reintegration of returnee migrants (MoLESS, 2022). Though the recently unveiled Reintegration Guidelines has drawn criticism for its failure to include undocumented migrants and the India returnees, it has been appreciated for recognizing the role of local governments and national and international organizations in carrying out reintegration related activities (Pandey, 2022).

In developing the institutional structure, Nepal has utilized the knowledge and experiences of such programs in other countries. For example, Afghanistan's Citizen Charter Program (2017–2026) is employing the strategy of cooperation and partnership in its effort to strengthen Community Development Councils, which promote participatory decision-making process, where returnees are one of the groups that elect their representatives to contribute to set priorities and interventions (IOM, 2021a). As part of creating a robust structure for smooth reintegration of returnees, Sri Lanka has set an example with the formulation of a reintegration sub-policy. The policy has adopted a holistic approach as it includes the aspects of social, economic and psychological reintegration of migrant workers, and follows the principle of ensuring a safe and dignified return and reintegration process, special attention to the reintegration needs of migrant workers who have faced stressful or traumatic migration experiences, and inclusiveness, non-discrimination, and gender equality (ILO, 2023). The sub-policy framework covers five areas: social reintegration of returnees, economic reintegration of returnees, physical and psychological well-being of returnees and their family members, civil and political empowerment of migrant returnees, and effective management of return and reintegration process (Wickramasekara, 2019). The sub-policy ensures welfare support and scholarships for migrants' children, social security scheme for returnees, and support for returnees to secure quality local employment, and more (GAATW, 2022). It sets an example of an evidence-based policy formulation, as a survey was carried out among returnees with support from ILO before developing the policy and a pilot reintegration programme as well as stakeholders' consultations informed the development of the action plan (Wickramasekara, 2019). The sub-policy provisions collaboration among the government and other stakeholders for the plan and implementation of emergency evacuation of migrant workers (LAPSOJ, 2020). However, the sub-policy is being criticized for its weak implementation (GAATW, 2022). Questions are also being raised as to lack of coordination among key ministries and agencies responsible. As envisioned by the sub-policy, a separate reintegration unit has been established by the government to look after its implementation.

Community level

In Nepal, Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (RERP) under the Ministry of Industry is working to support rural households, including migrant families and returnees, with on-farm and off-farm activities, vocational training, information dissemination, financial literacy, and supply chain support (IOM, 2021a). The livelihood support and jobs for migrants' families has become a relevant safety net for migrant workers upon their return particularly when they happen to return unprepared into the community (*ibid.*). In another innovative effort, a community-led reintegration programme is being implemented in Dhankuta Municipality of Nepal, which has included non-migrants in the community and migrant families for the well-being of returnees, and they help each other regardless of migration background (Hickcox, 2023). Despite these efforts, community engagement is significantly low among migrant returnees in Nepal, with almost 90% migrant returnees are not involved in any social/community-related activities, and most of them do not receive any support from the community on returning home, which indicates a great need of attention on their social reintegration (Blitz Media and Humanity United, 2022). Similar programmes in other countries have shown effective results, and it has been expected that this will prove so in Nepal. For example, Afghanistan's Citizen Charter Program's support Community Development Councils, and its community level intervention through the improvement of infrastructure and social services to communities, including access to clean water, quality education, basic health services, electricity, roads and irrigation systems, helped all sorts of community members, including returnees to reintegrate in the community (IOM, 2021a). The programme focuses on the communities that host the most returnees and strengthens the communities with various activities such as the maintenance and construction cash grant, which are the paying jobs for one-third of the poorest households. The Citizen Charter programme's collaboration with Reintegration Assistance and Development in Afghanistan (RADA) project helped boost integrated community development and support to new and existing small and medium enterprises, strengthen road network, irrigation system, drainage systems and others (*ibid.*). The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) created jobs for returnees, with 17 SMEs employing 104 returnees, including 22 females, by the end of 2020 (IOM, 2021b). It followed 'by the returnee for the returnee model' as the SMEs established by former returnees provided jobs to recent returnees.

Individual level

Focus on reintegration of returnee migrants has gained much attention in Nepal after more migrant workers returned to the country with the outbreak of COVID-19. To cater to the individual needs of returnee migrants, the government has been conducting programmes related to financial literacy, vocational

training, psychosocial support, shelter support and provides direct grants to individuals as part of reintegration of returnees (MoLESS, 2022). Recognising prior learning, skills-oriented training⁴, facilitation of exemplary returnee entrepreneurs with up to Nepali Rs 100,000 are some other support services. Similarly, returnees can get their skills and experiences gained during foreign employment certified free of cost. Although the skill certification increases the additional income generating opportunities for returnees, lack of information to returnees, absence of follow-up activities and post-training support such as financial arrangement, business consulting, market linkage and simplification of administrative procedure have prevented them from being effective. In addition, a long-hour training is not preferred by returnee migrants (Neupane & Adhikari, 2021). Moreover, only 15.7% have knowledge about the government programmes, indicating that most returnees are not aware of them (IOM, 2021c).

With the facilitation from Foreign Employment Board, there is a provision of soft loans of maximum NPR 1,000,000 from banks for an individual returnee migrant. This program has been going on after the budget speech in 2018/19, which was aimed at returnee migrant workers who opt for entrepreneurship; a total of 782 returnees succeeded in taking loans under this provision until the mid of 2021 (IOM, 2022). However, this scheme was discontinued citing mainly the low demand/approval for individual loans. The low approval of the loan could have been the result of limited knowledge on application process, required documents and the technical skills on business planning. Returnees do not have any information as to where, how and when to approach for such subsidized loans, and that the beneficiaries of such loans are the ones who have political connection and who have access (IOM, 2021c).

However, there are cases of success of programs at the individual level. For example, India and Bangladesh have offered good practices especially in data collection, which feeds into the support programs. Bangladesh has started collecting the disaggregated data of returnees, in which the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training handles the system, and provides training on the use of the system. District Employment and Manpower Offices, Technical Training Center and Union Development Centres input the data of returnees. A 2013 survey of returning Bangladeshi migrant workers analysed skills and entrepreneurship demand in the domestic economy with a view to effectively reintegrating workers into the labour market (Wickramasekara, 2019). It engaged with 1,200 returning migrant workers, including 272 women migrants at the airports, supplemented by in-depth interviews with 85 returned workers. Similarly, Bangladesh's Return Migrant Survey 2018/19 covered 5,000 households with at least one member who returned from work abroad after 2009, and it provides information on destination country, duration of stay, labor market outcomes at destination, and reasons for returning, returnees' expectations about wages and savings, difficulties encountered abroad, and overall impressions of the migration experience (Ahmed & Bossavie, 2022). In the same way,

India launched Vande Bharat Mission beginning in May 2020 to ensure the safe and secure repatriation of Indians from different countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, repatriating over 9.6 million Indian citizens by October 2021 (Wickramasekara, 2022). Under the mission, a database of skills of returning workers was created with the launching of the Skilled Workers Arrival Database for Employment Support (SWADES), a joint initiative of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Civil Aviation, and the Ministry of External Affairs.⁵ It facilitates the reintegration of migrant workers into the local labor market, and the data is shared with concerned government agencies on a real-time basis (Wickramasekara, 2022).

Using the experiences of Bangladesh and India, there has also been some initiations in Nepal in data/information collection about the migrants to examine how best they could be reintegrated into the society. Local level governments have started doing this. For example, Kolhalpur Municipality of Banke District has started collecting data of returnee migrant workers to create a base for retaining the returnees, a part of reintegration of migrant workers. In an interview, the mayor of the municipality stated “based on the data and its findings, we are going to develop and implement plans and programmes for the returnees. Our aim is to reintegrate them in our municipality and to reduce forced migration through creating the availability of income generating activities commensurate with the skills of the returnee migrants in the municipality. Enumerators have been mobilized to collect the household level data, and it will be completed quite soon.”⁶ The municipality has aimed at contributing to the development of the country through mobilization of capital, skills and experiences of the returnee migrant workers as part of their reintegration, and it has already conducted orientation to 30 enumerators, two from each ward (Gahatraj, 2023). The initiative of the municipality is expected to contribute to the evidence-based policy-making efforts.

Similarly, Shivaraj Municipality of Kapilvastu District has developed a profile on foreign employment, which includes details about the issues of returnee migrant workers in the municipality (Shivaraj Municipality, 2022). The profile mentions demographic descriptions of returnee migrant workers, the reasons behind the return, skills and capacities gained abroad, and their engagement and plans after return. Of the total 13,558 households in the municipality, 3,657 (27%) households have their youths in foreign employment, and about 50% of them have returned to the country (ibid.). Majority of returnees (1,447) are low-skilled labourers. Most of the returnees (654) are engaged in agriculture, while 362 returnees are searching for jobs and 291 are waiting to remigrate. The profile was developed with the aim of designing and implementing evidence-based policies, programmes and monitoring to make foreign employment safe, orderly, regular and dignified, and to mobilize the skills and capital acquired during the foreign employment in the productive sector.

Kalaiya Sub-metropolitan City has also developed a migration profile on foreign employment, including some information about returnees. The profile

sheds light on the demographic details of the returnee migrant workers, their current situation, reasons of return, investment status, the local government's support for the entrepreneurship development, challenges faced by the returnee entrepreneurs and their challenges and others (Kalaiya Sub-metropolitan City, 2020). It mentions that a total of 1320 migrant workers returned to the municipality, with 1263 males and 57 females. The returnees are mainly from Malaysia (703), Qatar (322) and Saudi Arabia (142). Of the total, 1,026 workers (78%) returned due to expiry of the contract, and 86 workers (7%) returned due to company closure. Budget constraint, marketing problem, lack of training and technical support were reported to be the major challenges faced by the returnee migrant workers in the municipality. The employment coordinator of the municipality said, "Based on the data and findings from the profile, we have started a reintegration programme on entrepreneurship development for returnees. We have formed a reintegration programme implementation committee. This time, 60 returnees have been selected as the beneficiary of the programme, from which they are entitled to receive NPR 35,000 as seed money."⁷ It indicates that the profile has created a base for conducting the reintegration programme.

Besides, many local levels in Nepal have provided employment, including to returnee migrant workers, through the Prime Minister Employment Programme. Beneficiaries under the programme are selected on the basis of the scores the applicants have obtained. There are two questions related to foreign employment— one related to the foreign employment experiences and the other related to skills learnt for giving the scores to the applications.⁸ The programme is not specifically targeted to returnees, but they have also benefited from it.

Conclusions and recommendations

Nepal is in the process of developing and refining legal and policy instruments for the sustainable reintegration of returnee migrants. While policies and laws/regulations had this idea since the late 2000s, the real concerns have been shown after the COVID-19 pandemic. After this incident, Nepali government has developed not only policies to this effect, but also directives for fast action along with development of institutional mechanisms. As a result, various programs have been implemented by the government (central, province and local), UN/INGOs, and NGOs. It is interesting to see that local governments have shown initiation to reintegrate returnee migrants and have taken various practices for this purpose. As Nepal is relatively new in the area of sustainable reintegration, it has also used the best experiences adopted in other South Asian countries – whether in terms of data collection and its use or in developing an institutional structure for collaboration between returnee migrants and the communities.

The legal and policy provisions have provided the ample ground for reintegration process of returnee migrants in Nepal. However, the implementation aspect of these legal and policy provisions including institutional mechanisms as well as budget allocation for reintegration is very mysterious. The gaps in legal

and policy provisions in terms of coherence, cooperation and coordination is another hindering aspect of reintegration.

Until now, the practices in Nepal – whether at the central level or local level – are more centered on economic aspects of reintegration at the community. This could be so because communities are still strong in Nepal where a returnee migrant finds its previous space, i.e., the space and acceptance before the departure. However, this is not so for all migrants. Still women returnee migrants do not find the same respect and space. Returnee migrants, especially women, are also seen to have mental health issues because of continuous harassment and discriminations at the place of their work (especially when engaged as domestic help). Therefore, the returnee migrants, along with community members need to understand each other, and they all need psychosocial (counselling) services. The experience of local level program planning and implementation has shown that there is lack of co-ordination for this purpose, and there is effectively very little done in this area.

Basically, two approaches, programmatic and self/personal effort approach are in practice in the context of reintegration of returnee migrants. The presence of required components of reintegration in programmatic approach is better than the second one for sustainable reintegration.

Poor banking system to promote entrepreneurship development is deemed a major bottleneck in Nepal for the reintegration in Nepal. Those having skills but without finance cannot really sustain their businesses or enterprises for lack of supporting financing system including soft loan, collateral free loan, support from the cooperatives and relaxed monetary policy.

Lack of resources was also seen a challenge for effective reintegration. Given the vast number of returnee migrants, a larger share of budget needs to be allocated for this purpose. In addition, the process for supporting returnee migrants has been complex along with unawareness among the returnees about the programs/support. For example, loan program was discontinued as there was no demand for this.

One of the ways to increase the resources to implement reintegration programs could be the effective integration of such programs as SDG programs for which international agencies could contribute more. SDGs and climate change adaptation programs have been receiving more resources. If reintegration of returnee migrants is done in a way that it also supports sustainable development goals and climate change adaptation goals, there is potential for overall economic and social gain for the society.

For effective reintegration programs, it is seen that there should an effective co-ordination and co-operation among different levels of government. Even though program implementation is effective when it is done from the local government level, central and provincial government should help in providing resources and developing co-ordination mechanisms at different levels.

The development of reintegration policy of provincial and local level in line with federal policy could play a pivotal role for successful and sustainable

reintegration. The allocation of budget including institutional mechanism should ensure for both programmatic as well as self/personal effort approach.

Both policymakers and actors have acknowledged that returnee migrant workers can have a great contribution for the development and are increasingly working towards creating environment for retaining the returnees. With their efforts mostly revolving around support at the individual level, both policymakers and actors need to enhance their understanding about the capacity of individual returnee migrants to make the reintegration initiatives more sustainable.

Notes

- 1 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Objective 21, Final draft, 11 July 2018. https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711_final_draft_0.pdf. The Global Compact was endorsed by 164 countries in December 2018.
- 2 Available from <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>.
- 3 As per the field observation on the reintegration programmes by the authors.
- 4 The Foreign Employment Board is providing skill-oriented training to returnees in 18 different types of skills, with a minimum of 160 hours of training.
- 5 Available at: <http://www.nsdindia.org/swades/#:~:text=Government%20of%20India,Skill%20Card%20below>.
- 6 Based on one of the authors' personal communication with the mayor of Kohalpur Municipality on 3 June 2023.
- 7 The information is based on one of the authors' personal communication with the employment coordinator of the sub-metropolitan city on 3 June 2023.
- 8 Information provided by the employment coordinator of Galkot Municipality of Baglung District, Swargadwari Municipality of Pyuthan District and Rohini Rural Municipality of Rupandehi District.

References

- Ahmed, S. A. & Bossavie, L. (Ed.) (2022). *Toward Safer and More Productive Migration for South Asia*. The World Bank.
- Bhusal, T. (2022, September 22). Reintegrating returnee migrant workers. *The Kathmandu Post*. <https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2022/09/22/reintegrating-returnee-migrant-workers>.
- Blitz Media Private Limited and Humanity United (2022). *Research Studies on Labour Migration in Nepal 2022*. Tripureshwar: Blitz Media Private Limited and Humanity United.
- Dhankuta Municipality (2021). *Dhankuta Nagarpalikako Baideshik Rojgar Tatha Punarekikaran Niti 2078* (Foreign Employment and Reintegration Policy of Dhankuta Municipality 2021). Dhankuta: Office of the Dhankuta Municipal Executive. Available at: <https://dhankutamun.gov.np/sites/dhankutamun.gov.np/files/documents/धनकुटा नगरपालिकाको बैदेशिक रोजगार नीति राज पत्र.pdf>.
- GAATW (2022). *Sustainable Reintegration: What Do Women Migrant Workers in the South Asia-Middle East Corridor Say?* Bangkok: GAATW.
- Gahatraj, R. (2023, May 22). Kohalpurma baideshik rojgaribata pharkeka yubako tathyanka sankalan suru [Data collection of returnee migrant workers begins in Kohalpur]. *The Kantipur*. <https://ekantipur.com/pradesh-5/2023/05/22/168473516681298700.html>.
- Gaur Municipality (2021). *Gaur Nagarpalikako Baideshik Rojgar Tatha Punarekikaran Niti 2078* (Foreign Employment and Reintegration Policy of Gaur Municipality 2021).

- Gaur: Office of the Gaur Municipal Executive. Available at: <https://gaurmun.gov.np/sites/gaurmun.gov.np/files/documents/वैदेशिकि रोजगार तथा पुन-नीती.pdf>.
- GoN (2007a). *Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice Parliamentary Affairs.
- GoN (2007b). *The Foreign Employment Act 2007*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice Parliamentary Affairs.
- GoN (2008a). *Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Rules, 2008*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice Parliamentary Affairs.
- GoN (2008b). *The Foreign Employment Rules 2008*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice Parliamentary Affairs.
- GoN (2015). *The Constitution of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice Parliamentary Affairs.
- GoN (2017). *Local Government Operation Act 2017*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice and Federal Affairs.
- GoN (2022). *Reintegration Programme (Operation and Management) Directives for Returnee Migrant Workers, 2022*. Singhadarbar: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Securities.
- Hickcox, A. (2023). *Case Study: Dhankuta Nepal: A Community-led Approach to Reintegration*. IOM & UNDP. Available at: https://migration4development.org/sites/default/files/2023-01/Nepal%20case%20study_for%20web.pdf.
- ILO (2016). *The cost of migration: What low skilled migrant workers from Pakistan pay to work in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates*. Islamabad: International Labour Organization.
- ILO (2023). *Guidelines on Labour Market Reintegration Upon Return in Origin Countries*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- IOM (2017). *Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the context of return*, Geneva: International Organisation for Migration, http://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/DMM/AVRR/Towards-an-Integrated-Approach-to-Reintegration.pdf.
- IOM (2019). *Reintegration Handbook: Practical Guidance on the Design, Implementation and Monitoring of Reintegration Assistance*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- IOM (2021a). *Fostering and Strengthening Interlinkages between Sustainable Development and Reintegration Programmes*. Geneva: EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub.
- IOM (2021b). *Reintegration Assistance: Good, Promising and Innovative Practices. Practice #10*. Geneva: EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub.
- IOM (2021c). *Profiling Returnee Migrant Workers for Labour Market Integration*. Kathmandu: International Organization for Migration.
- IOM (2022). *Mapping of Reintegration Services in Nepal*. Kathmandu: International Organization for Migration.
- IOM and NIDS (2020). *Status of Nepali Migrant Workers in Relation to COVID-19*. Kathmandu: International Organization for Migration.
- Kalaiya Sub-metropolitan City (2020). *Kalaiya Migration Profile*. Bara: Kalaiya Sub-metropolitan City. <https://kalaiyamun.gov.np/sites/kalaiyamun.gov.np/files/documents/कलैयाउपमहानगरपालिकाकोवैदेशिकिरोजगारसम्बन्धीपारश्वचत्तिर्२०७७.pdf>.
- Koser, K. & Kuschminder, K. (2015), *Comparative Research on the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration of Migrants*, International Organization for Migration, Geneva.
- LAPSOJ (2020). *Policy Brief: Vulnerability of Migrant Workers and their Right to Return to the Country of Origin*. Kathmandu: LAPSOJ. Available at: https://lapsoj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Right-to-Return_Edited.pdf.

- Neupane, Manoj Sharma and Adhikari, Umesh Kumar (2021). *Needs Assessment of Returnee Migrants and Conflict Victims for Skills Development*. Sanothimi: Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training.
- Ministry of Foreign Employment Sri Lanka (2015). *Sub Policy and National Action Plan on Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers in Sri Lanka*. Ministry of Foreign Employment Sri Lanka. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-asia/-ro-bangkok/-ilo-colombo/documents/publication/wcms_497323.pdf.
- MoLESS (2018). *Remittance Inflow through Formal Channel and Utilization of Remittance in Productive Sector: A Study Report*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.
- MoLESS (2022). *Nepal Labour Migration Report 2022*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.
- Nepal Rastra Bank (2023). *Current Macroeconomic and Financial Situation of Nepal 2021/22*. Kathmandu: Economic Research Department. Available at: <https://www.nrb.org.np/contents/uploads/2022/08/Current-Macroeconomic-and-Financial-Situation-English-Based-on-Annual-data-of-2021.22-2.pdf>.
- NIDS (2010). *Migration Year Book 2010*. Kathmandu: Nepal Institute of Development Studies.
- Pandey, P. (2022). "Reintegration programme for migrant workers awaits implementation. *The Kathmandu Post*, dated 6 November 2022. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/money/2022/11/06/reintegration-programme-for-migrant-workers-awaiting-implementation>.
- Ratha, D., Kim, E. J., Plaza, S., Riordan, E. J., Chandra, V. & Shaw, W. (2022). *Migration and Development Brief 37: Remittances Brave Global Headwinds. Special Focus: Climate Migration*. Washington, DC. KNOMAD-World Bank.
- Shivaraj Municipality (2022). *Shivaraj Nagarpalika Kapilvastuko Baideshik Rojgarsam-bandhi Parshwachitra-2078* [Foreign Employment Profile of Shivaraj Municipality of Kapilvastu]. Chandrauta: Shivaraj Municipality. Available at: https://www.shivarajmun.gov.np/sites/shivarajmun.gov.np/files/documents/foreign%20employment%20profile%202078_1.pdf.
- Wickramasekara, P. (2019). *Effective Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers: With Special Focus on ASEAN Member States*. International Organization for Migration.
- Wickramasekara, P. (2022). Return and Reintegration Challenges and Policy Responses in Asia Following the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *Labour Migration in Asia: COVID-19 Impacts, Challenges and Policy Responses*. Tokyo: ADBI, OECD & ILO.
- World Bank (2023). *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

6

MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION POLICIES IN NEPAL

Padma Prasad Khatiwada

Introduction

Migration in simple term is the process of change in usual place of residence (IOM, 2019a). Due to growing human mobility for the purposes of many kinds and natural calamities resulting in displacement and dislocation, the realm of migration has created its broader scope of both voluntary and forced nature of phenomena. Worldwide migration is taking place as internal and international and the outcomes of them are seen as long term and seasonal, diaspora, student migration, travel for family reunion and visits. Migration due to external factors known as forced migration is taking place in the form of trafficking, smuggling, refugee and internal displacement. Whatever the cause may be the issues of return, repatriation, security, health measures, diaspora, and associated factors like cost of migration, climate change, environment and migration, cross border mobility are the major areas of investigation.

The number of international migrants, including refugees, in the world reached 281 million in 2020 (IOM, 2020a) which is increased almost double the amount recorded 20 years ago. The growing number of international migrants has association with population growth, increased connectivity, demographic imbalances, rising inequality and climate change. Worldwide, migration has been the international agenda to be addressed through collaborative efforts in a comprehensive and planned way.

Migration, environment and climate change (MECC) stands as a nexus between voluntary and forced. IOM (2018) conceptualizes this nexus as “neither entirely forced nor entirely voluntary but in a grey zone in between” (IOM, 2018). Incidents of natural calamities due to environmental factors as an outcome of climate change and natural hazards have close association with the resilience and vulnerability of individuals, households and communities causing

exodus of hundreds of thousand people. Some lively examples are the disaster induced displaced people due to earthquake, landslide or flood. It is, however, difficult to establish a direct causal link between environmental factors and the decision to migrate rather “a cumulative effect of climate change and environmental degradation impacting sustainability of livelihoods, for example, failure in agriculture, resulting in reduced income or poverty which drives migration” (IOM, 2016).

COVID-19 spread worldwide since the late 2019 has impacted overall economic, social, political and a cultural aspect across the world and migration is a sector having its direct impact. Due to the pandemic, the migrant workers have not only lost their jobs but also witnessed massive ‘economic shocks and disruption in supplies of goods and services’. Overall scenario suggests the pandemic has an ‘unprecedented crises in the field of human mobility and foreign labour migration’ which has become one of the key global economic and social activities supporting livelihoods of millions of families (IOM, 2020b).

Migration in Nepal is characterized mainly by internal migration, long term and seasonal migration, diaspora, student migration, refugees, travel for family reunion and visits. The overall internal migration pattern is Tarai cantered where more than half (53.66%) people reside (NSO, 2023). International migration for foreign employment has become a common livelihood option for millions of Nepali youths. The recent data published by CBS on Population and Housing Census 2021 shows that 2,190,592 people were absent from Nepal. Of them, 390,917 (17.8%) were females (Ibid). The Government of Nepal has officially issued institutional labour permits for the foreign employment in 110 destination countries. The major countries of destination for Nepali migrant workers include Qatar (31.8%), United Arab Emirates (26.5%), Saudi Arabia (19.5%), and Kuwait (6.8%) (MoLESS, 2020).

In addition to the financial capital, migrant workers bring back the social, cultural, and human capitals. If utilized adequately, the capitals brought back by the migrant workers can contribute to sustainable development of the country. Article 51(i)(6) of the Constitution of Nepal envisions the use of the capital, skill, technology, and experience gained in the foreign employment in the productive sector in the country. Similarly, the Foreign Employment Policy 2012 envisions the strategy to reintegration of the returnee migrant workers. The policy promises to utilise the earnings of the foreign employment in the development of the country (Government of Nepal, 2012).

As an effort to utilise the migration into development, the government has been providing returnee migrant workers with soft loans up to 1,000,000 with subsidised interest rate for entrepreneurship development and promotion, and 744 returnee migrants have already taken the loan that amounts to a total of NPR 550 million (Subedi, T. (2021)). The FEB has also developed a reintegration guideline. The guideline package includes, psychosocial counselling, free skill trainings and financial facilitation.

Likewise, National Budget for FY 2021/2022 has allocated NPR 400,000,000 for training for youth, including returnee migrants, on handicraft, plumbing, electric repairs, electronic, cook, craftsmanship, mason, carpentry, sewing and cutting, beautician, hair cutting, and vehicle and mobile repairs (MoF, 2021/22).

Nepal's environmental vulnerability also has an impact on the scale of internal and international migration. Climate change, environmental degradation, natural and human-made disasters trigger displacement and dislocation from the land, meaning that many Nepalis migrate to ensure a sustainable livelihood (IOM, 2019b).

Nepali citizens have been residing abroad for work, for study or on diplomatic mission. According to the Non-resident Nepali Act 2008, the non-resident Nepalis are eligible for NRN Identification cards for 10 years, with the possibility of renewal. The cards grant benefits such as the waiver of a visa for entry into Nepal and eligibility for certain rights in Nepal on the same basis as nationals including on investment and purchase of land (Nepal Law Commission, 2008).

Nepal is a country with growing human trafficking incidences (NHRC, 2019). Particularly, women and girls become the victims of trafficking and the main purpose is prostitution and labour exploitation ~~sex~~. They are trafficked both inside and outside the countries: India, the Middle East, Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. An estimated 15,000 Nepali women, girls and children are trafficked to India every year with false promises of steady employment (Ibid). As a transit country, Nepal also sees Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan women transit Nepal enroute to the Middle East, sometimes using fraudulent Nepali travel documents (IOM, 2019b).

Objectives

This study aims to explore and analyse the existing policies, laws, and other relevant instruments in Nepal relevant for migration and development. This exercise contributes further to identify the status of policy coherence, gaps, and opportunities for refinement.

Sources of Data

The Author contributed to a research paper – ‘An Assessment of Provincial Policies on Migration and Development in Nepal’ – carried out by International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Nepal Office in 2022. The data used in this Chapter are from this research. Further desk review was carried out to cross verify and validate the findings. The desk review included review of Nepal's policy documents and plans. Constitution of Nepal, National Policies and Programmes, Federal Budgets, SDG Roadmap of Nepal 2016–2030, 15th Periodic Plan, Provincial Planning Commission's planning documents, Ministry of Social Development's documents and rural and urban municipalities' plans, policies and budgets were intensively reviewed. The existing policies, laws, plans and

other relevant instruments related with migration and sustainable development were also assessed. They included Global literatures like Global Compact on Migration for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration (GCM), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The review of secondary sources also consists of but not limited to the reports of UN agencies, including IOM Migration Profile, Status Report of Nepali Migrant Workers in Relation to COVID-19, and that of non-UN entities like periodic/annual development plans/programmes and reports related to migration and development.

Nepal's Commitment to Global Migration Policies, Laws, and Instruments

Nepal has ratified almost all core UN human rights treaties including International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). However, Nepal has not ratified the Convention on Rights of the Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 1990. Nepal has ratified 11 ILO Conventions (Table 6.1). The country has not ratified major ILO Conventions such as C097: *Migration for Employment Convention (Revised)*, 1949 (No. 97).

TABLE 6.1 ILO Conventions Ratified by Nepal

SN	ILO Conventions ratified by Nepal	Ratification date
1.	C014 – Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921 (No. 14)	10 Dec 1986
2.	C029 – Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)	03 Jan 2002
3.	C098 – Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)	11 Nov 1996
4.	C100 – Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	10 Jun 1976
5.	C105 – Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)	30 Aug 2007
6.	C111 – Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	19 Sep 1974
7.	C131 – Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131)	19 Sep 1974
8.	C138 – Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) <i>Minimum age specified: 14 years</i>	30 May 1997
9.	C144 – Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)	21 Mar 1995
10.	C169 – Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)	14 Sep 2007
11.	C182 – Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)	03 Jan 2002

Source: ILO¹

Similarly, Nepal has not ratified the core ILO Convention on Migration for Employment (C097) and Domestic Workers Convention (No. C 189) (2011) which is also a fundamental tool which, after having been ratified by States, contributes to guaranteeing the rights of female nationals as well as women migrant who are employed as domestic workers.

Nepal being a Member State of the UN has made commitment to the 2030 agenda for SDGs. Nepal is committed to achieving the targets and indicators set forth in the SDGs by harnessing broader cooperation among the countries and stakeholders in safeguarding safe, regular, and orderly migration. Nepal is also the signatory to the **Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** (GCM), a document committed for the protection of all kinds of migrants. According to the key informants selected for this study, the government of Nepal has been developing strategies for materialising all of the GCM's 23 objectives to ensure and promote safer migration. For this, Nepal needs to prioritise GCM's 23 objectives—all of which are about commitments to making migration safer at local, regional and international levels. Nepal is criticised as lacking with a well-planned preparation to accommodate the return and reintegration needs of the returnee migrant workers and accompanied children in terms of plans, policies, programmes and resources even in the situation without the pandemic and other crisis (NHRC, 2020).

TABLE 6.2 ILO Conventions Related to Migration Not Ratified by Nepal

SN	<i>ILO Conventions not ratified by Nepal</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.	C097 – Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97)	Core migration convention
2.	C087 – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)	Core human rights convention
3.	C081 – Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)	Core governance conventions
4.	C122 – Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)	
5.	C129 – Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)	
6.	C081 – Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)	
7.	C143 – Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)	Core migration convention
8.	C156 – Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)	Related to migration
9.	C161 – Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)	Related to health issues of migrant workers
10.	C189 – Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189)	Related to women migrant workers
11.	C190 – Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)	Related to women migrant workers

Source: ILO²

Human trafficking in Nepal is diverse in its forms. Trafficking of men, women and children occurs for various purposes. The internal, cross-border and transnational are the common types of human trafficking occurring in Nepal. The Government of Nepal has pledged to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030 and has shown political commitment to achieve SDG 8.7 through its endorsement of the call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and its agreement to become a “Pathfinder Country” of the global alliance initiative. These recent commitments reinforce longstanding efforts by the Nepalese government to address human trafficking and promote decent work (Plan International, 2019).

Nepal ratified the **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children**, commonly known as **Palermo Protocol** in June 2020. Nepal became the 176th country to ratify this Protocol. This is the first global legally binding instrument with an agreed definition on trafficking in persons, and protecting people at home and abroad. The enforcement of this protocol benefits to Nepal and other countries that sends its citizens to work abroad and a country that has been as a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking. One of the aims of the Protocol is to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, paying attention to women and children; to protect and assist the victims of such trafficking, with full respect for their human rights; and to promote cooperation among States Parties.³

Domestication of Nepal's Global Commitments on Migration

The **Constitution of Nepal** is the key legal document that primarily recognises the issues of Nepal's foreign employment. Provisions on citizenship, citizens' right to freely move, making foreign employment free from exploitation and guaranteeing the rights of migrant workers and mobilisation of the capital and skills of returning migrants are included in the constitution. In the State's Policies relating to labour and employment, the Constitution of Nepal has the provision to regulate and manage foreign employment to make it free from exploitation, safe and systematic and to guarantee employment and rights of the labours, and to encourage to mobilize the capital, skills, technology, and experience gained from foreign employment in productive sectors in the country (GoN, 2015).

The 15th **Periodic Plan of Nepal** has incorporated migration in its goal ‘to manage population and migration appropriately’. The earlier periodic plans were limited in regulating migration without clear policies and indicators. The 15th Plan has for the first time got a shift from regulating migration to managing migration which is the reflection of the SDGs. In order to manage migration, this plan mentions to keep the internal and external migration-related records and statistics system in a more succinct way compared to previous periodic plans. It has the policy for the demographic management to be institutionalised as an integral part of the overall development process through

coordination and collaboration between population and migration, development, and environment. It further states that migration becomes more systematic, and the establishment of manufacturing and service sector industries based on local products and raw materials will have contributed to economic development and poverty alleviation. Furthermore, border management and immigration systems will have been strengthened and undocumented migration and cross border crimes will have been controlled (NPC, 2019).

The 15th Periodic Plan of Nepal is, thus, committed to fulfilling the spirit of the Goal 10.7 of SDGs, however, it lacks policy vision to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well managed migration policies.⁴ Nepal has developed indicators to promote decent works (SDG-8) through protecting labour rights and promote safe and secure working environment for all workers, including migrant workers in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment management (indicator # 8.8). There are still other areas related to migration such as targets 5.4 on gender and 4.4 on education in the SDGs on which Nepal lacks mainstreaming on them through concrete policies.

While international migration has provided employment opportunities to the youth, it has also led to social implications and the loss of contributions of productive youth within the country (NPC, 2020). It mainly highlights government's long-term vision to create better employment opportunities within the country with a view to reducing the number of youths who are compelled to look for employment abroad. Despite these shortcomings, the Government of Nepal is working on improving the labour conditions in the countries of destination, extending support for better utilisation of the skills of the returnees, and providing resources for productive purposes with various schemes and programmes, including financial inclusion and financial literacy, in different parts of the country.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 forbids human trafficking and considers it as a punishable offense. Provisions of fundamental rights such as rights of women, right to employment, right against exploitation, right to justice, right against torture, right to freedom and rights of children are guaranteed. Particularly, Article 29 has the provision of right against exploitation which guarantees the right against the exploitation and also guarantees that no one shall be subjected to trafficking nor shall be held in slavery or servitude (GoN, 2015). In June 2020, Nepal ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, commonly known as **Palermo Protocol**.⁵ As per the Palermo Protocol, the act of human trafficking encompasses the broader scope with the following elements: a) Action: Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of the person, b) Means: Threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, and c) Purpose: Exploitation of the person.

Migration Policies in Nepal

Nepal has framed migration policies targeting foreign employment, internal mobility/migration, immigration and cross-cutting issues like governance, human trafficking, gender, and reintegration.

The **Foreign Employment Policy, 2012** has given a direction for the effective management of foreign employment, to make the process of migration safe and accessible and to solve the existing issues in the field of foreign labour migration. The main objective of the policy is to provide knowledge and skills as demanded by the international labour market and develop a skilled, capable and competitive labour force to make the entry of Nepali workers into the international market safe, organised and respectable. This policy has further given priority on the protection of the rights and welfare of Nepali migrants. For the safe, secure and dignified migration, the policy has the provisions of directives and manuals like Standard on the Enlisting Process of the Health Examination–2013, Directive on the Procedure on individual Labour Permits–2013, Manual on Registration and Renewal of Orientation Training Institutions–2014 and Directives on Sending Domestic Helpers for Foreign Employment–2015.⁶

The first **Foreign Employment Act** was passed in 1985 and the **Foreign Employment Rules** were enacted in 1999 with the aim to control and manage foreign employment. This Act was amended in 1998 and in 2007 and the Rules got amended in 2008 which set forth the provision to regulate the process associated with foreign employment and also regulates the works and behaviour of recruiting agencies, prescribing penalties for fraud and misrepresentation. However, this Act does not cover the undocumented migrations. This law enables the government to enter into agreement with the countries of destination in order to protect the rights of migrant workers by regulating minimum wages, costs of recruitment and introducing requirements for training, insurance and other programmes.

With the changes in the State structure of Nepal from unitary to federal, the Constitution of Nepal has put the employment creation responsibility in concurrent powers of federal and provincial governments.⁷ The provincial governments have been giving priority to reduce the existing higher rate of youth unemployment. Yet, Nepal has to work more seriously to make the foreign employment more secure and safe in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Nepal set targets to protect labour rights and promotes safe and secure working environment for all workers including women migrant workers (SDG-8.8).⁸ Youth from all the seven provinces go to foreign employment. In fiscal year 2018/2019, the Province-1 was at the highest (24.4%) and the Sudur-paschim Province (2.6%) (GoN, 2020) at the lowest to send migrant workers. The first periodic plans of all seven provinces envision to create employment and self-employment opportunities for youth by providing vocational and skill development trainings in order to reduce the present compelling situation to migrate foreign countries for employment. For this, there is a strategy to protect

workers' rights, increase employment and end gender discrimination at the employment sector, emphasise on entrepreneurship and self-employment, increase skilled human resources, promote culture to respect work and ensure access to concessional loan, among other needs.

To realise this plan, all the provinces have set interventions to take skill tests of returnees, provide skill certificates, provide additional required skill development training and provide collateral-free bank loan including for returnee.

The share of women migrant workers was about 9.96 per cent in fiscal year 2020/2021.⁹ The districts with highest percentage of women migrant workers include Jhapa, Sindhupalchowk, Makawanpur, Morang, Kathmandu, Kavrepalanchok, Ilam, Sunsari and Chitwan. These 10 districts account for over 50 per cent of the total female migrant workers (GoN, 2020). The adoption of the aspiration "orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration" at the global level provides, for the first time, a benchmark for States against which to measure migration policies and an implicit acknowledgement that migration governance is the responsibility of all States (IOM, 2019b).

The Local Government Operation Act 2017 has stated that the local governments can provide financial literacy and skill training for the labour force going abroad.¹⁰ Similarly, **the National Population Policy 2014** has stated that out-migration of productive human resources has impacted agricultural productivity and has changed the demography of rural area by leaving only women, children and senior citizens behind.¹¹

Furthermore, **the Immigration Act 1992** and **the Immigration Rules 1994**, **the Immigration Procedures 2008**, **the Foreign Employment Act 2007**, **the Foreign Employment Rules 2008**, **the Foreign Employment Policy 2012** and **the Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act 2007** and its **Rules 2008** are the key legal frameworks to guide Nepal's foreign migration sector. Such legal frameworks have laid emphasis that foreign employment should be developed as tool for transfer of new skills and technology by recognising the foreign employment returnees as development partners for the country through utilisation of their skill and savings.

Furthermore, **the Immigration Act 1992**, **the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2000** and **the Labour Act, 2017** are also the key legal instruments that determine the areas relating to labour and migration. In regard to the foreigners to work in Nepal, the government policies are restrictive except for the highly skilled ones. **The Labour Act, 2017** has restricted the foreigners from getting employed in Nepal stating that no employer shall employ any foreign citizen as a labour without obtaining the work permit.¹² However, the employer may employ a foreign labourer only if skilled labourers cannot be supplied from among Nepali citizens. The Act has a clear provision that prior to employing a foreign labour, the employer should publish an advertisement in a national daily newspaper in order to acquire the required skilled labour from among the Nepali citizens. If no application is received from any Nepali citizen as prescribed or if no Nepali citizen was selected, the employer should make an

application to the Labour Department. The Department may issue a work permit for the employment of a foreign skilled labour if it deems reasonable upon inquiring into the application received and the evidence attached.

During the period of COVID-19, the Supreme Court ordered government to use welfare fund to repatriate Nepali workers stranded abroad.¹³ Similarly, the government of Nepal has passed a directive related with repatriation on 20 July 2020. As per the provision of directive, the government of Nepal has provided facilitation to return back home to those who were in stranded, vulnerable and difficult situation at the country of destination.¹⁴

A **directive to allow overseas** voting has been discussed for the past few years, which is the result of a Supreme Court case which recognised that about 25 per cent Nepalis are out of the country for different purposes at any time and that all Nepalis should have the right to contribute to democratic nation building (IOM, 2019b).

Immigration Policies

The Immigration Act, 1992 and the Immigration Regulation, 1994 are the main regulating frameworks for managing immigration. Basically, the Immigration laws of Nepal govern the entry, exit and stay of immigrants as well as for Nepali citizens to and from Nepal. The Immigration Act provides the basic provisions on entry, stay and departure and provides the authority of the Government to regulate these matters. The Act does not permit the foreigners to enter and stay in Nepal without holding a passport and visa. In special cases, under Article 13 of the Act provide exemption from visa fees (GoN, 1992).

Similarly, the Immigration Rules has different provisions related to definition, types of visas, renewal of visa, restriction in work, change in types of visa, cancellation of visa, exemption on visa fees, permission on travel and especial provision on mountaineers (GoN, 1994). The Regulations define different classes of visa, which are: a) Diplomatic visa for foreign diplomats, which is issued on the basis of reciprocity for the term of assignment in Nepal (issued by the MOFA); b) Official visa for staff in diplomatic missions and their family members and consultants of the Government, staff of UN and other international organizations and participants in Government of UN conferences (issued by MOFA); c) Tourist visa for foreign tourists and trekking permit; d) Study visa for foreigners and their family member who either work, study or conduct research for an educational institution in Nepal; e) Non-tourist visas, for a range of professionals; f) Business visa for foreigners who have obtained a licence to invest in, or trade from Nepal; g) Transit visa; h) Non-residential Nepalis visa for an NRN who intends to reside or conduct business in Nepal; and i) Residential visa for foreigners allowed to live in Nepal.

Furthermore, the Immigration Procedures 2008 has the provisions of various functions of the Department of Immigration, the Director General and of Immigration Offices. It provides the overall vision and values in regard to immigration

as well as outlines a number of procedural matters. Similarly, the Department of Immigration is the principal institution for implementing the immigration laws and regulation of Nepal. This institution performs monitoring, controlling and regulating entry, exit and stay of immigrants in Nepal. The Department of Immigration also oversees arrival and departure of Nepali citizens to and from Nepal.

Internal Migration Policies

Internal migration is the movement of population from one place to another within national boundary. For regulating internal migration process, there is no especial and separate internal migration policy and law. The Constitution of Nepal 2015, Article 17 under its fundamental rights has right to freedom. Constitutionally, every citizen of Nepal has the freedom to move and reside in any part of Nepal (Article 17.e) (GoN, 2015). Since the Constitution also has the provision of freedom to practice any profession, carry on any occupation, and establish and operate any industry, trade and business in any part of Nepal, no local level has developed the internal migration policy (either for in-migration or for out-migration). The Local Government Operation Act 2017 has the provision of making its own law and policy for regulating internal migration. But till now there is not any specific internal migration policy developed by any local government. Similarly, this Act has the provision of collecting and managing data, statistics and records available at the local levels. Furthermore, it includes provisions of recording different vital events like birth, death, marriage, divorce and migration. As per this Act, local government is regarded as the crucial institution for social reunification for returnee migrant workers and utilization of knowledge, skills, and experiences of returnee migrant workers (GoN, 2017).

The National Population Policy 2014 has the objective of managing the urbanization, external and internal migration in Nepal (MoHP, 2014). The main policies include: the coordination and cooperation between stakeholders for balancing the population and development by managing the population, the urbanization, external and internal migration shall be managed effectively, and youth and demographic dividend shall be involved in employment-oriented sectors (MoHP, 2014). This policy has the strategy of maximising engagement of human resources in the productive sector inside the country, and establishing at least one industrial area in every constituency, municipality and district headquarters; Safeguarding Nepalis migrant workers through diplomacy with major countries of destination; Developing sets of information on destination countries' context, language, culture and law; Providing feedback to relevant institutions on developing MOUs with destination countries; managing internal migration and keeping native communities' economic, social, cultural aspects intact; developing of compact settlements with adequate facilities; documenting internal and external migration and utilization of returnees' skills and capital in the development of the nation (MoHP, 2014).

The Population Perspective Plan of Nepal (2010–2030) has encompassed the migration and spatial distribution as one of the major components. This plan has four strategic plans as: a) stopping migration; b) redirecting the flow of migration to an area with low density and newly emerging cities; c) return the migrants to their original place and d) managing migration by providing facilities at the destination place (MoHP, 2010). On the basis of this Perspective Plan, the Government of Nepal has been trying to develop the migration-related activities, but such types of activities are insufficient to manage the internal migration in Nepal.

The Youth Vision-2025 prioritises on preparing strong, competent, competitive and self-reliant youths for their integration with the goal of national and international development. It also gives emphasis on creating youth employments and entrepreneurship by increasing investment in important sectors of prospective economic growth including tourism, agriculture, water resources, energy, forest, infrastructure and herbal products. This vision indirectly halts or encourages youth to remain in Nepal for their employment (GoN, 2015).

Through the ‘Comprehensive Integration Plan’, the Government of Nepal has initiated to organise nationwide entrepreneurship development programmes that include financial literacy, vocational training, psychosocial support, shelter and grant to individuals. Such, programmes are not available to thousands of migrants without labour permits and undocumented ones. These people are also deemed ineligible to receive other facilities being provided by Foreign Employment Board including compensation in case of death, injury or serious illness, reintegration plan and soft loans or other supports. A study done with returnee migrants reveals that most of them are interested to begin farming for which they need loans, improved seeds, fertilizers, insurance, and marketing to earn livelihood at homeland rather than to be compelled to go back to foreign employment (IOM, 2020b).

Migration Policies at Sub National Level

After the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal in 2015, Nepal has been practicing three tiers of the governance: federal, provincial and local. Both the provincial and local levels are autonomous in the sense that they can formulate policies, develop and implement programmes on their own for which the federal government provides support with grant as well as technical along with policy support and guidance. The Constitution of Nepal has, furthermore, envisioned safe, dignified and systematic foreign employment under the provision of fundamental rights to employment. The Constitution of Nepal has ample provisions of utilising the knowledge, skills, experiences, and technology earned at foreign employment in the nation (GoN, 2015). Similarly, under - Directive Principles, Policies and Obligations of the state, in the Constitution of Nepal has the policies relating to labour and employment for: a) Creating a condition to ensure employment for all and employment opportunities in the country itself by making the labour power, which is the main social and economic force, competent and

professional; b) Guaranteeing social security by ensuring the basic rights of all labourers in accordance with the concept of dignity of labour; c) Ending child labour and all forms of labour exploitation; d) Encouraging the participation of labourers in the management by creating good industrial relationship between employers and employees; e) To regulate and manage the sector to make foreign employment free from exploitation, safe and systematic and to guarantee employment and rights of the labourers; f) To encourage to mobilize the capital, skills, technology and experience gained from foreign employment in productive sectors in the country (Ibid).

Similarly, the Section 33 of Foreign Employment Act 2007 has the provision of use and operation of Foreign Employment Welfare Fund. This section clearly states that the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund shall be used for launching employment-oriented programmes for the workers who have returned from foreign employment (GoN, 2007). Section 33 (a) has accorded emphasis on skill-oriented training while Section 33 (b) focuses on launching the employment-oriented programmes for the workers who have returned from foreign employment (Ibid). The Foreign Employment Act 2007 has offered broader areas for the reintegration of returnee migrant workers through the utilisation of the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund. Under this ground, the Foreign Employment Board as a concerned institution for the management of the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund has been providing reintegration services and facilities.

All the provinces except Sudurpaschim Province have prepared the first five-year provincial plans. Overall migration policies formulated by the provinces through their five-year plans and other policies are reviewed in this section.

The Policy and Programmes of Province 1 of the fiscal year 2021/22 has promised to implement the projects to ensure direct benefit to the people rendered jobless due to the COVID-19 pandemic and returnees from the foreign employment. Province 1 has stated to implement the 'Chief Minister Youth Entrepreneurship Programme' in coordination with the local levels and other development partners by preparing a clear modality meant to create employment opportunities to the youth for self-employment and make them self-reliant as well to effectively use the knowledge, skills, efficiency and capital of returnee migrant workers.¹⁵ All other labourers would be given needed training and would be certified. Such skilled human resources would be ensured with reliable and sustainable employment opportunities. Similarly, concessional loan would be facilitated and coordinated by considering projects as collateral and certificate would be given after short-term skill generating training and skill tests.

The Policy and Programmes of the Madhesh Province of the fiscal year 2021/22 has announced to run short and long-term skill development training programme by targeting the youths and women in coordination with the local levels to ensure employment opportunities in enterprises, agriculture, business and other sectors for the potential migrant workers and youth human resources. It has also stated to unveil special programme for safe migration by making systematic to the employment information centre.¹⁶

The Policy and Programme of the Bagmati Province of the fiscal year 2021/22 has stated to continue Concessional Loan Investment Programme for Production and Employment Generation in the province in cooperation with the bank and financial institutions. It has also announced to advance programmes for physical infrastructure development, entrepreneurship development and employment opportunities to the returnees who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷

The First Periodic Plan (2020/2021–2024/2025) of the Gandaki Province has realised the skill, capital and technology and experiences gained by the migrant workers and its proper utilisation in the country itself so as to provide a decent work to all. It has underscored lack of safe, regular, and orderly migration as one of the key challenges. The Gandaki Province has set the goal to make the foreign employment systematic. It has also mentioned to establish required coordination to make labour migration safe, managed and dignified by keeping the record of the foreign migrant workers. It has further stated to encourage the knowledge, skills, experience, and capital received from foreign employment in the production sector.¹⁸

The First Periodic Plan (2020/2021–2024/2025) of the Lumbini Province has taken the plan to ensure technical and vocational education and capacity development to produce the human resources as per the demand of the labour market. It has also mentioned to assist the returnee migrant workers by providing concessional loan and skill certification upon their return for their self-employment.¹⁹

The **Karnali Province** in its Policy and Programme for the fiscal year 2021/22, has taken the policy to deploy youth in the productive sector through the promotion of production and entrepreneurship using local knowledge, skills, resources, means and traditional as well as modern technology. It has taken the policy to employ youth in the country by encouraging them to run homestay, factories and other programmes. It has also taken the policy to establish a vocational education and training centre to produce skilled and qualified human resources. In its policy, the Karnali Province Government has announced to provide concessional loan to the youth accepting their academic certificate and business in collateral to ensure production, entrepreneurship and employment.²⁰

The Sudurpaschim Province, in its Policy and Programme for the fiscal year 2021/22 has unveiled a policy to provide concessional loan from Province Self-Employment Development Fund to the returnee migrant workers and accompanied children from abroad due to the COVID-19 pandemic for making them self-reliant by running industries and businesses.²¹

In nutshell, the fiscal planning of the current year of all provinces have considered the reintegration of returnee migrants in general but there is lack of specific account on the issues of women migrants.²² The Sudurpaschim Province focuses on the programmes mainly targeting to the development of the products, productivity, employment, and self-dependence. The programmes have focused on utilising the knowledge, skills and capacities of the citizens returned

from India and the third countries. The primary focus of the province is to provide collateral free loan/soft loan through the Self-Employment Development Fund, especially to returnee migrant workers.²³

Institutional Set Up for Regulating Migration in Nepal

The **Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security** stands as an apex body to regulate, monitor and manage labour migration. The line agencies responsible in the country to oversee the entire foreign employment domain of Nepal are the following:

- The **Department of Foreign Employment** is the key institution that manages issues related to foreign employment, including labour permits, recruitment agencies, grievances hearing and others.
- The **Foreign Employment Board** is chaired by the Minister for Labour, Employment and Social Security, the Board consists of 23 members represented by different Ministries, Nepal Rastra Bank, civil society, and the private sector. The Board conducts promotional activities for foreign employments responsible for ensuring social protection and welfare of workers abroad or those returned or are in the process of returning. Tasked with formulating programmes to utilise the skills, capital and experience of returnee migrants, the Board manages the Foreign Employment Welfare Fund and conducts pre-departure orientation and skills training.
- The **Foreign Employment Tribunal** is another semi-judicial body responsible for settling cases regarding licenses for recruiting agencies and ensuring the recruiting agencies operate lawfully. The Tribunal is chaired by a Judge of Nepal's High Court, and an officer of the Labour Court and an officer of the Judicial Service.
- **Labour Attachés** appointed in the countries of destination is another provision for managing and regulating foreign labour migration in Nepal. It is regarded as one of the most important assignments of MoLESS for promoting and ensuring the rights and safety of Nepali migrant workers in the countries of destination. Legally, Section 68 of the Foreign Employment Act 2007 states that Labour Attaches can be appointed in the countries of destination having at least 5,000 Nepali migrant workers. Similarly, as per Rule 43 of the Foreign Employment Rules 2008, a female Labour Attaché in the country of destination can be appointed where at least 1,000 women migrant workers are based. However, this regulation is not fully implemented. Till date there are no female Labour Attaches based on the legal provision and the number of Attaches appointed so far is nine. And they are in Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Republic of Korea, Bahrain, Japan, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia and Mauritius. The main function of the Labour Attachés is to assist in disputes with employers, assist or rescue any Nepali workers in distress and provide information on the job market and conditions in the country of destination.

- The Vocational and Skill Development Training Centre operates under the Ministry and provides training programmes for Nepalis seeking foreign employment. It has a number of training centres located in cities throughout Nepal.
- The Foreign Employment Office of Tahachal was established in 2013 to provide all foreign employment related services in one place.
- The Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) first conceptualizes and started by IOM and now operated by various stakeholders and managed together with the local government were established to provide accurate and reliable information to migrant workers on foreign employment.²⁴ Furthermore, MRC also provides access to justice, skills, financial literacy, and psycho-social support to both aspirant and returnee migrant workers.²⁵

However, the Ministry does not see the overall migration and development issues. The Ministry of Home Affairs is responsible for immigration issues including passport and visa whereas Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is responsible for student migration. The issues connected with trafficking and smuggling of women and children are coordinated by the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens. This indicates a coordinating apex body such as a joint working group or committee to deal with the entire migration and development sector and exchange data and information on migration.

Migration Policy Coherence/Incoherence (Vertical/Horizontal)

Article 4 of the GCM states that migrants are entitled to the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, which must be respected, protected and fulfilled at all times. Article 11 of the Resolution stresses a comprehensive approach to optimise the overall benefits of migration, while addressing risks and challenges for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination. Article 15 of the GCM introduces two major ideas on the need of policy coherence on migration. They are:

- i Whole-of-government approach: Migration is a multidimensional reality that cannot be addressed by one government policy sector alone. The whole-of-government approach is needed to ensure horizontal and vertical policy coherence across all sectors and levels of government; and
- ii Whole-of-society approach: The Global Compact for Migration promotes broad multi-stakeholder partnerships to address migration in all its dimensions by including migrants, Diasporas, local communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians, trade unions, national human rights institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders in migration governance.²⁶

Observing from this perspective, Nepal's migration policies as such are somehow coherent both vertically and horizontally. However, the federal government has constitutional, legal and policy provisions to reintegrate the returnee migrants in Nepal. The existing resources of the State can be distributed at all levels of government as per the constitutional principle of co-existence, coordination and collaboration. Similarly, as per this principle, the policies, laws and plans related to reintegration of returnee migrants formulated by the federal government should be brought into practice and reality at all three layers of government. Based on this principle and existing provisions, all seven provinces and 753 local governments have the right as well as obligation to formulate the laws and policies including plans, procedures and directives to make reintegration more effective, sustainable and successful. But some provinces do not have reintegration policies, plans, procedure and directives to reintegrate the returnee migrants in an effective way, but these provinces just included the reintegration programmes and packages in other policy, plan, procedures and directives. There is no clear definition of the term "reintegration" in the policy, plan and programme documents which is regarded as the main lapse while conducting reintegration programme.

Gaps and Challenges

The return of migrant workers requires not just the safe return home, but also the reintegration of returnees into national labour markets and supports required to cope with socioeconomic challenges at the post pandemic recovery phase. The returnee migrant workers and accompanied children require support from government to enable environment and supply-chain network developed for entrepreneurship development. In addition, they need facilitation from the government, non-government and private sector actors to flourish their new business. The 15th Periodic Plan for the first time realised the need of migration management policies, however, how they are reflected in the concrete policies and programmes are the major issues of concern. As a signatory to the Global Compact for Migration and being a champion country, Nepal has committed to reintegrate returnees into community life by providing them with equal access to social protection, employment opportunities, and 'skill recognition' what they have acquired overseas and matching them with the domestic labour market. Through the 'Comprehensive Integration Plan', the Government of Nepal has initiated nationwide entrepreneurship development programmes that include financial literacy, vocational training, psychosocial support, shelter, and grants to individuals, but this programme is not available to thousands of migrants without labour permits.

The gender aspect should be made key considerations while designing the reintegration programmes. A study done with returnee migrants reveals that most of them are interested to begin farming for which they need loans, improved seeds, fertilizers, insurance, and marketing to earn livelihood at

homeland rather than to be compelled to go back to foreign employment (IOM, 2020_b). If such an enabling environment is created, then the skill and knowledge of returnee migrants can be utilized in productive sector in Nepal. Those who want to return to foreign employment should be provided with skill development training so that they earn more than unskilled labourer.

Laws related to child trafficking are insufficient because they do not clearly criminalise recruitment, harbouring or receipt, or transportation in the absence of force, fraud, or coercion. The legal framework also does not explicitly prohibit the use of a child in the production of child pornography. In addition, the legal framework prohibiting the use of children in illicit activities is insufficient as it does not prohibit the use of children in the production of drugs or extend to children who are 17 years of age.

In 2017, Nepal made a pledge at the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour held in Argentina to take initiatives on adopting the National Master Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour, amending the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, and conducting research on child labour and forced labour. Although the government has a policy to address human trafficking, it does not have a policy to address other worst forms of child labour. In 2017, the National Planning Commission approved the National Master Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour and forwarded it the Cabinet, where it remains waiting for endorsement.²⁷

To sum up, the Government of Nepal should allocate sufficient resources to consular services for the support of migrant workers in the countries of destination, and put systems in place to effectively repatriate and reintegrate returning migrants—documented and undocumented, male and female. Both home and host countries need to work together to improve labour laws and social protections for migrant workers. Despite the remittance amount, the government should explore the challenges and potential of returnee migrant workers and accompanied children to reintegrate the post pandemic situation in Nepal's labour market as an approach to migration good governance.

Conclusion

Nepal is a signatory to core UN human rights treaties that include a common provision of prohibiting discriminations and affirm that every right set out in them shall apply to every person without discrimination of any kind. Nepal is yet to ratify the core migration convention: International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (United Nations, 1990) and core ILO Convention on Migration for Employment (C097) and Domestic Workers Convention (No. C 189) (2011) which contributes to guaranteeing the rights of female nationals as well as migrant women who are employed as domestic workers.

Nepal has shown its strong commitment to abide by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular

Migration (GCM). Despite these formal commitments, Nepal is criticised as lacking with a well-planned preparation to accommodate the return and reintegration needs of the returnee migrant workers and accompanied children in terms of plans, policies, programmes, and resources even in the situation without the pandemic and other crisis.

A lot of institutional mechanisms have been developed for facilitating and regulating migration. However, these are labour migration focused. The Provincial and local governments were found lacking much awareness on Nepal's global commitments towards migration and development and the need of vertical integration and horizontal relations. These all demand an apex body to address all types of migration and its vertical and horizontal linkages with development. It looks that Nepal remained silent on formulating concrete policies on forced migration.

All seven provinces have been found formulating their first periodic policies and programmes by making some highlights on the migration and development. But none of them have given spaces as separate chapter or section. Comparatively, the Province 1 has a greater number of reintegration policies. Overall, the provincial policies are not focused on establishing linkages of migration and development. They look silent on forced migration policies.

Finally, clear definition of reintegration in policy documents at national, provincial, and local levels, sectoral prioritisation with specific needs and focus, provision of proper skills of returnees and services of local level, vertical coherence to be maintained while formulating reintegration policy and participatory approach to follow for making the policies evidence based, enhancing ownership and holding accountable to all.

Notes

- 1 <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:1:0::NO>.
- 2 https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11210:0::NO:11210:P11210_COUNTRY_ID:103197.
- 3 <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>
- 4 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>
- 5 United Nations Treaty Collections, retrieved on 17 August 2021 at https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18&clang=_en
- 6 Foreign Employment Policy of Nepal, 2012.
- 7 The Constitution of Nepal (2015), Schedule 7, the list of concurrent powers of federal and state.
- 8 Needs Assessment, Costing and Financing Strategy for Nepal's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), National Planning Commission (NPC).
- 9 <https://dofe.gov.np/yearly.aspx>
- 10 <https://www.lawcommission.gov.np/wp-content/uploads>
- 11 <https://publichealthupdate.com/national-population-policy-nepal-2071/>
- 12 <https://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Labor-Act-2017-2074.pdf>

- 13 <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/06/17/supreme-court-orders-government-to-use-welfare-fund-to-repatriate-nepali-workers-stranded-abroad>
- 14 <http://rajpatra.dop.gov.np/welcome/book/?ref=24157>
- 15 Policy and Programme of fiscal year 2021/22, Province 1 Government.
- 16 Policy and Programme of fiscal year 2021/22, Province 2 Government.
- 17 Policy and Programme of fiscal year 2021/2022, Bagmati Province Government.
- 18 First Periodic Plan (2020/2021–2024/2025), Gandaki Province Government.
- 19 First Periodic Plan (2020/2021–2024/2025), Lumbini Province Government.
- 20 Policy and Programme of fiscal year 2021/2022. Karnali Province Government.
- 21 Policy and Programme of fiscal year 2021/22, Sudurpaschim Province Government.
- 22 Policy and Planning of Sudurpaschim Province (fiscal planning – 2021/2022)
- 23 <http://ocmcm.sudurpashchim.gov.np/ne/node/685>
- 24 Rural Enterprise and Remittance (RER)/SAMRIDDHI is an IFAD-funded project that aims at providing sustainable sources of income to poor households – Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (moics.gov.np). SaMi project is a bilateral initiative of the Government of Nepal and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).
- 25 IOM. Increasing the Capacity of Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in Nepal to Foster Safe, Humane and Orderly Migration. <https://nepal.iom.int/increasing-capacity-migrant-resource-centres-mrcs-nepal-foster-safe-humane-and-orderly-migration>.
- 26 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/195.
- 27 Child Workers in Nepal Concern Centre. Child Helpline – 1098. Accessed November 30, 2021. <https://www.cwin.org.np/index.php/programme-of-actions/child-helpline-1098.html>.

References

- GoN (1992). *Immigration Act*. Kathmandu: Nepal Law Commission.
- GoN (1994). *Immigration Rules*. Kathmandu: Nepal Law Commission.
- GoN (2007). *Foreign Employment Act*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice and Federal Affairs.
- GoN (2015). *The Constitution of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.
- GoN (2017). *The Local Government Operation Act*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Law, Justice and Federal Affairs.
- GoN (2020). *Nepal Labour Migration Report*. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security.
- Government of Nepal (2012). *Foreign Employment Policy*. Government of Nepal, <https://publications.iom.int/books/status-nepali-migrant-workers-relation-covid-19>.
- IOM (2016). *Assessing the climate change*. IOM, Dhaka. <https://publications.iom.int/books/assessing-climate-change-environmental-degradation-and-migration-nexus-south-asia>.
- IOM (2018). *Perspectives on migration, environment and climate change*. IOM, Geneva. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/meccinfosheet_climatechangeactivities.pdf.
- IOM (2019a). *Glossary on migration*. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf
- IOM (2019b). *Migration in Nepal: A COUNTRY PROFILE 2019*. <https://publications.iom.int/books/migration-nepal-country-profile-2019>.
- IOM (2020a). *World migration report*. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2020-interactive/>

- IOM (2020b). *Status of Nepali migrant workers in relation to Covid-19*. <https://publications.iom.int/books/status-nepali-migrant-workers-relation-covid-19>.
- Kathmandu. http://www.skills.gov.np/uploads/newsFiles/4594_eccf972dfee35fdc1e7ae3c2334751fb_1478599773_2.pdf.
- MoF (2021/22). *Budget speech of FY 2021/22*. https://www.mof.gov.np/uploads/document/file/1627455031_Budget_speech_2021.pdf
- MoHP (2014). *National Population Policy 2014*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Population and Health.
- MoHP (2010). *Population Perspective Plan 2010-2031*. <https://publichealthupdate.com/population-perspective-plan-2010-2031-nepal>
- MoLESS (2020). *Nepal Labour Migration Report*. Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Singhadarbar, Kathmandu. <https://dofe.gov.np/report.aspx>.
- Nepal Law Commission (2008). *Non-Resident Nepali Act*. <https://lawcommission.gov.np/en/?cat=286>.
- NHRC (2019). *National Report on Trafficking Persons in Nepal*. Kathmandu: National Human Rights Commission.
- NHRC (2020). *COVID-19 Mahamariko Chapetama Nepali Aapravasi Shramikharuko Adhikar Adhyayan Pratibedan* [Rights of Nepalese Migrant Workers amid COVID-19 Pandemic]. National Human Rights Commission, Lalitpur.
- NPC (2019). *The Fifteenth Plan*. National Planning Commission, Kathmandu. (https://npc.gov.np/images/category/15th_plan_English_Version.pdf).
- NPC (2020). *National Planning Commission. Nepal National Review of Sustainable Development Goals*. National Planning Commission, Kathmandu. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26541VNR_2020_Nepal_Report.pdf.
- NSO (2023). *Population and housing census 2021 national report*. Vol. 1. <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/downloads/national>.
- Plan International (2019). *The Trafficking of Girls and Young Women in Nepal*. Kathmandu: Plan International.
- Subedi, T. (2021). "Sahuliyatkarjamaasantulan" [Imbalance in soft loans], *Annapurna Post*, 18 June 2021, Page No. 7. Available at <https://epaper.amn.media/annapurnapost-detail/1695#gallery-7>.
- United Nations (1990). *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*. New York, 18 December 1990. https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?chapter=4&clang=_en&mtdsq_no=IV-13&src=TREATY.

7

SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS, CAPITALS AND RISKS IN YOUTH MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH

Syeda Rozana Rashid

Introduction

Youth mobility has become a defining feature of the contemporary world. A complex web of different forms of migratory movements characterised by binary concepts of temporary vs permanent, work vs education, skilled vs unskilled and regular vs irregular has engulfed the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Scholars attempted to understand this phenomenon through the lenses of globalisation (Veale and Dona, 2014; Cairns, 2021), youths' aspirations (Appadurai, 2004) and the formation of new identities (Dolby and Rizvi, 2008, Beck 2008). Some scholars studied youths' aspiration for migration, education, employment and family relationship in the context of their parents' migration (Meyerhoefer and Chen, 2011). As youths register predominantly within various migration flows, it motivated scholars to understand the stimulus of such moves and the decision-making process. Development discourses analyse youth migration based on cost-benefit analysis (Riaño and Piguet, 2016). Sociologists, nevertheless, often examine complex and contradictory implications of youths' mobility locating them within particular social and cultural contexts (Raghuram, 2013). The idea of economic motivations for migration is gradually challenged by the findings on non-economic factors that propel migration even in unfavourable conditions (Heckert, 2015; Pustulka and Winogrodzka, 2021, Mkwanzani, 2018). Drawing on cases from rural Norway, Rye (2011) demonstrates how social background informs youths' evaluations of their societal position and influences their migration practices. In a similar study, Alexander (2016) discusses how island experiences shape British youths' journey to the mainland for education and employment.

Youth studies are relatively scarce in Bangladesh though the policy and academic literature on labour migration is all-pervading, covering as diverse

themes as livelihoods (Siddiqui 2010, Rashid 2016), work conditions (Siddiqui 2005), irregular pathways (Rahman 2020), gender (Dannecker 2005, Rahman 2011) and so on youths' participation to labour migration remained under-researched except in some economic studies on youth employment (Khatun and Saadat 2020). The contribution and potential of educated and highly skilled youths in migration received some attention recently (Rashid, 2023). Yet, over and above, a general dearth of knowledge persists regarding youths' migration practices and their imperatives, drivers and consequences. This chapter intends to fill the gaps. Taking migration stories of youths pursuing legal labour migration, student migration and irregular migration in Bangladesh, it asks: Why do youths respond differently to the opportunities of migration abroad? What factors influence youths' ability to capitalise on migration abroad? How does migration affect their overall life trajectories? Underlying is the assumption that youths in rural and urban areas are exposed to various forms of capital and risks embedded in their socio-cultural circumstances.

The objective is to contribute empirically to generate knowledge about the intersection between migration, capital and risks to achieve youths' life choices. It argues that migration is ingeniously linked to the life planning of the youths in terms of improving their conditions. Taking Bourdieu's idea of habitus and capital as analytical tools, the chapter demonstrates that youths see huge potential in migration. Their capacity to migrate is shaped and contested by personal traits, i.e. Socio-Economic Status (SES), education, information and network. Although all groups are ready to accrue high costs, their pathways differ.

Consequently, migration, which is considered a 'risk- minimising strategy' generates newer risks due to the domestic compulsions in most countries of the Global South and restrictive migration policies of the Global North which admit only the most appropriate and suitable candidates through a formal process. The chapter presents a case where the circulation of information and the flow of people create a craving for a better life in migration. These qualifications are hard to earn by disadvantaged sections of society. The chapter thus argues that the capital and risk in migration are unevenly distributed among the youths.

The study is rational on several grounds. The country enjoys a demographic dividend, with around one-fifth of its population aged 14–24 (BBS 2021). It is crucial to understand the agency of the youths to pursue their goals in high-skill migration or education, or both. The dynamics and determinants of different forms of migration pursuits would help identify policy gaps. More importantly, Bangladeshis are among the largest groups of migrants taking risky boat journeys to Europe from Asia and Africa via Turkey, Libya and the Mediterranean Sea (UNHCR 2019). Very little research informs us why people resort to irregular pathways while the risk of loss may outweigh the gains of migration. A study such as this would help recognise that Youth is not a uniform and universal category; they are different across class, gender and educational backgrounds, and so does their migration endeavours. Using Bourdieu's idea of habitus and capital, the chapter analyses the patterns and rationality of youth migration beyond borders.

Methodology

The study employs interpretive and critical sociological approaches and delves into youth biographies to understand Bangladeshi youths' mobility for work and education. It relies on a pool of primary qualitative data from various studies conducted by the author from 2019 to 2021 on three clusters of youths pursued labour migration, student migration and irregular migration (See Table 7.1). The study used labour migration-related primary data from an ethnographic longitudinal study carried out by the author from two migration-intensive villages in Cumilla. The source of student migration-related data is a qualitative study on Bangladesh's tertiary-level students conducted in 2021–2022. Qualitative in-depth interviews with 20 tertiary and higher-level youth men and women studying in universities in Bangladesh, Canada, Australia and Malaysia informed this study. Most of the students belonged to middle-class or upper-middle-class urban families. Irregular migration-related data came from a study carried out in 2018 on mapping the irregular pathways of Bangladeshis. This study mainly relies on stories of eight youths who hailed from the rural and semi-urban areas of Tangail, Munshiganj and Narayanganj districts of Bangladesh and migrated to Europe. All of them were male since youth women rarely use these pathways. The study used pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of all respondents.

TABLE 7.1 Profile, Data-Collection Methods and Number of Youths Interviewed

<i>Target Groups</i>	<i>Origin and Background</i>	<i>Levels of Education</i>	<i>Socio-Economic Status of the Household</i>	<i>Number of Interviews</i>	<i>Data Collection Methods</i>
Labour migration	Two Migration-intensive villages in Cumilla District	Primary and Secondary	Rural middle-income and low-income Profession: agriculture, artisan, migration and daily labour	15 youths 15 family members	Longitudinal data of 20 migrant households collected through formal interviews, observation and for 20 years
Student Migration	University Students in Urban Centres of Dhaka, Canada, Australia and Malaysia	Tertiary and post-graduate	Urban middle or higher middle-income, Profession: public or private jobs or business	15 males 5 females 20 males and females	In-depth Interview 2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD) KIIs with Experts and Parents
Irregular Migration	Rural and Sub-urban Areas of Tangail, Munshiganj and Narayanganj Districts	Mostly Secondary	Rural middle-income Profession: agriculture or small business	8 Returnees 15 Returnees	In-depth Interviews 3 FDGs KIIs with Experts

The chapter progresses in the following order. After the Introduction, the following section discusses Bourdieu's ideas of habitus, capital, and Beck's theorisation of a 'global risk society' that underlie the discussion and analysis in this chapter. The third section sketches the socio-cultural and migration topography of Bangladesh. The fourth section shows how youths capacitate their future in different forms of migration. The fifth section analyses the causes and consequences of youths participating in parallel and differentiated trajectories.

Conceptual and Analytical Framework

The Meaning of Youth

In its factual meaning, youth refers to a phase of human life when individuals start embracing the characteristics of an adult while they are not entirely adults. According to the United Nations, the age group between 15 to 24 years are considered youth. Yet, scholars argue that, as a social category, 'youth' is historically constructed and culturally bounded as the meaning of 'youth' varies from one social setting to another and even from one person to another, depending on the economic, symbolic and ritual situations of society and the family (Thorsen and Yeboah 2021). The community may associate youths with specific abilities associated with earning, marriage and establishing a household. In Bangladesh, education, socio-economic status, age and gender invariably affect one's profile as a youth. Bangladeshi youths can be defined as a group aged from 15 to their mid-twenties. In the public discourse, Youth is associated with energy, motivation, potentiality and the ability to work hard.

Migration Decision Making

Classical theories of Economics define migration as the geographical movements of individuals from low-income to high-income locations based on demand-supply and a cost-benefit analysis (Todaro 1976). The New Economics of Migration conceives it as a risk-minimising strategy of the household (Stark and Bloom 1985). In contrast, network theorists highlight the role of preexisting links and social capital in facilitating migration (Boyd 1989). There are differences in methodological approaches too. Whereas deterministic models conceive migration as a preordained response of some push and pull factors at the origin and the destination, respectively, the behaviouralists favour the detailed biography of the migrant to take into account the 'experience and context of migration' (Halfacree and Boyle 1993: 344).

The studies on youth career choices revolve around the opportunity and structure models. Some scholars see individual agency, including interests, values, and skills, as critical variables of career choices (Yates, 2015). Others focus on structural factors, i.e. 'home backgrounds, educational attainments,

local job opportunities and employers' recruitment practices' (Roberts, 2009: 345). Hodkinson (2009:4) combines two theories and argues that social and occupational structures and individual agency play a vital role in youths' decision-making. Hodkinson argues individuals make choices as they progress. The interaction between individuals with the 'the fields they inhabit' or the 'context' enables them to decide. While a combination of the analysis of individual biography and social structure is best suited for analysing the migratory movements of youths in this chapter, it draws heavily on Bourdieu's ideas of fields, habitus and capital, which demands some discussion.

Bourdieu's Notion of 'Habitus'

The conceptualisation just presented is essential but insufficient for a study on understanding youth migration for career and studies in a cross-cultural setting. Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital offer a sound theoretical framework to explain migration decision-making in practice.

Bourdieu opposed the positivist notion of the 'rational choice model' and identified objectivism of action 'as a mechanical reaction without an agent' and subjectivism 'as the deliberate pursuit of a conscious intention' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 121). He stated, 'social reality exists twice, in things and minds ...' (ibid: 127). To him, individuals are neither free 'rational' objective actors nor solely governed by social reality. Therefore, it is essential to understand the interplay of structure and action, objectivism and subjectivism and external constraints and internalised structures (Bourdieu, 1985). This theorisation is of enormous significance as this chapter explores youths' different migration trajectories.

Any given 'social space' is a field, according to Bourdieu, which is 'a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field and that is irreducible to the intentions of the individual agents or even to the direct interactions among the agents' (Bourdieu., 1985: 724). It is the 'habitus' – 'a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks' (Bourdieu, 1977: 82–83). Bourdieu's concept of habitus thus claims a complex dialectical relationship between a person's habitus and objective conditions determining an individual's action. The chapter finds it helpful in explaining the patterns and diversities in move choice that may be associated with different groups of people in different environments. It explains why educated youths are associated with student and skilled migration and less educated rural youths appear to be more associated with low-waged work opportunities abroad. This article will consider youths as a social field with their own sets of goals, capitals and risks – in Bourdieu's language, 'own sets of rules, resources and stakes' (Bourdieu, 1993).

Bourdieu's Notion of Capital

The 'Forms of Capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) identified three distinct forms of capital: economic, cultural and social. It stressed that we must grasp the concept of capital in all its forms and the laws regulating its conversion. By economic capital, Bourdieu refers to one's command over economic resources, i.e. cash, assets etc. In contrast, cultural capital denotes forms of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that a person has, which give him a higher status in society. In his attempt to understand differences in educational outcomes in France, Bourdieu shows that parents provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes and knowledge needed to succeed in the current educational system (Erel, 2010). To Bourdieu, cultural capital is a form of 'informational capital' since it exists in three forms: embodied, objectified or institutionalised (Bourdieu, 1986). Objective cultural capital refers to things of symbolic value owned or transmitted as economic or cultural capital, such as a piece of art. Research shows that the goods they carry, and the act of migration have become important forms of embodied, objectified and institutionalised cultural capital (Rashid, 2016). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 99) emphasise the importance of the composition of an individual's overall capital, made up of cultural, economic and social capital further mediated by individuals' 'position-taking'. Capital structure and volume depend on an individual's 'social trajectory' (ibid) of gaining and valorising capital. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of capital is particularly relevant in explaining how and why youths capitalise on migration to achieve their life goals. The study elucidates how actors can enter the field to increase capital and 'to transform, partially or completely, the immanent rules of the game'.

The Idea of 'Global Risk Generation'

Within his conceptualisation of habitus, Bourdieu saw some elements of transformation. To him, encountering an unfamiliar social space may lead an individual to reinvent or transform himself. This idea of transformation is essential in this research in exploring the extent to which the information and ideas of 'global' – a new 'field' – interface with the existing field of the youths and reinvent the habitus. Beck's idea of 'global risk generation' offers a valuable platform. Beck (1992: 21) considered risk a characteristic of late modernity, where modernity itself induces hazards and insecurities. To him, survival in a 'risk society' is the primary goal. Therefore, it has created a global risk generation, which is 'definitely not the Western, but the non-Western generation, rising against inequality across nation-state borders, putting down a claim on equality' (Beck, 2008: 208).

As youths sketch the map of their future in a 'global risk society', risk is an irreducible element of recurrent migration, forming one of our time's main features (Castles, De Haas and Miller 2014). Several large-scale surveys on risk

attitudes have established that migrants have higher risk tolerance levels than non-migrants in the destination populations (Barsky et al. 1997: 545). However, one must recognise substantial differences in risk tolerance between socio-economic and socio-demographic groups (Kahneman et al. 1982). Dohmen and his colleagues (2011) show that though one's willingness to take risks is a function of gender, age, height, and parental background, risk attitudes are reasonably stable across different contexts. It indicates that individuals tend to display stable risk tolerance even when the risk landscape in which they live changes dramatically.

While Bourdieu identifies 'fields' as homologues of the broader system of distinction, it would be interesting to see the 'stakes' or 'risk' and how youths contest them in encountering the material, cultural and technological changes brought by globalisation (McGrew and Held, 2002).

The Fields

Social backgrounds and status significantly influence how youths draw mental maps for migration. This section provides a broad overview of Bangladeshi societies, culture and economy, followed by a description of established migration pathways.

Society, Economy and Culture in Bangladesh

As a geographically small but demographically large country, Bangladesh carries distinct economic, social and cultural traits within which Bangladeshi youths plan their life. Over 50 years, the country turned from a 'bottomless basket case' to lower-middle income status. The country's GDP is US \$416.26 billion (in 2021), and between 1990 to 2016; its poverty declined from 41.9% to 13.5% (World Bank, 2023). However, rising inequality, inflation, energy shortage, revenue shortfall, foreign loan and a balance of payment increasingly challenge the high pace of development. As a result, youths rarely foresee a wealthy and promising future in the country. High unemployment and underemployment in the country exacerbated the situation (World Bank, 2023).

The differential nature and pace of development in rural and urban areas led to different classes¹ in both areas (Gankovsky 1974). Capital imported through informal sectors and migration divided the peasant society into new socio-economic statuses based on high, medium and poor earnings from diversified income sources, including internal and international migration. Urban centres in Bangladesh carry entirely different features. Dhaka and other large cities have become home to corporate executives, civil bureaucrats, professionals, intellectuals, artists, industrialists and businesspeople. Individuals' professions, educational background and wealth determine their social statuses. Unlike rural areas, lineage carries little significance in an urban class structure.

Gender is another variable which significantly influences the class and the life world of the Youth (White 1992). In the cultural context of Bangladesh, gender decides the type of roles and relations a youth man and a youth woman will perform. A patriarchal structure in the socio-cultural context of Bangladesh is clear. Men are considered the primary providers, and women as homemakers and dependant on their men. For a man, success and status lie in being a good provider (Rashid, 2016: 174). While the growing participation of women in the formal and informal sectors in urban and rural contexts challenges this norm, the social ethos still differentiates between men's and women's contributions to the household and economy, especially when class and locality intersect with gender.

An urban middle-class family usually invests in their children's education regardless of gender, whereas village girls are usually married off by their early 20s. As Del Franco (2010) observes, young girls' educational aspirations are closely intertwined with the centrality of getting married (Del Franco, 2010). The value and meaning of education and marriage for young women in Bangladesh lie in complex social and hierarchical relationships, which see women's unique place in the household (Kabeer, 2002).

While primary and secondary education in Bangladesh is compulsory as per the policy, in reality, the dropout rates are quite high at both the primary (18%) and secondary (50%) levels (Zaman 2014). Due to poverty and child marriage, female students' dropout rate is much higher (around 40%) at the secondary level (Alam and Hoque, 2023). The gross enrolment of youths for higher education remains as low as 16% (BBS, 2021). There are 159 public and private universities and tertiary colleges which provide higher education in Bangladesh (UGC, 2021). Currently, 4.7 million students enrol in tertiary-level education compared to only 31,000 in 1972. In 2020, 1.1 million students were at the tertiary level (UGC, 2021). National University, the public and private universities and the Islamic Arabic University offer higher education in Bangladesh.

As this study explores, it is within the complex domain of intersectionality – marked by the interconnected nature of class, location and gender and interlocking dimensions of advantage and disadvantage – that youths in Bangladesh navigate their dreams of working, settling or studying abroad.

Dominant Migration Pathways

Bangladesh exhibits three predominant forms of overseas population migration: a. labour migration to the Gulf and Southeast Asia, b. student migration mainly to the developed English-speaking countries and c. irregular migration to Europe.

During the 1990s, labour migration became a national pillar of the economy and a preferred livelihood strategy for many Bangladeshi Youth. In 2022 around 1029,000 persons migrated abroad for overseas work (BMET, 2023), of which more than 60% of migrants were between 15 to 25 years old. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Oman, Qatar, the UAE and Bahrain are the primary destination for male migrants. In contrast, Bangladeshi female workers mostly go

to the UAE, Lebanon, Oman, Jordan and Qatar (*ibid*). Around 64% of the labour migrants are semiskilled and less skilled. Migrants' friends, relatives and acquaintances employed abroad facilitated more than 70% of total migration (Rashid, 2012a). They arrange visas for their friends and relatives using their contacts with their employers or local intermediaries. On receipt of a visa, the aspirant migrant, alone or with the help of a relative, completes all the formalities, including government clearance. More than 1200 licensed recruitment agencies in Bangladesh operate legal labour migration from Bangladesh.

Migration from Bangladesh is predominantly a male phenomenon. The increased migrant flows have resulted in the feminisation of the labour force comprising around 12% of the total flow. Although most female migrants from Bangladesh go abroad as domestic workers, these are widely considered low-skill jobs. Labour migration does not necessarily draw people from the lowest socio-economic background. Households earning between BDT 5,000–10,000 opt to send one or more to smooth consumption and save a lump sum for the future (Rashid, 2016: 110). A survey by RMMRU on 1,390 migrant households shows that more than 55.5% of the migrants came from households with a monthly income between Tk. 10,000 to 30,000, whereas only 4.1% had income up to Tk. 5000 (Siddiqui and Mahmud, 2015). Short duration and specific job contracts for low or semiskilled work make such migration circular with few chances of settlement.

The second form of youth migration is evident for education purposes. Currently, 4.7 million students in Bangladesh get admission to tertiary-level education compared to only 31,000 in 1972. Compared to their share in the total population, a tiny percentage of Youth migrate yearly for higher education. There is no systematic data on student migration from Bangladesh. UNESCO estimates it was around 60,000 in 2017 compared to 1,008,525 labour migrants in the same year (BMET, 2023). The United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, Sweden and Canada are significant destinations for Bangladeshi students. Recent years have also seen growing student migration to China, Malaysia, the Middle East, South Korea and other European countries.

In most cases, students and their families bear the cost of travel and tuition fees since scholarships are rarely available. Anecdotal evidence suggests that student migration for Master's or higher degrees is limited to only 5 to 10% of the graduates. Student migration abroad for higher education² has increased in South Asia due to structural factors, i.e. economic instability, higher unemployment, lower salary, political instability and lower quality education system (Khan et al., 2018). Students usually process their visa and other travel documents from the local or regional consulate offices of the aspired country once they receive offer letters from the university upon fulfilment of English language tests and relevant certificates. In the past two decades, sending students abroad has become a large business.

Every year, a few Bangladeshis migrate to developed countries for settlement through family reunification or highly skilled professional visas. For the past

two decades, irregular migration to Europe, the USA and Australia using maritime, air and overland routes has become a practice for Bangladeshi youths (Rashid, 2020). There is neither any reliable data nor any mechanism to calculate the numbers. In United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)'s (2019) account, Bangladesh ranks fourth among Europe's most common nationalities of sea arrivals as of March 2019. Bangladesh has become one of the top 30 countries with more than 100,000 citizens detained and found to be living in the European Union countries without required documents from 2008–2016 (Rashid 2020).

Another group of Bangladeshis attempted to reach as far as Australia and the USA using South Asia, Southeast Asia and South American air, sea and land routes. Italy and Greece are the most preferred destinations in Europe due to large Bangladeshi communities and the state's more inclusive asylum policies. Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes are most popular among migrants. Studies reveal other routes, such as Balkan and West African routes through Turkey, Iran and the Middle East and North African (MENA) region, i.e. UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt and Libya (Rashid, 2020). However, human smugglers and traffickers frequently change routes.

Social Backgrounds, Capitals and Risks in Formulating Migration' 'Habitus'

This section sketches the landscapes of youth perception, dispositions, compulsions and rationales for moving to one or other migratory tracks and shows how they vary across youths' social backgrounds.

'My father has arranged a visa for my migration to Saudi Arabia'

I failed in my SSC examination. There is not much to do in the village. My parents are worried about my future in the village. Plus, they are unhappy with my mingling with 'evil company'. So my mother asked my father to arrange a migration to Saudi Arabia. He has arranged a free visa spending Tk. 600,000. I'll stay with my father in his dormitory until I get a suitable job.

Sharif (18) of Cumilla made these statements. His father Mohiuddin (50) has a migration history of more than two decades. During Sharif's interview, Mohiuddin was employed as a construction company supervisor. The longitudinal data collected from migrant villages shows that Bangladesh is currently experiencing labour migration of its second and third generations (Rashid, 2021). Youths capitalise on their social and kinship network to find a foothold abroad. In many households, sons or younger brothers have followed the pathways of the pioneer migrants.

Again, some brothers have arranged migration for younger brothers to the same or other destinations by arranging visas, work permits, tickets and money (Rashid 2021). In some cases, the support of the paternal or maternal uncles

was instrumental. The author observed a few cases where the youth migrations were inspired, paved and supported by the unrelated pioneer migrants of their locality. Some youths have migrated out with the help of the migrants from the same or neighbouring or in-laws' village. This cooperation emerges from youths' strategic behaviour embedded in the existing power relations and institutional processes, which pre-structure subsequent decision-making (de Haan and Zoomers, 2005: 43). As elsewhere, the support comes in the financial form and in connecting them with a middleman or recruitment agency, selling visas and finding jobs and accommodation abroad.

For rural low-educated youths, migration is still a household decision. Low-income families found a way to increase household earnings and improve the household's socio-economic condition. Hannan (25) and Mannan (23)'s case illustrates it well. They studied up to the primary level and were daily labourers. The low-income family managed to send two sons to Malaysia, spending around BDT 500,000. Hannan entered Malaysia as a tourist and received a two-year work permit. Soon after his migration, his family brought land worth BDT 1500,000. They hoped that Hannan and Mannan would pay it off from his earnings abroad. Thus, for a sheer group of rural, less educated and financially challenged youths, labour migration remains one of the strategies to diversify income. This mobility usually involves only parts of the family migrating (Thieme 2008). Employing multiple members with different livelihoods enhances the household's capacity to struggle against the odds (Kothari, 2002, Rashid, 2016). Family decisions are usually their decisions irrespective of how precarious, low paid and uncertain these travels are.

The capital transmitted by the first-generation migrants has a bearing on the migration of the second generation. Father's presence helps alleviate risks in the migration of sons. As Mohiuddin (50) and his son's case illustrates, the initial unease with coping with a different environment and culture subsides as fathers arrange their accommodation, food, and even work, especially in cases of 'free visa' or undocumented migration. Youth men get priority over their sisters as receivers of migration capital from their parents or other relatives. The social norms allow investment of remittances for a daughter's education and marriage.

'Why should I think about migration? It's men's work. My brothers will go. I'm not thinking about it.' This is how Khadija (18) expressed her outlook on migration. Labour migration in Bangladesh is considered a gendered task, where women are not meant to cross the boundaries of their villages and the country. Also, domestic work where most migrant women are engaged has a lower social value and is reserved only for the destitute, divorced, deserted women (Rashid, 2012b). Society approves the overseas migration of youth women only in extreme poverty and in the absence of male providers.

It would be, however, wrong to suggest that all youth boys in migrant households see migration as a prospective livelihood strategy. The failure of the pioneer migrants in the family to achieve economic and social mobility dissuaded some youths from making a living on migration. They prefer to live on

whatsoever daily small earnings they can make at home through small investments, employment or labour than try fortune in migration. Of course, others developed repulsion against migration from their inability to cover the cost of migration.

'If Luck Favours, Europe is a Dreamland'

Aman (19) wanted to go to Europe since he was an adolescent, not to travelling, but to make a fortune. For many youths like Aman, Europe is a dreamland full of opportunities for anyone. Like many of the average lower-middle-class teenagers of rural Bangladesh, Aman could not complete high school. As his father became sick, he had to take responsibility for his family and earn money. For him, going abroad was the only viable option.

In 2013 he went to war-torn Iraq, formerly one of the largest labour markets for Bangladeshis. There he worked as a tailor but was ill-paid. The employer often beat him, tortured him, and fined him for not fulfilling the 'target' (assigned job). He survived such working conditions for three years but then decided to flee, along with three of his co-workers.

With the help of a fellow Bangladeshi, they fled Iraq to go to Europe. That is when his dangerously adventurous journey began. Without any passport or legal document, he started his journey to Greece with the help of a middleman. First, he travelled to 'Kurdistan' to cross the Iraq-Turkey border. He waited one night in the jungle with other people from different countries. Then they walked several miles, crossed the border, went to Ankara and then to Istanbul. He waited 14 days for the 'Game', ironically, the dangerous boat journey through the Mediterranean. They waited six nights in the jungle near the coast without any food, money, or connection with the outside. Unknown sources gave them minimal food. This time the Turkish coast guard caught them while they were trying to cross the Mediterranean by an air-filled boat. After a short detention, they were freed. He tried his luck again after several days. This time, he was successful. Again, they sailed through the Mediterranean by an overcrowded airboat. They were on their own and were just told to reach the light shown. Finally, they reached Mytilini of Greece. Aman, and other migrants from Algeria, Morocco, India, and Pakistan, willingly went to a refugee camp. They were not permitted to work or leave the camp.

Aman's ultimate goal was to wait for a chance to flee or secure a work permit. In the meantime, Greece decided to repatriate the migrants following a terrorist attack in France. Moreover, an Algerian refugee set fire to a Mytilini camp, killing 44 people. Because of these incidents and the overall uncertainty, Aman returned home. He returned with the help of an international organisation but, with empty hands, incurred huge debt, which he still struggles to pay. He might go again if he gets a better route and network; because he still thinks, if luck favours, Europe is a dreamland!

Aman's story epitomises the typical case of a youth who pursues a dream to move to a developed country but has little access and capacity to do so in a regular and orderly manner. Several structural factors, i.e. restrictive migration policies of the destinations, undocumented labour markets and the rise in the transnational organised groups of human traffickers, are responsible for such migration.

Regarding youths' motivations, destinations were hierarchically located in youths' psyches (Rashid 2016). Middle Eastern countries accrue lower status than Europe and the West due to low-paid jobs and lack of protection and accommodation, prompting even low-educated youths towards permanent migration to Europe or the West. The success of pioneer migrants in those countries also attracted them, while many were highly frustrated with the work opportunities at home. Regular migration opportunities to the global north are limited to highly educated and skilled persons; village youths with a secondary education do not hesitate to make irregular migration.

At times, overcoming the physical and mental hardship to reach a destination appears unbearable. Still, migrants believe that it's worth pursuing the irregular pathways. Compared to regular labour migration or student migration, irregular migration is precarious. The risk of losing lives is high in irregular migration, especially for those who attempt to cross seas by boats and trawlers. Youths gamble their resources, such as money, workability and social status, when their migration attempts fail. While it costs BDT 10–20.00000 to migrate to any Europe through illegal means, migrants find it meaningful. One may find the answer in the Ellsberg paradox (Fox and Tversky, 1995), which asserts that individuals prefer risk to uncertainty to avoid ambiguity. As revealed from interviews with youths who attempted irregular migration, they perceived themselves as more capable and willing to bet larger amounts than their earlier generation who made such migration.

'I Need to Go Abroad for My Higher Education'

I have been planning to go abroad to pursue my master's or PhD since I was in class X. As I wanted to be a scientist, I thought I would need to go abroad for my higher education. Unlike developed nations, Bangladesh lacks financial, institutional and infrastructural settings for research and development, especially in science and technology.

Like Zarif – a senior student at a public university in Bangladesh – educated youths interviewed for the study expressed their willingness to go to one or other developed countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, Sweden, Japan, China and Malaysia, for further studies. Some of them considered it a possible way to settle abroad permanently. The enormous cost and required educational qualities draw student migrants mainly from the well-off and educated cohorts of youths. Student migration data is rarely recorded, yet anecdotal evidence suggests that these youths turn from 'internationally mobile students' to

settlers in the Global South. Unlike their rural low-educated counterparts, their migration aims are closely connected to their educational attainment.

Their rationale for migration included ‘deep interest in the subject’, ‘poor standards of education in Bangladesh’, ‘parents’ wishes’, ‘friends are going’, ‘higher job opportunities in the field of study’, ‘opportunities of research’, ‘internship opportunities’, ‘possibilities of permanent migration’, ‘aptitude to in-depth knowledge’, ‘cultural assimilation’ and ‘the willingness to add something in life’. The youths also stated that migration is not an end but a means to earn capital to fulfil the ultimate goal of living a decent life. Beyond the immediate causes, youths cited ‘deteriorating living standard’, ‘lack of governance’, ‘high competitiveness’ and ‘poor quality of education’ and ‘peer pressure’ pushes them to go abroad. However, youths are well aware of the hardships associated with such migration. “I want to start anew. I want to go somewhere where nobody will recognise me.” Unable to cope with the loss incurred in education by COVID-19, Maliha – a final year female student at a public university – blamed herself for being unable to move out of the country.

Like labour migration, information is vital for student migration and frequently causes changes in youths’ plans. Youth students interviewed said they had access to online devices at home and abroad, i.e. smartphones and laptops, which offers a virtual ‘openness’ and ‘freedom’ to explore the opportunities. In many cases, educational institutions provide them with the required network as these are sites for the circulation of a great deal of information, impression and images across these sites shape youths’ aspirations for migration abroad (Dolby and Rizvi, 2008). Most respondents said they received the idea of education abroad from seniors at the university, friends and families through in-person and virtual contacts. Often, friends and relatives studying abroad appeared to be their main interlocutors. Accessible communication technology and social media were essential communication tools used by them. However, too much or too little information often affects their decision-making. In some cases, accessing information determines their capacity to migrate.

Class is another critical variable that interacts with gender and shapes the choice and the decision about education, work and migration. Girls and boys from a higher class are more likely to be constrained to exploit the full range of choices and actions, as their higher social position often narrows their thinking and mind set. Education migration rarely rely on the predecessors’ migration capital. The resources necessary for such migration usually come from family sources, which are why youths belonging to the upper middle class or higher SES are better able to decide about their future in foreign education, irrespective of gender. Arranging scholarships remains a challenge for youths as it requires outstanding results. It implies that low SES and education migration are related inversely. Meeting the associated costs poses additional pressure for young people pursuing higher education. As a result, for many youths from low-income families in the villages, achieving life

choices through higher education is time-consuming, expensive and often beyond their means. A part of the youths wants to adopt informal ways to get a foothold in developing countries.

Production and Reproduction of Differences through Migration

Why do youths respond to migration opportunities differently? In answer to this question, the study identifies that migration is a common strategy that a section of youths follows to reach their life trajectories, realise their dreams, and transform or alter their distinct economic and cultural boundaries. Among other determinants, social and cultural orientations embedded in a class, education and gender invariably influence their migration perspective. The study thus observes the interplay of structure and agency, shaping their migration habitus. Neither desire (agency) nor the socio-economic condition (structure) alone determines their trajectories (Bourdieu 1985).

As this study demonstrates, youths living in different settings are conditioned by the structures which generate and organise different migration practices. The cross-cultural milieu is the structure which produces 'habitus' – the durable ideas of migration (Bourdieu 1985). One may compare each type of journey with a 'habitus' – that allows youths to act meaningfully to pursue their goals in migration. These migration practices are the results of the social condition. These are not always conscious acts by youths as their socialisation process varies across extensive grounds. Youths' decision-making is a social activity grounded in a socialisation structure. Regular work migration, student migration or irregular migration are 'schemes of actions' undertaken and 'improvised' according to the situation.

The situation varies for youths. Information about regular or irregular migration and opportunities for work or study abroad produces the image of a new 'field' or social space in which Bangladeshi youths plan their future. The youths experience new situations and contexts with their existing social situation. In Bourdieu's understanding, they experience a new situation of 'discomfort' until they readapt to it. Youths attempt to redesign their life and mould different life trajectories through different forms of geographical mobility. Migration is thus a cultural project for youths bound by their different socio-economic positions. Youths' choice to relocate is integral to fulfilling their self-realisation projects on migration abroad. Migration offers a tool to fulfil the ultimate goal of 'earning a handsome amount' or 'living a "prosperous" life' or achieving 'world-class education and jobs'.

Rural and less educated youths usually invest in interpersonal ties for labour migration. The intergenerational transmission of past accumulated 'migration capital' is a significant determinant of labour migration of this cohort of youths (Ivles and King 2008), while others invest in social relations for the economic capital required for migration. The experiences of older generations significantly influence the migration decisions of the youths in rural Bangladesh for

overseas employment. Households that have accumulated some economic and social capital through labour migration give impetus to the next generation for a safe and secure labour migration as they can invest in financial and social capital. Youths belonging to rural low-income and non-migrant families can only move for joining to the lowest strata of the international labour market because of their low skill and low social and financial capital (Rashid 2021). The aim is to smooth household consumption and finance social spending such as marriage or building a house. Living in a migrant society produces ever-increasing pressure for non-migrant youths to achieve the status of their peers (Rashid 2023). Since the local job markets have little to offer these youths, they compete for a limited number of jobs abroad.

In contrast, educated urban middle-class youths see higher education as an opportunity for personal growth since ‘mobility produces mobility’ (Cairns, 2021). This cohort of urban youths thus aims to be ‘hypermobile global citizens’ (Czerska-Shaw and Krzaklewska 2021), as it would offer them personal, professional and social mobility. Their choices are rooted beyond a simplistic desire to smooth consumption or save a lump sum as they want to become part of a globalised culture or to follow lifestyles that revolve around international conviviality (Cairns, 2021:14). As opportunities for learning, training and working are limited, Bangladeshi youth boys and girls are left to make decisions and make sense of their migration trajectory.

As the study found, rural and urban youths with sufficient access to financial capital but inadequate human capital to migrate to the West resort to irregular migration paths. The choices of this cohort of youths are informed by their needs and the information that they have at their disposal. While the commentary of the successful migrants creates the visual images of an urban life, culture and modernity in the mental map of these youths, transnational organised groups offer the tools for translating their ideas into action (Rashid 2020). They necessarily have imperfect knowledge as to future changes, i.e. migration policy of the country of destination. Their migration also involves moving to an unfamiliar terrain they are likely to have less knowledge about, representing more significant uncertainty. Yet, these optimistic youths overestimate their competence compared to their peers and often become overconfident about their relative abilities. They develop a perspective of the unknown land, which creates confidence in them, leading them to risk life (Barber and Odean 2001).

Youth migration in the context of Bangladesh epitomises uneven and parallel tracks leading towards different directions, characterised by a mixture of hope and despair. It is beyond this study to explore the transformation that these youths face while encountering another culture abroad. Yet, this writing, at least, demonstrates how youths’ ability to choose particular migration tracks varies and why. Interestingly, the tracks remain parallel like railway tracks and never meet each other except for crossing areas of intergenerational human capital accumulation. It is only in rare instances that the labour migration

produces high-skill education migration, or the irregular labour migration produces formal labour migration indicating the reproduction of the different migration pathways for a generation. This trend is alarming, for it insists on the persistence of inequality and their differential access to life choices. The socio-economic structure at the origin, coupled with the discriminatory immigration and labour migration laws and regulations of the receiving countries, perpetuates the reproduction of youth moves in different directions. Temporary labour migrants are bound to return to their origin due to the temporary nature of overseas jobs and arrange another temporary migration for their youths. Youths who want to transcend the temporal and spatial boundaries with compromised human capital resort to irregular migration. This track has disproportionate physical and financial risks, often distributed to families.

Migration appears as a feasible 'action' for youths with higher human and financial capital for their settlement to a promising world of development with a seemingly higher chance of securing their generations' future as their 'habitus' changes with the interface with a new global cultural field. These youths are less like to transfer human or financial capital to the countries of origin, perpetuating the ever-growing inequality and reproduction of more affluent and poorer classes abroad and at home respectively. There are puzzling consequences for the state too. The lowest-educated and lowest-invested youths transfer the highest capital to the country through remittances. In contrast, highly educated and most-invested youths transfer their human and financial capital to their new countries of migration-their new 'field' (Bourdieu 1985).

Conclusion

This chapter examined the various forms of migration that youths pursue to fulfil their life trajectories. Illustrating cases of young Bangladeshi populations of different socio-cultural and educational backgrounds, it examined how different groups of youths instrumentalise migration differently to live up to their preferred life. It essentially makes a comparative analysis of youths' different pursuits for migration through regular and irregular channels to get employment, higher education and permanent settlement.

As youths are diverse in their backgrounds, so are their journeys. For the youths following labour migration, the journey is sometimes discrete, circular and motivated by economic and non-economic aspects. Less-educated rural youths are more risk-tolerant and often do not dare to follow irregular migration pathways to pursue their dream. Conversely, their educated urban counterparts can capitalise on their resources in higher education and higher socio-economic status to migrate abroad. Employing Bourdieu's sociological concepts of habitus and capital and Beck's risk society, the chapter considers the possibilities of rediscovering migration habitus within a non-egalitarian social field.

The study reveals that youths rely on different forms of capital to get a foothold abroad. While students capitalise on their education, less educated

youths rely on networks and predecessor migrants, and a group of youths look for networks for irregular migration. In all three cases, the socio-cultural dispositions face contradiction with new ideas generated by globalisation and a new image is created in the mental map of the youths. The success of the pioneer migrants and the lack of attractive employment opportunities at home lead youths to aspire to get a foothold abroad by whatsoever means they can by employing resources of connection and money.

The study also identified that risks are disproportionately distributed among youths of different socio-cultural contexts. Whilst unemployed youths with limited human and financial capital resort to regular or irregular labour migration, their stakes are higher than their educated counterparts who want to move to a developed country, usually for higher education and then permanent settlement. These practices often perpetuate inequality, just as the channels of various forms of migration reproduce similar pathways. The findings offer fresh insights into the migration literature of South Asia by analysing the dynamics, challenges and potentials of youth migration. The study suggests a need for further cross-cultural and cross-country comparisons of youths in the destination countries to understand their future in migration.

Notes

- 1 Class here implies an objective category of occupational status and income.
- 2 Higher education is tertiary education at universities or similar educational establishments leading to award of an academic degree.

References

- Alam, M.M. and Hoque, M.N., 2023. Causes of Female High School Student Dropout in Bangladesh: An Exploration of the Pabna District in Familial, Economic and Institutional Contexts. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 39(2), pp.43–60.
- Alexander, R., 2016. Migration, education and employment: socio-cultural factors shaping individual decisions and economic outcomes in Orkney and Shetland. *Island Studies Journal*, 11(1).
- Appadurai, A. 2004. The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition. In V. Rao and M. Walton (Eds.), *Culture and Public Action* (pp. 59–84). Stanford University Press. Stanford.
- Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). 2021. *Statistical Yearbook 2020*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbs.gov.bd/site/page/29855dc1-f2b4-4dc0-9073-f692361112da/Statistical-Yearbook>.
- Barber, B.M. and Odean, T., 2001. Boys will be boys: Gender, overconfidence, and common stock investment. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 116(1), pp.261–292.
- Barsky, R.B., Juster, F.T., Kimball, M.S. and Shapiro, M.D., 1997. Preference parameters and behavioral heterogeneity: An experimental approach in the health and retirement study. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112(2), pp.537–579.
- Beck, U. 1992 [1986]. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London: Sage Publications.
- Beck, U., 2008. Global generations in world risk society. *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, pp.203–216.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Bourdieu, P. 1985. The social space and the genesis of groups. *Theory and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 6 (Nov., 1985), pp.723–744
- Bourdieu P. 1986 The forms of capital. In: Richardson J.G. (ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 241–258.
- Bourdieu P 1993. *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. and L. Wacquant, 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press and Blackwell.
- Boyd, M., 1989. Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas. *International Migration Review* 23 (3): 638–670.
- Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET). 2023. *Statistical Data*. Retrieved from <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/viewStatReport.action?reportnumber=24>
- Cairns, D., 2021. Mobility becoming migration: Understanding youth spatiality in the twenty-first century. *The Palgrave handbook of youth mobility and educational migration*, pp.17–24.
- Castles, S., De Haas, H. and Miller, M.J., 2014. *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Czerska-Shaw, K., and Krzaklewska, E. 2021, The super-mobile student: Global educational trajectories in Erasmus Mundus. In D. Cairns (Eds). *The Palgrave Handbook of Youth Mobility and Educational Migration*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan. 199.
- Dannecker, P., 2005. Transnational migration and the transformation of gender relations: The case of Bangladeshi labour migrants. *Current sociology*, 53(4), pp.655–674.
- De Haan, L. and Zoomers, A., 2005. Exploring the frontier of livelihoods research. *Development and change*, 36(1), pp.27–47.
- Del Franco., N. 2010. Aspirations and self-hood: exploring the meaning of higher secondary education for girl college students in rural Bangladesh. *Compare*, 40(2), 147–165.
- Dohmen, T., Falk, A., Huffman, D., Sunde, U., Schupp, J. and Wagner, G.G., 2011. Individual risk attitudes: Measurement, determinants, and behavioral consequences. *Journal of the european economic association*, 9(3), pp.522–550.
- Dolby, N. and Rizvi, F. 2008. *Youth moves: Identities and education in global perspective*. Routledge.
- Erel, U., 2010. Migrating cultural capital: Bourdieu in migration studies. *Sociology*, 44(4),
- Fox, C.R. and Tversky, A., 1995. Ambiguity aversion and comparative ignorance. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 110(3), pp.585–603.
- Gankovsky, Y.V., 1974. *The social structure of society in the People's*
- Halfacree, K.H. and Boyle, P.J., 1993. The challenge facing migration research: the case for a biographical approach. *Progress in Human Geography*, 17(3), pp.333–348.
- Heckert, J., 2015. New perspective on youth migration: Motives and family investment patterns. *Demographic Research*, 33, pp.765–800.
- Hodkinson, P., 2009. Understanding career decisionmaking and progression: Careership revisited: The fifth John Killeen memorial lecture, October 2008. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 21(1), pp.4–17.
- Ivlevs, A. and King, R.M., 2008. Intergenerational Transmission of ‘Migration Capital’ and the Decision to Emigrate. *University of Nottingham Research Paper*, 26.
- Kabeer, N., 2002. *The power to choose: Bangladeshi women and labor market decisions in London and Dhaka*. Verso.
- Khan, Y., Hassan, T., Yi, W. M., & Gulzar, R. (2018). A Comparative Analysis Based on Economic Factors of Students Emigration from South Asia. *Asian Journal of Economics and Empirical Research*, 5(2), pp. 201–208. <https://doi.org/doi:10.20448/journal.501.2018.52.201.208>.

- Khatun, F. and Saadat, S.Y., 2020. *Youth Employment in Bangladesh*. Springer Singapore.
- King, R. and Raghuram, P., 2013. International student migration: Mapping the field and new research agendas. *Population, space and place*, 19(2), pp.127–137.
- Machina, M.J. and Siniscalchi, M., 2014. Ambiguity and ambiguity aversion. In *Handbook of the Economics of Risk and Uncertainty* (Vol. 1, pp. 729–807). North-Holland.
- McGrew, A. and Held, D., 2002. *Governing globalisation: power, authority and global governance*. Polity Press.
- Meyerhoefer, C.D. and Chen, C.J., 2011. The effect of parental labor migration on children's educational progress in rural China. *Review of Economics of the Household*, 9, pp.379–396.
- Mkwananzi, F., 2018. *Higher education, youth and migration in contexts of disadvantage: Understanding aspirations and capabilities*. Springer.
- Pustulka, P. and Winogrodzka, D., 2021. Unpacking the mobility capacities and imperatives of the 'global generation'. In *The Palgrave handbook of youth mobility and educational migration*, pp.47–61.
- Raghuram, P., 2013. Theorising the spaces of student migration. *Population, Space and Place*, 19(2), pp.138–154.
- Rahman, A., 2020. A Study on irregular migration from Bangladesh to Malaysia through the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. *Otoritas: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan*, 10(2), pp.120–131.
- Rahman, M.M., 2011. Bangladeshi migrant workers in the UAE: gender-differentiated patterns of migration experiences. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47(2), pp.395–411.
- Rashid, S. R. 2012a. *Capitalising on Social Ties for Overseas Labor Migration: Findings from Bangladesh*. *Asia Pacific Migration Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, Vol 21 No. 1. pp 31–55.
- Rashid, S. R., 2012b. "Gendering Space and Movement: A Reflection on Overseas Labour Migration Policy in Bangladesh" In Rahman Md Mizanur and Ullah AKM Ahsan (Eds). *Asian Migration Policy: South, Southeast and East Asia*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Rashid, S. R. 2016. *Uncertain Tomorrows: Livelihoods, Capital and Risks in Labour Migration from Bangladesh*, University Press Limited (UPL), Dhaka.
- Rashid, S. R. 2020. *The Mapping of Irregular Routes Utilised by Bangladeshi Migrants*, Unpublished Research Report, BRAC, Dhaka
- Rashid, S.R. 2021, *Revisiting Livelihoods, Capital and Risk in Labour Migration from Bangladesh: A Longitudinal Study on Two Villages in Cumilla*, Unpublished Report, Social Science Faculty, University of Dhaka.
- Rashid, S.R. 2023. *Local Youths, Global Aspirations: Migration for Higher Education in Bangladesh, in Globalisation and Cultural Transformations among the Youth: Tertiary Institutions under the Spotlight*, The University Press Limited (UPL), Dhaka.
- Riaño, Y. and Piguët, E., 2016. International student migration. In *Oxford Bibliographies* (pp. 1–24). Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, K., 2009. Opportunity structures then and now. *Journal of education and work*, 22(5), pp.355–368.
- Rye, J.F., 2011. Youth migration, rurality and class: a Bourdieusian approach. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 18(2), pp.170–183.
- Siddiqui, T. and R. A. Mahmud, 2015. *Impact of Migration on Poverty and Local Development in Bangladesh*, SDC and RMMRU: Dhaka.
- Siddiqui, T., 2005. International labour migration from Bangladesh: A decent work perspective. *Policy Integration Department Working Paper*, 66.
- Siddiqui, T., 2010. *Migration as a livelihood strategy of the poor: the Bangladesh case*.

- Stark, O. and Bloom, D.E., 1985. The new economics of labor migration. *The American Economic review*, 75(2), pp.173–178.
- Thieme, S., 2008. Sustaining livelihoods in multi-local settings: Possible theoretical linkages between transnational migration and livelihood studies. *Mobilities*, 3(1), pp.51–71.
- Thorsen, D. and Yeboah, T., 2021. Mobility and the rural landscape of opportunity. In *Youth and the rural economy in Africa: hard work and hazard* (pp. 78–91). Wallingford UK: CABI.
- Todaro, M.P., 1976. Internal Migration in Developing Countries: A Review of Theory, *Evidence, Methodology and Research Priorities*, Geneva: ILO.
- Tversky, A. and Kahneman, D., 1974. Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases: Biases in judgments reveal some heuristics of thinking under uncertainty. *science*, 185 (4157), pp.1124–1131.
- Kahneman, D., Slovic, P. and Tversky, A. eds., 1982. *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases*. Cambridge university press.
- Kothari, U., 2002. *Migration and chronic poverty* (Vol. 16). Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre.
- UNHCR, 2019. *Most Common Nationalities of Sea Arrivals (Since 1 January 2019)* <https://Data2.Unhcr.Org/En/Situations/Mediterranean/Location/5205>.
- University Grant Commission (UGC). (2021). *Summary of the 47th Yearly Report 2020*. Retrieved from http://www.ugc.gov.bd/site/annual_reports/7a8fff67-71e4-4083-9a1f-5c95b0d5c107
- Veale, A. and Dona, G. eds., 2014. *Child and youth migration: Mobility-in-migration in an era of globalisation*. Springer.
- White, S.C., 1992. *Arguing with the crocodile: gender and class in Bangladesh*. Zed Books.
- World Bank, 2023. *Bangladesh Overview: Development* <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview>
- Yates, J., 2015. ‘The heart has its reasons that reason knows nothing of’: The role of the unconscious in career decision making. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 35(1), pp. 28–35.
- Zaman, M.M., 2014. *Dropout at primary and secondary level: A challenge to ensure rights to education for the government of Bangladesh* (Doctoral dissertation, Brac University).

8

ACTIVISM, LAW AND LIFE IN BETWEEN

The Rohingya in Bangladesh camps

Sucharita Sengupta

Yes, I am a Rohingya ...
Somewhere I wither in detention,
Somewhere I grow up in restrictions.
Somewhere I am banned from school,
Somewhere I am jailed without reason.
Yes, I am a Rohingya ...

Written by Ali Johar, Rohingya youth volunteer and Ipshon Lal Baroa¹

These words by Ali Johar², who lives in the Rohingya refugee camps in Delhi, India, provides a glimpse to the precarious poignancy of being a stateless Rohingya person in a world obsessed with strict borders and nationhood. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has declared the Rohingya victims of genocide in their homeland, Myanmar, where they are not considered as citizens. However, despite being recognised by the UNHCR as refugees, they are not formally granted rights as refugees in Bangladesh and India where they have sought asylum. While the law can render one stateless, how do the people living within this condition address or survive and if at all resist it? One of the most crucial contemporary problems that a nation state can experience is that of statelessness as it questions the idea of a state-citizenship relationship. This brief article centres around some of the consequences that are brought in by one of the biggest challenges that the world is faced with since the end of the second world war in 1945 – the loss of nationhood or statelessness. In this context this text cites the instance of one of the largest stateless people in contemporary world politics, the Rohingya. At present, a million plus Rohingya are living in Bangladesh in 34 camps, spread across the regions of

Kutupalong, Ukhiya and Teknaf under the district of Cox's Bazar after being forced to leave Myanmar. This article centers around one aspect of their camp livelihood- resource politics, visibility, and the effect of NGO presence as care givers in the camps³.

A Brief Introduction to the Context: Who Are the Rohingya

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority ethnic group from the Arakan province of Myanmar. Through almost 50 years now, they have been living in such a state of flux and vulnerability that they have been in no position to negotiate with a particular nation-state to secure a home for themselves in South Asia or beyond. Being denied citizenship in Myanmar, they constitute one of the world's largest deracinated people in existence. To assimilate into host countries that they have sought asylum from, many of them have been forced to juggle multiple identities and often have been forced to hide or shelve their own in a bid to survive. Their identity thus has been difficult to pin down and, in context, it is difficult to categorise them into any fixed category, for instance, as stateless, refugee or asylum-seeker. Following massive persecution in Myanmar, the Rohingyas have been forced to flee to neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, separated from the Arakan only by a small river, from the 1970s. Since then, they have been living for a protracted period as refugees, mainly in the Cox's Bazaar area of Bangladesh's Chittagong in two camps, and under unwritten rules, have been restricted to interact with the local population. Bangladesh has been housing the Rohingya since the 1970s. In 1978 almost 200,000 Rohingya refugees were forced to seek asylum in Bangladesh. By April 1992, another 300,000 had joined them. At that time 20 camps were built and later dismantled. Only two had remained: Nayapara camp near Teknaf and Kutupalong camp in Ukhiya, housing 21,621 refugees. The rest were repatriated back to Myanmar (Banerjee, 2020; Ullah, 2011). These two camps are the only two registered refugee camps administered by the UNHCR. The influx, however, continued informally and after a fresh exodus in 2017, a massive influx of Rohingya, an estimated 745,000 Rohingya (as of January 2019) started from 25 August 2017 from Myanmar to Bangladesh. This date is now termed by the Rohingya living in Bangladesh camps as 'genocide day'.⁴ As a result, Bangladesh is now hosting 1 million Rohingya in formal and informal camps, creating the world's largest refugee settlement and humanitarian crisis in Bangladesh. This has evoked humanitarian response and involvement of several international and local non-governmental organizations with UNHCR and international Organization of Migration (IOM) at the helm. The camps are also supported by the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

Camp Livelihood and Resource Crisis

My doctoral fieldworks in Bangladesh camps in phases between 2015 and 2019 illustrate whether rights are given to them or not, Rohingya refugees have tried to claim rights by negotiating their existence. In this context, it is worth sharing a narrative of a Rohingya refugee camp dweller, Muhib, from Cox's Bazar. In a recent conversation through a digital platform, he expressed something very interesting which yet again questions the relevance of the international conventions in the South Asian context:

On 2nd August 2021, Bangladeshi national newspapers, media and tv channels have released a statement of the World Bank's recent proposal to the Bangladesh government to integrate the Rohingya with the host community (Bangladeshi nationals). But the Bangladesh government has rejected it. Additionally, the foreign minister A K Abdul Momen has claimed that there are no UN registered refugees in Bangladesh. We are deeply frustrated on hearing this and would want to remind Bangladesh and the international community that there are 39,588 registered refugees in Cox's Bazar and two official camps in Kutupalong and Noyapara. We have gained refugee status by being registered jointly with the UNHCR and Govt of Bangladesh under the 1951 UN Convention and Law. However, despite this, we have been deprived of the fundamental refugee rights that we belong to. We have been waiting for a durable solution for 30 years in refugee camps which are like open prison. I on behalf of all of us request you to spread the word to the international media and global international agencies about the plight of registered refugee in the camps of Bangladesh. As registered refugees we cater to 3 solutions as per the UN refugee protocols: 1) Go home with right 2) Local integration 3) Resettlement in another country. Yet, after 30 years, we have been waiting and received nothing⁵(Aziz, 2022; Brinham, 2022).

To clarify, the one million refugees that have been living in Bangladesh since 2017⁶ are unregistered but the early settlers were registered from the 90s. Bangladeshi nationals are not allowed by law to get married to the Rohingyas while they can be married to other nationalities. This has led to fissure between the registered and unregistered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh that only goes on to show the multifarious crises that a situation of statelessness breeds.

Section 8.1: NGO as care givers in camps

An NGO Response Platform was created in Bangladesh immediately after the influx of 2017. Initial days were marked by formulating and implementing decision through number of committees under the supervision of RRRC. An

emergency response platform was also formed. This is the first time after the Rohingya had started migrating to Bangladesh since the 70s, that an ‘NGO Response Platform’ was created in Bangladesh after August 2017 with support from the government to provide aid and protection in the camps and most significantly to involve the refugees in it. In one year between August 2017 and August 2018, there has been an exponential growth in the number of INGO-NGOs, donor organisations and projects, aiming to facilitate better services in the camps and to come up with recommendations of sectors that needed improvement. For the assessment work, the INGOs would always tie up with local Bangladeshi organisations (NGOs) as they are the ones who live in Bangladesh, can afford to be in the camps for the entire duration of the projects, know the local language and culture to be able to interact with both the local Bangladeshi people and the Rohingya in camps.

1.1 Crisis Management in the Initial Days After the 2017 Influx

On 4 October 2017, the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) of the Government of Bangladesh, with the support of UNHCR, launched the ‘Family Counting Exercise’ to count refugee arrivals from Myanmar (UNHCR, 2024). Going from shelter to shelter, a joint team of RRRC staff, UNHCR staff and UNHCR-hired enumerators collected information on refugee arrivals, identified their specific protection needs and vulnerabilities, geo-referenced each family, and delivered a family counting card that provides each refugee family with a unique identification number. This was how the population data was mapped initially and gets updated on a regular basis. The family counting data supports protection and assistance activities both at the household and individual level and is used for protection and assistance purposes (UNHCR, 2024).

On 21 June 2018, the Government of Bangladesh and UNHCR jointly launched a verification/registration exercise to create a unified database for the purposes of identity management, documentation, protection, provision of assistance, population statistics and for seeking solutions. The exercise aims to achieve this objective by updating information and issuing documents to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to ensure that people can live safely during their stay in Bangladesh, whilst accessing appropriate services, basic assistance as well as protection and solutions (UNHCR, 2024). The humanitarian assistance does needs to be critiqued here for it often dawns the role that is very similar to that of the state. Therefore, care work is devised and orchestrated by state control.

The UNHCR population factsheet includes all refugees from Myanmar except some in a few locations within the host community. The dataset provides population data for the Government and all humanitarian partners informing site planning, harmonization of assistance, and most critically protection responses that address vulnerabilities and specific needs among the refugee population (UNHCR, 2024).

On this context, I made an appointment with Sayeema, Field Manager of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) at a restaurant in Cox's Bazar in May 2019. This was in order to know about their food distribution programme in the camps from the time of the influx in 2017 till the time of this conversation in 2019. Sayeema briefed that the Food Distribution is of two kinds⁷: a) General Food Programme (GFP) which includes ration like Rice, Pulses and Oil and b) Blanket Supplementary Food Programme (BSFP) which is an additional nutritional supplementary that includes Semolina, Biscuits, Nutrition packets, WFP special food packets for Malnutral children or pregnant women. This second category is provided mostly by other donor organisations like 'Save the Children' with support from WFP. The GFP is being implemented through e-vouchers like the one in Figure 8.1.⁸

There are four e-voucher points/outlet in the camps including the registered camps. Rs 700 is provided per head in the voucher⁹. This system began around January 2019. The process of biometric had begun from 2018, one year since the major influx took place. Each food outlet has three shops respectively from where the Rohingya can buy what they require from the vouchers. Sayeema says, the process of smart cards like the one in Figure 8.1 or biometric had started to check duplication of food cards. Apparently several Rohingyas across camps were making duplicate cards so that they can receive ration twice. To check this, the system of a smart card through

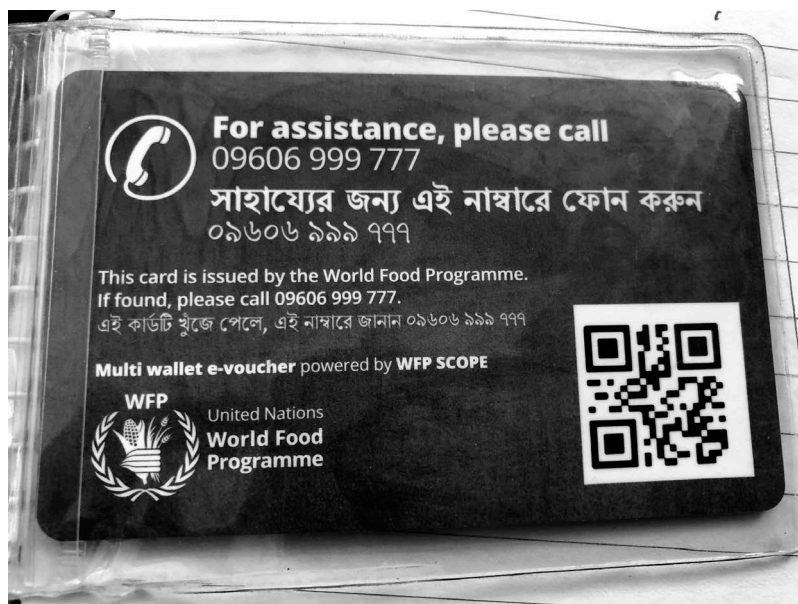


FIGURE 8.1 Food assistant card, photo by the author

biometric was introduced¹⁰. Sayeema continues that the registered Rohingyas however have refused to accept this card and hence have been denying ration, as also confirmed by a Registered Rohingya refugee in a subsequent section of the chapter¹¹. This shows the difference in receiving aid varies between the registered and unregistered Rohingya refugees. This picture will get clearer from the second section through a few Rohingya narratives from the camps.

Section 8.2: Rohingya activism in the camps

Two years of the Covid pandemic have ushered in significant changes in how refugees build their networks across continents. In fact, digital boom or revolution in the cyberspace has helped refugees build their networks to strengthen their collective identity (2024). This idea also provides insights to Anderson's imagined communities (2006) and Hall's framework of Diaspora and Cultural identity formation. Hall argues that diasporic communities constantly reproduce themselves through transformation and difference (1990, 236). Marino (2015, 6, 11) also talks of 'digital togetherness' in this context, while explaining the need of refugees to stay connected and prophase their voice digitally in the absence of physical outlets. He mentions the instance of Rohingya refugees, for whom, being 'active' has been synonymous to being present online through various social media platforms. This has helped them to organise online events as well as to spread awareness about their existence.

In a workshop conducted in Nepal in May 2022, noted scholar Sandro Mezzadra mentioned how access to digital instruments is crucial for migrants in detention centres (Mezzadra, 2022). Use of artificial intelligence, digitisation of borders, boom of 'digital labour' most of whom are migrant labour in professions like food delivery through online portals and apps that have increased from the time of the pandemic have been useful tools for migrants to consolidate and organise themselves. The UN has emerged as a strong platform for Rohingya activists to claim recognition globally as until recently they have been incarcerated in countries like Bangladesh and India, as 'illegal' interlopers, where they have sought refuge. From terming it as 'ethnic cleansing' earlier to announcing it as 'genocide' after the 2017 violence in Myanmar, the United Nations Organisation has provided to the Rohingya activists across borders, a platform to base their claims upon. However, as pointed out by Natalie Brinham, often the United Nations Organisation has found itself to be a collaborator of the state and has supported steps that might not be conducive for the Rohingya to return to Myanmar. International organisations of the Rohingya too have been misled in syncing their demands with the language of the UN leading to mistrusts within the Rohingya. The following stanzas will bring out some of those tensions through narratives, conversations, and personal exchanges. There are two sections in this part of the paper. The first will focus on a few

narratives of activists from the camps – some of them have received international fame culminating into discontents; the second will highlight key Rohingya organisations and my interactions with them on their mobilisation, demand for statehood and current global movement.

Some of the key global organisations of the Rohingya are European Rohingya Council (ERC), Free Rohingya Coalition (FRC), Arakan Rohingya Union, Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO), Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights (ARSPH), Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative (Aziz 2022, 11).

2.1 Issues Between Registered and Unregistered Rohingyas in Camps

a) 29 March 2019, 4pm

I have quoted snippet of a conversation with Muhib at the beginning of this chapter. This section elaborates on that. Through this conversation a few important perceptions surrounding issues of registered Rohingya activists in the camps and their struggle of statelessness come across.

I was introduced to Nur Mohammad¹² by Muhib. Nur (28) is a registered Rohingya refugee from the Kutupalong Registered Refugee Camp that is a registered refugee camp formed in 1992.



FIGURE 8.2 Kutupalong registered refugee camp, photo by the author.

Nur is part of small informal activist groups in his camp and is also in contact with several global leaders. He spoke in clear Bengali and fluent English without any accent from Cox's Bazar. His Bengali was very close to the Bengali being spoken in Dhaka, which is considered the pure dialect of the language. This aspect makes him identifiable as more of a Bangladeshi citizen rather than a Rohingya.

Nur¹³ began by saying 'living life of a refugee in the camps is very different than the life of activists living worldwide including my brother'¹⁴. They might have empathy for us but living this life is still different unless one experiences it'¹⁵. His elder brother Rafiq did not have to live in the camps for a very long period since he was born in Myanmar and had left for Ireland with his wife early on in life:

There are people within the community who of late have received international fame for their activism inside the camps, but most times they don't even want to admit to their Rohingya identity, at least till 2017 they hardly revealed themselves¹⁶.

Nur then referred to a few Rohingya activists who have for most part denied their Rohingya identities but post the 2017 crisis and influx, these same persons have owned up to their identities to get benefits. He mentioned Razia Sultana, whom I will write about later in this chapter and said till recently the Rohingyas had not heard about her work or the fact that she is a Rohingya, but they are the ones getting prominence now¹⁷.

Nur's family in the camp comprises of his parents and three brothers including him. In the registered camp as an adult gets married, they get a separate family registration number and start living separately. His elder brother Rafiq got married after he turned 18 and was living separately till, he and his own family were resettled to Ireland in 2009. Nur and second elder brother (now deceased) were living with their parents. Nur was not keen on marriage because of the uncertainties that cloud their lives. At the time of this conversation in 2019, Nur had lost his second elder brother with whom he was most attached very much¹⁸.

Both Nur and his brother were selected for resettlement to the USA in 2010 but their 'luck ran out at the last moment' even after the entire procedure was complete:

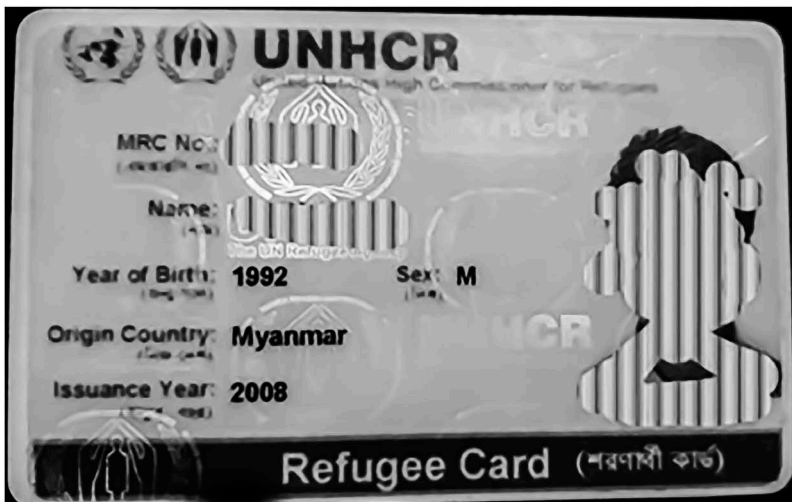
We do not have a passport which is the valid travel document, so we needed an 'exit permit' from the government of Bangladesh to take the flight but the government suddenly stopped issuing the permits for internal political reasons. There was resistance from locals also over Rohingyas being settled abroad so the entire process of resettlement stopped after 2009 when Rafiq and several others were resettled abroad through government collaborations¹⁹.

Around 5000 Rohingyas were selected for resettlement in 2010 which has not materialised yet.

Interestingly, Nur has never been to Myanmar. He was born in the camps in 1993 and has never gone outside the country since then, due to restrictions.

Registered camps did have schools inside where Rafique got his basic education, but it is not considered as formal education due to lack of certification. Rohingyas from the registered camps were also not given any certificates of education even when termed as ‘refugee’ by the UNHCR. In standard IX he managed to get enrolled into Kutupalong High School outside the camps and studied there till standard X. He could not continue since officially Rohingyas, even if registered as ‘refugees’ are not allowed to study in Bangladesh schools.

A few important issues that are worth pondering upon from the conversation are:



The bearer of this UNHCR Card, whose photograph appears on the front, is a Refugee registered by the Government of Bangladesh. As a refugee he/she is a person of concern to UNHCR and should, in particular, be protected from forcible return to a country where he/she would face threats to his/her life or freedom. During his/her stay in Bangladesh the bearer has the obligation to respect national laws.

ইউনাইটেড নেশন্স এর কাউন্সিলের এই কার্ড, যার ছবি শেষ পৃষ্ঠায় মুদ্রিত আছে, তিনি বাংলাদেশ সরকার কর্তৃক নথিভুক্ত একজন শরণার্থী। শরণার্থী হিসেবে তিনি কাউন্সিলের শরণার্থী হিসেবে হতে কখনও (ইউনাইটেড নেশন্স) এর আশ্রয়ভুক্ত একজন ব্যক্তি, এবং বিশেষতঃ তাঁকে কল্যাণের জন্য কোন দেশে প্রত্যাবর্তন করে না যেখানে তাঁর জীবন বা স্বাধীনতা হুমকির সম্মুখীন হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। বাংলাদেশে অবস্থানকালে এই কাউন্সিলের কার্ড এই দেশের জাতীয় আইন মেনে চলতে বাধ্য হবেন।

UNHCR Representation in Bangladesh, can be contacted at:

(ইউনাইটেড নেশন্স বাংলাদেশ এর প্রতিনিধিত্ব প্রদান)

New Cottage, Motel Road, Tel: +880 341 63550
4700, Cox's Bazaar. Fax: +880 341 63870
bgdco@unhcr.org

This card is the property of UNHCR. If found, kindly return to UNHCR.

(এই কার্ড ইউনাইটেড নেশন্সের সম্পত্তি।
যদিও কার্ড খোঁজা পড়বে, দয়া করে
ইউনাইটেড নেশন্সের কাছে ফেরত দিন।)

FIGURE 8.3 of the ‘Refugee card’ as issued by UNHCR in the registered camps of Kutupalong and Teknaf, photo by the author.

As an activist he is aware of the 1951 convention and refugee rights. He said since Bangladesh has not yet ratified the convention, they do not get refugee rights as per the convention. He has spent 28 years already in the camp. He says according to international conventions, more than 15 years in the camp ideally qualifies him for a third country resettlement other than Bangladesh or Myanmar. In case that is not possible then as UNHCR registered refugees, they should at least get refugee rights in Bangladesh which include educational and work rights. Neither has happened till now.

The second important issue was when he argued that unlike the new Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh in 2017, he does not feel attached to Myanmar. He truly feels he is 'stateless' because he was born in the refugee camps and has spent 28 years there without any sense of land possession or belonging. Talking about his feelings about Myanmar, Nur continues,

Throughout my growing up years I have heard the locals blaming us, even the local friends that I have made here never said anything kind about us. They say this place has changed for us, crimes have increased and its overpopulated. I don't deny that, but I always say that they still have a country of their own to call 'home'. What do we have?²⁰

Another important dimension echoed by both Nur and Muhib were the changes that took place in lives of the registered refugees after the 2017 influx.

Earlier the ration we received came for Myanmar's 'refugees'. After 2017, this has changed to a new terminology – 'Myanmar's displaced persons'. This means now we are clubbed together with unregistered migrants. All these years there has been a difference between the registered and unregistered camps but now that difference is not being acknowledged by the government. The past 28 years in the camps suddenly feel different because of the new influx. If we are not acknowledged as 'refugees' as our cards claim, then it will be difficult for us to get officially resettled in another country. Therefore, many from our camp have been on strike denying the ration. There are protests going on in the registered camps for our rights. We should be either integrated in Bangladesh or resettled somewhere else. Repatriation is hardly an option for us. we are the ones whose births were registered here in Bangladesh and we should not be treated as per the new Rohingya because our lives and origins have been very different"²¹.

On further prodding he revealed his family was accepting the ration since they do not have much income to sustain otherwise.

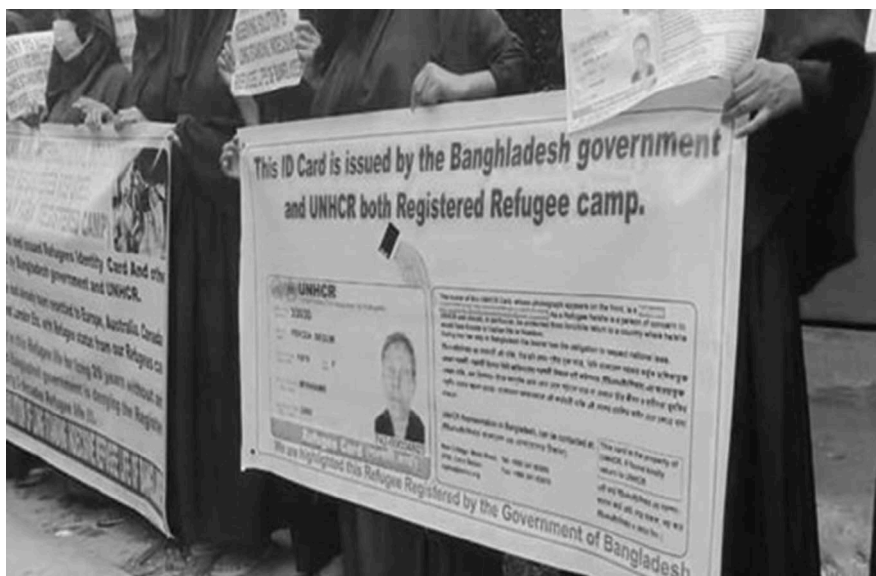


FIGURE 8.4 Protests going on inside the registered camp of Kutupalong

Nur echoed sentiments of several Rohingya that I interacted with. In both Myanmar and Bangladesh, they are used for political purposes especially during elections, but they remain out of the scope of political rights.

b) A conversation with Razia Sultana

It was with some luck that a meeting with Razia Sultana could be arranged. Razia is a Rohingya woman activist and a lawyer by degree, based in Chittagong district, on the same day as Nur on 29 March 2019. Razia at the time of the interview was honoured with the ‘International Women of Courage Award’, by the US Department of State on 7 March 2019. She was among 10 extraordinary women from around the world to have achieved this award. This event took place during my fieldwork in Bangladesh, and I hardly expected to be able to meet the very grounded and extremely warm Razia apa (elder sister) in person.

It is ironical that although the award has given her recognition for her humanitarian work in the camps, it has also drawn the ire of certain quarters, as media reports claim that she is a Bangladeshi national, i.e., she has received citizenship status in Bangladesh. On my question whether she is happy to be recognized as a Bangladeshi woman or proud of her Rohingya roots, this is what she responded with –

I will forever be a proud Rohingya, and I have never ever hidden my identity. I cherish the international recognition and wishes from fellow Bangladeshis after I received the award. I have grown up here, and we are extremely indebted for the generosity that the government of Bangladesh has shown in recent years to the Rohingya

She added,

I have received congratulatory messages from several Bangladeshi organisations too and I do not see a conflict between the two identities that I possess, although I am quite aware of the criticisms that this has drawn. That, however, is not a hindrance, as I have got support from many of our leaders across the globe, and I will continue with the work that I have been doing in the camps, especially on the development and emancipation of women. There is a dire need of education in the camps now²².

She further noted, there are some small centres termed as ‘women friendly spaces’ in the camps but their scope is limited.

These organisations do not focus on building skill as most NGOs do not get fund for the same. The issue of privacy for the women in makeshift camps is a major area of concern. In their eagerness to break free and find a better place to live, they are falling prey to traffickers on tropes of marriage, job and so on. Despite stringent rules by the government of Bangladesh, child marriages and forced prostitution are too rampant in the camps. I have been also organising campaigns to generate awareness on reproductive health and birth control measures but even if some women are convinced and willing to accept pills, there is a dearth of supply. (Sengupta, 2019)²³

Her words was intriguing enough to prod how men of her community have reacted to her success. Are there frictions, resistances?

Razia responded, she has often been told by Rohingya men, Muslim women do not work so what she is doing is wrong (Sengupta, 2019), despite which she has not been deterred from her work of organising all women self-help groups in the camps.

On 16 July 2019, UN Women Bangladesh in partnership with Oxfam and Action Aid along with several other organizations including Razia’s collaborated to invite the UN Resident Coordinator and organized a gathering of Rohingya women leaders from new and old camps, representing their different networks and self-help groups in order to discuss common challenges, issues, demands and how to create one woman’s platform or network to address these issues in order to foster gender equality and the empowerment of women and young girls²⁴. These initiatives indicate the will and freedom of Rohingya women to participate in awareness initiatives as compared to their situation in Myanmar.

2.2 Nuances of Gender As an Agenda of Care Work

Shifting gender roles coupled with having gender as agenda of care giving comes with its own issues leading to different kinds of perceptions. For instance, there were men in the camps who told me there are ‘immoral activities’ like dancing,

music etc that take place within the women friendly camps. This perception is often shaped by the garb of secrecy that is maintained by organisations in respect to the functions and activities inside these spaces. INGO and NGOS working on the Rohingyas do not share any data on the services they provide which further lead to these myths. I attempted speaking with the representatives of the women-friendly space of a local NGO called DAC in camp 9, Balukhali I. The woman in charge was courteous enough to invite inside but owing to official policy she denied interacting on the services rendered for the women inside. Through informal exchanges I gathered the camp inmates cooked inside and either ate together or took back food to their respective families which were often disliked by the men for whom this liberty of the Rohingya women in camps sans a male figure, were relatively new.

In Camp 7, I went to another women-friendly space run by the NGO- Pulse in collaboration with IOM. Here, the IOM representative who was also the safe space supervisor or woman in charge of the centre who agreed to speak as I went there with a Rohingya woman who was her friend. She said this space was meant to provide relaxation to women and children. The women were trained into handicraft, basic computer operations and sewing in the centre. There was also a television set inside one of the rooms, although the person in-charge denied its existence. They also provided snacks and thami²⁵ to new Rohingyas. She also said, around 60–70 women visited this place daily. There were also awareness programmes on trafficking, art therapy and dance and music sessions. However male resistance in sending women to these spaces has restricted women's mobility considerably.

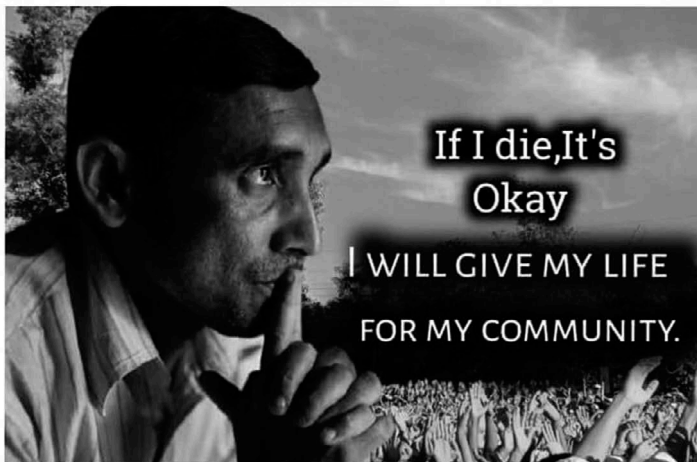
After the global visibility of the Rohingya following the boat crisis in 2015, Kofi Anand's report on their living condition in Myanmar in 2018, more Rohingyas men and women have become vocal about their identity who previously would not do so. I had the opportunity to have a long discussion with the secretary of the European Rohingya Council, based in Ireland in August 2018.

He is a young activist who was enrolled into medicines and whose father, also an activist, was exiled to lifelong sentence by the Myanmar military. A fearless proud activist, Haikal was happy to share his identity and real name. Although, it is true that Haikal Mansor belonged to a privileged section of the society. They were landlords in the Rakhine state and propertied class which perhaps has been the most important reasons for his successful assimilation in the new place. The detailed conversation with Haikal epitomises the kinds of narratives that Rohingya activists use internationally²⁶. International Rohingya activism hinges on a denial of their statelessness as also pointed out by Haikal, Nurul Islam of ARNO, Tun Kin, Razia Sultana and several other Rohingya activists. He emphasises that they had a state which was snatched away from them and that no one can be born stateless. This says a lot about their political agenda, claim making and portray them as powerful actors of resistance. It conveys a message to the world that they are demanding citizenship status because they have the right to ask for it.

Section 8.3: Mohibullah and Camp Activism

It gives me insurmountable pain to write this section as Rohingya activist Mohibullah was brutally murdered in 2021 allegedly by the members of the Rohingya militant organisation, ARSA. I met him in 2019 when he was just back from Geneva to the camps in March 2019 on invitation from the UNHCR.

We spoke for more than an hour when he shared about his activism in the camps and assertions that the Rohingya must be given full citizenship rights in Myanmar. He was also spearheading a signature campaign in the camps for safe repatriation to Myanmar. By November 2017, 20,000 people



Ro Nay San Lwin 1 Oct 2021 · 🌐

Mohibullah was a notable refugee leader who had long worked for the protection and wellbeing of the Rohingya refugees. He had raised the voices and concerns of the refugees in international forums and with world leaders, including former U.S. President Donald Trump.

According to his brother Habib Ullah, Mohibullah was shot dead by a group of assassins belonging to Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) who are gangling up in the refugee camps often resorting to hijacking and killing the innocents, committing extortion, loot, torture and various criminal atrocities on the helpless refugees.

The camp situation remains particularly precarious. Living in intolerable conditions in cramped conditions, with limited freedom of movement, access to education or health service, the Rohingya refugees are dependent on the goodwill of their host nation and the international community.

We urge the Government of Bangladesh to probe into the gruesome killing and punish the culprits at an early date and take all necessary measures for

AN IRREPLACEABLE LOSS FOR ROHINGYA

The assassination of Mohibullah in his refugee camp office is extremely reprehensible. The Rohingya community now lost a leader who had defiantly defended Rohingya refugees and raised the issues faced by the refugees. He was a great grassroots activist who had dedicated his life despite received constant threats.

This crime of great nature should not be left unpunished nor condoned. Bangladesh has a responsibility to investigate and bring the criminals to justice. The international community must also urge Bangladesh to eradicate criminals from the camps where the survivors are genocide live constantly in fear.

May the death of Mohibullah not go in vain. It is a wake up call for all. The criminals, the murderers, the kidnapers, the drug-smugglers and the gangs are the cancer for the community.

May Allah forgive his sins and grant him Jannah!

FIGURE 8.5 Collected and compiled by the author from Facebook profiles. Picture of Mohibullah has been taken by the author after seeking due permission.



FIGURE 8.6 Mohibullah, photo by the author.

had already signed it. He had founded the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace & Human Rights (ARSPH) in the Bangladesh camps and enjoyed considerable support from the Rohingya in camps. I met him in his camp – Lambassia Camp 1, E block of Kutupalong extension. The office was in a slightly deserted corner of the camps. The long stretches of the camps are only walkable by foot. Mohibullah was also helping the UNHCR to make a list of Rohingya for repatriation to Myanmar. He himself has come to the camps following the violence of 2017 in Myanmar but his convictions about repatriation was firm. He told me – ‘within one year I promise you we will go back. I am trying my best for that’²⁷. I was surprised at his firm faith when clearly the condition of Myanmar was not conducive for a safe return yet. He had a strange faith on the government of Myanmar but while this was creating hope among the Rohingyas in camps, he was simultaneously being targeted. He was receiving death threats allegedly from members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) who are also referred to as ‘Alkin’ in the camps (for the history of ARSA, see AlJazeera, 2017)²⁸ as they are against repatriation under the present circumstances in Myanmar.

Mohibullah was deeply connected with the UNHCR and other international humanitarian organisations that did not go well with a section of the camp inmates. He feared his safety in the camps and shared his angst in one of our digital conversations in 2020. Apparently, there was a security in place to protect him inside the camps but the fact that it did not help only goes on to show the fragile security condition in the camps.



FIGURE 8.7 Mohibullah's office in the camp, photo by the author

Mohibullah has paid with his life in pursuing human rights as his sole focus to achieve for the Rohingya. He was also working as a volunteer with UNHCR when I had met him in 2019.

Section 8.4: Current Deteriorating Camp Condition Was Fuelled by the Pandemic in 2020

It is undeniable that the pandemic has induced the increase of crime in the camps and further jeopardised the security of the camps. Taking opportunity of the lockdown, fringe elements have increased since 2020. Situation has worsened to an all-time low since then and is at the bottom standing in 2023.

I contacted Zubair in June 2020, during the first phase of the Covid lockdown. 'Please at least tell them we are not the only one who can spread the corona virus'²⁹ were the exact words of Zubair with whom I was exchanging text messages on 9 June 2020 on the seriousness of the situation in the world's largest refugee camp in Bangladesh. This message by Zubair was enough to

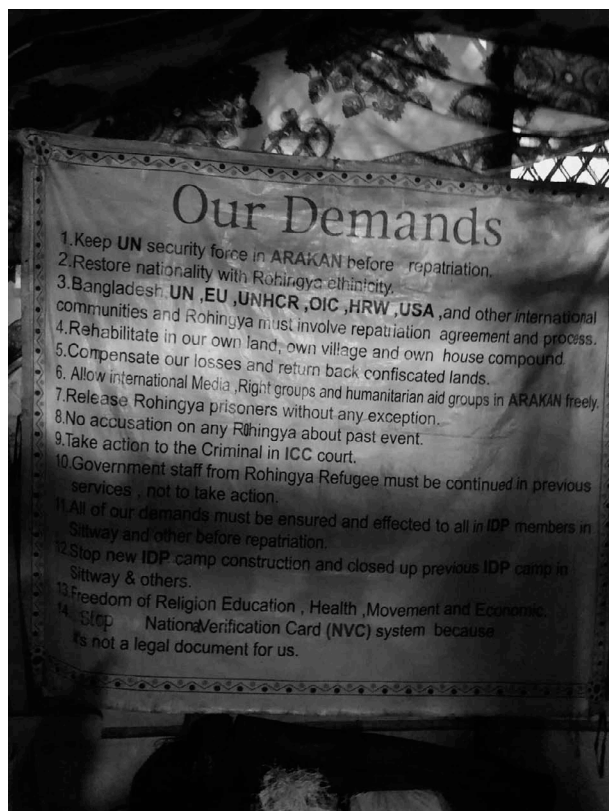


FIGURE 8.8 Mohibullah's office, photo by the author

convey the extent of stigmatisation that is provoked by social distancing as the primary measure to control the public health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It has given rise to a new racial and apartheid regime for the lives in the margin, migrants, and refugees³⁰. I did not ask whom he meant by 'them'; some words are better left unanswered.

As of 10 June 2020, the 76th day of the lockdown in camps at the time when I reached out to the camps to check on them, 11 new tests were conducted of which 5 were been reported as positives³¹. The total number of refugees tested positive so far for the virus, while writing this piece was 35 (Swarajya, 2020). According to a report updated by WHO on 31 May 2020, 151 Rohingyas have been separated in quarantine isolation (AlJazeera, 2020). Worse is that, in the last 24 hours preceding 9 June, there was a widespread rumour of two more deaths in the camps due to the virus, although the official news in media was still one death (AlJazeera, 2020). During my visit to the camps in 2019, I have seen the narrow lanes and tiny huts, where in one small hut, basically comprising of one room, 7–8 people were crammed together. Does Social distancing as a word ring any meaning here?

Sanitisation, another keyword of protection from the pandemic is also a farce in the camps. The condition of regular sanitisation, drainage, accessibility of drinking water and other basic hygiene were still underway last year when I had visited the camps housing one million refugees since 2017. Toilets were built by Government or by NGOs throughout the 34 camps, but supply of water or sanitisers were still to be sourced in, and tube wells were still being built to cover such a vast land area of that of the camps. In this scenario, it is not very hard to imagine the nature of sanitisation in the camps at present. I contacted Faruk about the Covid situation who said:

Due to the lockdown NGO workers are unable to come to the camps and as a result we are devoid of sanitisers or other amenities that they could have provided us with. Our access to the outer world is otherwise limited, so neither do we know what to do nor we have information regarding the correct methods to protect ourselves. Furthermore, there is tremendous fear among the refugees caused due lack or miscommunication of news. I am educated but my parents are not, and they say God is going to save us from the virus, we don't need anything else.

4.1 Major Problems Faced by the Rohingya During the Pandemic

We have been denied internet usage and phone access since the past six months in the camps. As a result, we mostly get to hear about the coronavirus through false rumours, as word of mouth circulates among camp residents. For instance, in April we were hearing in one country, 200,000 people have been infected and, in another thousands, and there is no way to know the truth.³²

Although he adds soon how the Rohingyas are thankful to the Bangladesh government for the help they have received till date. Help in terms of non-governmental agencies were also restricted since entry to the camps are restricted. As a result,

one million Rohingya refugees are cramped, as if living in a concentration camp or in an air jail. This is the lowest possible standard of living that one can ever imagine and it is sad because my family in Myanmar was not so poor and it's difficult for us to live like this. We also need a proper medical support which unfortunately we still do not have. Additionally, the quarantine facilities are so bad that we fear to get tested as no one wants to stay in the quarantine facilities³³

He added.

Similar concerns surrounding information and quarantine fear among the refugees were also echoed by Razia Sultana³⁴:

Leak of information which are in most times false rumours, or media publishing fake news have made the camp residents very worried. It is necessary that the isolation centres are managed by medical experts or trainers. The situation in anyway is very grave because Bangladesh is reeling under a lot of pressure to conduct tests of its own citizens and to deal with the crisis hence adequate supply of test kits within the camps are out of question. We fear the moment tests will increase cases will increase too. There are also persons with symptoms who do not want to get tested and are hiding them in fear of the next steps like isolation or of the unknown³⁵.

From my personal interactions with the camp residents, NGO workers and Bangladeshis residing around the camp area, the general perception of the refugees is them being uncouth/uncivil and 'dirty' hence it is not difficult to gauge the kind myth or thoughts that will be generated in the current scenario as the reactions to deal with the pandemic is unprecedented in history.

Conclusion

It is interesting that owing to international pressure and activism more and more Rohingya activists are being vocal in public or through social media platforms outside Myanmar. In India too there are people now willing to talk without concealing identity. It was interesting to speak to Haikal and all other activists mentioned in this chapter as it embodies the kind of narrative or words that the Rohingya activists are using to put forth their claim. It also shows how they visualise them or how they are exercising their claim by using the history. The interesting part of the interview was that Haikal was that they do not consider themselves as stateless. He emphasises that they had a state which was snatched away from them and that no one can be born stateless. This, is interesting as it says a lot about their political agenda, claim making and portray them as powerful actors of resistance. It conveys a message to the world that they are demanding citizenship status because they have the right to ask for it. It was their once and the state has wrongfully taken it away from them. This also shows their acceptance and faith in the state system; the problem is their exclusion from it. It means that they do not perhaps resist or question how exclusionary the way nation states are structured, what they rather question is them being excluded from it.

The UN has emerged as a very strong platform for Rohingya activists to claim recognition globally as until recently they have been incarcerated in countries like Bangladesh and India where they had sought refuge as 'illegal' interlopers. From earlier terming it as 'ethnic cleansing', till recently, the UN has termed the persecution of Rohingyas by Myanmar as 'genocide'. (OHCHR, 2018) This has given the Rohingya a basis to ask for rights however since the

exodus of the 2017, the unfolding and rise of humanitarian aid and assistance in the wake of the crisis in Bangladesh has complicated the scenario for generations of Rohingya living in the camps since the 90s especially for youths like Nur and Muhib who have grown up in Bangladesh. A potent solution to the crisis of statelessness and the Rohingya in this context needs to include the concerns of the Registered Rohingya in Bangladesh for whom integration in Bangladesh does not seem to be a feasible option and on the other, they will find it extremely difficult to go back to Myanmar – if at all repatriation does take place. Resource crisis remains a pressing problem in Bangladesh surrounding the influx and the s of humanitarian discourse had added to the existing nuances which complicates possibilities of a solution to the existing crisis of the Rohingya in Bangladesh.

Note

- 1 This chapter is based on the author's personal experience and oral narratives collected during her PhD field work in the Rohingya camps of Bangladesh in 2019 and thereupon through personal messages, phone or digital communication in platforms like Facebook, Twitter, etc. The author has taken Ali Johar's permission to use this poem. They know each other since a few years
- 2 The author has taken Ali Johar's permission to use this poem. They know each other since a few years.
- 3 This paper is an abridged version from a chapter of my PhD thesis submitted in March 2023. The fieldworks for the thesis were done in 2015 and then in 2019 in Bangladesh. This was followed up by virtual/digital field work through the years of the pandemic – 2020–2022.
- 4 Information gathered from the field.
- 5 Conversation with Muhib from Kutupalong refugee camp, Bangladesh on 10 August 2021.
- 6 This is the biggest exodus of the Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh since their plight from the 70s.
- 7 Conversation with Sayeema on 2 May 2019 in Bangladesh.
- 8 At the time of writing this paper.
- 9 This data is of 2019.
- 10 Conversation with Sayeema on 2 May 2019.
- 11 Conversation with Sayeema on 2 May 2019.
- 12 I have not changed his name since he was okay with keeping this name for quoting. He has a different Burmese name as well.
- 13 This personal conversation between the author and Nur Mohammad took place in Salt Café, Cox's Bazar city on 29 March 2019.
- 14 Nur's brother is a prominent Rohingya activist and holds a key position in European Rohingya Council (ERC) that is based in Ireland.
- 15 Personal interview with Nur on 29 March 2023.
- 16 Personal interview with Nur on 29 March 2023.
- 17 Personal interview with Nur on 29 March 2023.
- 18 Conversation with Nur and Muhib at Salt, Cox's Bazar, 29 March 2019.
- 19 Conversation with Nur, 29 March 2019.
- 20 Conversation with Nur, Cox's Bazar, 29 March 2019.
- 21 Conversation with Nur, Cox's Bazar, 29 March 2019.
- 22 Personal interview in March 2019.
- 23 Personal interview in March 2019.

- 24 Information from Razia Sultana during one of our conversations on 3 August 2019.
- 25 Traditional dresses worn by Rohingya women.
- 26 Derived from conversation with Haikal Mansor in June 2018.
- 27 Detailed conversation with Mohibullah in Lambassia, 30 March 2019.
- 28 There is a long history available on ARSA and their activities. ARSA, formally known as Harakutul Yakeen was formed in October 2016 in Myanmar in a bid to save the Rohingya from continuous violence in Myanmar. It is allegedly because of their attack on the Myanmar police that the biggest exodus from Myanmar took place on 25 August 2016.
- 29 Conversation with Zubair, living in the Rohingya camps, on 9 June 2020.
- 30 In no way does this sentence wish to imply lack of agency of the vulnerable or portray them as solely hapless victims.
- 31 This information is gathered from direct message exchanges with some camp residents working as volunteers in different NGOs/INGOs.
- 32 Conversation with Zubair, living in the Rohingya camps, on 9 June 2020.
- 33 Same as FN 281.
- 34 The conversations were held digitally between 2 and 9 June 2020.
- 35 Same as FN 281.

References

- AlJazeera (2020) 'First Rohingya refugee dies from coronavirus in Bangladesh', 2 June, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/rohingya-refugee-dies-coronavirus-bangladesh-camps-200602095409310.html>, accessed on 10 June 2020.
- Anderson, Benedict (2006) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso.
- Aziz, A. (2020) Rohingya diaspora online Mapping the spaces of visibility resistance and transnational identity on social media. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Abdul-Aziz-31/publication/362910136_Rohingya_diaspora_online_Mapping_the_spaces_of_visibility_resistance_and_transnational_identity_on_social_media/links/634b55cb9cb4fe44f32c717a/Rohingya-diaspora-online-Mapping-the-spaces-of-visibility-resistance-and-transnational-identity-on-social-media.pdf
- Aziz, A. (2022, September 30) 'Rohingya Diaspora Online: Mapping the Spaces of Visibility, Resistance and Transnational Identity on Social Media.' School of Communication, Digital Media Research Centre, New Media & Society. Monash University – Monash University Malaysia. Available at: <https://doi.org/DOL: 10.1177/14614448221132241>.
- Banerjee, P. (2020) 'Rohingyas: The Archetypal Nowhere Community' in Foreword of Roli Mishra> (ed.) *Migration, Trafficking and Gender Construction*, Sage. <https://ebin.pub/migration-trafficking-and-gender-construction-women-in-transition-1nbsped-9381345473-9789381345474.html>
- Brinham, N. (2022) ID Cards for Rohingya: 'Pathways to Citizenship' or Instruments of Genocide? London: School of Law, Queen Mary University of London.
- Hall, S. (1990) 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, 222–237. London: Lawrence & Wishart. Available at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/dhaka-rejects-world-bank-proposal-on-integrating-rohingya-into-bangladesh/2322506>
- Marino, S. (2015) 'Making Space, Making Place: Digital Togetherness and the Redefinition of Migrant Identities Online'. *Social Media + Society* 1 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115622479>

- September. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23575&LangID=E>
- Sengupta, S. (2019) 'Rohingya Crisis: Life in Bangladesh Refugee Camp as Seen by a Field Researcher'. Available at: <https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/rohingya-crisis-life-in-bangladesh-refugee-camps-as-seen-by-field-researcher>, accessed 2 September 2019.
- Swarajya (2020) 'Bangladesh Declares Areas Near Rohingya Camps as Covid 19 Red Zone', *Swarajya*, 6 June, <https://swarajyamag.com/insta/bangladesh-declares-areas-near-rohingya-camps-in-coxs-bazar-as-covid-19-red-zone>, accessed on 9 June.
- Ulla, A.K.M. Ahsan (2011) 'Rohingya Refugees to Bangladesh,' *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* 9 (2011): 152.
- UNHCR (2024) *Refugee Population Factsheet*. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd>.

9

WHERE HAVE ALL THE CLIMATE (CHANGE) REFUGEES GONE?

Ilan Kelman

Linking climate change and migration

Science, media, policy, and practice reports are replete with tales of people forcibly fleeing their homes as climate change impacts manifest. The assumption permeates that climate change must entail masses of people moving without choice. This paper provides an overview of deconstructing many of the myths and much of the rhetoric surrounding discussions on forced migration of people due to climate change.

Examples are Guzman (2013: 181) explaining about ‘refugee camps and cities overwhelmed with migrants fleeing climate change and its impacts’ and UK newspaper *The Independent*’s headline ‘Climate change could force more than a billion people to flee their homes’ (Griffin 2017). The latter was reporting on a paper stating (Watts et al. 2018: 13):

Climate change is the sole contributing factor for at least 4400 people who are already being forced to migrate, worldwide. The total number of people vulnerable to migration might increase to 1 billion by the end of the century without significant further action on climate change.

This 1 billion figure was caveated by ± 50 percent. Meanwhile, Bronen (2008: 31) aims to coin the term ‘climigration’ which ‘occurs when a community is no longer sustainable exclusively because of climate-related events and permanent relocation is required to protect people’.

Climate change is certainly inducing major impacts on the planet and on humanity; society is not adequately dealing with these shifts; and pathways to needed action are not being followed to the degree required (IPCC 2013–2014). If climate change impacts end up being worse than the median projections, or if

severe and extreme changes appear, such as significant chunks of polar ice sheets thawing and hence producing dozens of meters of sea-level rise over millennia (Clark et al. 2016), then human migration due to climate change could be a dominant influence on population dynamics. Denying any link between climate change and migration would be ignoring the reality which many locations must address involuntarily while downplaying scenarios which are realistic from now through to future decades and centuries.

Equally denying reality is focusing on climate change only without considering wider contexts. Human population dynamics are and have always been complex and multifactorial (Macbeth and Collinson 2002; Stojanov 2014). Too many debates regarding, and research about, climate change and migration do not place this topic within deeper and wider understandings of mobilities and non-mobilities of people, especially from academic literature covering fields other than climate change science, such as recognising and explicitly accepting climate change and its impacts as sitting within a subset of broader disaster and sustainability realms. Instead, environmental determinism is invoked by phrases such as ‘climate change refugees’, ‘climigration’, and ‘climate migrants’, thereby underlining a (potentially unintentional) linear, causal connection – which is typically absent – from climate change to forced migration.

Why migrate?

Low-lying coastal communities, often from islands, are frequently mentioned as being amongst the locations most needing to prepare for migration which is presumed to link to or be caused by climate change. All the examples from Watts et al. (2018) of climate change being the sole contributing factor to decisions to move are of island or coastal communities. All these locations also have a long history of migration, with migrants being an essential part of life in those places. The reasons for migrating are multi-faceted – ranging from health and education to adventure and opportunity (DeLoughrey 2007; Hau’ofa 2008) – with climate change possibly being a factor or possibly being irrelevant. As long accepted by migration and mobility studies, one human condition is and always has been about movement and migration. In the title of Pieterse (2000), ‘We are all migrants.’ Either migration and non-migration might be either forced or voluntary – and often combines both.

The degree of being voluntary or forced might be subjective. If someone has resources and elects to move for adventure or fun, then such migration is certainly voluntary. If soldiers proffer a choice of marching or being killed, or if land is expropriated for a shopping mall or a dam, then it would be hard to dispute the migration as being forced. Migration for a specific job, or for other economic rationales, is presumed to be voluntary, yet could also be considered as being forced if other viable options are absent. Mobilities and migration studies explain a fundamental tenet as the human condition of finding reasons to move which does not preclude forced migration.

Since migration is not necessarily an end state, migrating once does not exclude migrating again, for different or similar reasons. Circular migration occurs when people leave for a time and then return, perhaps seasonally or with each stage taking several years. Many adventurers, such as Pacific islanders (Hau'ofa 2008), and subsistence peoples, such as from Tibet (Næss 2012), developed their civilisations as nomads. For them, migration is the norm, not the exception; it is not a one-off decision, but a continual process. Non-migration is not the default, meaning that examining reasons for not migrating is as important as examining reasons for migrating.

Nonetheless, diminishing migration's exceptionality is not a justifiable excuse for forced migration. It simply places forced migration in wider contexts of mobilities. It is not about judging non-migration or migration, but about recognising that people deserve and want choices, to pursue their own pathways of mobility or non-mobility, rather than losing control and choice, whether by expropriation, soldiers, or climate change. Constructing blame for migration on a single cause, such as climate change, obscures the reality of migration as the norm.

Climate change migration?

Demonstrating climate change migration has always had problems with attribution and calculation. Many quantitative estimates are provided, but fail to stand up to scrutiny. The main problems, as explained by Watts et al. (2018) methodologically, are (i) separating climate change from other environmental influences and (ii) attributing migration to climate change. Decoupling climate change migration from other migration impetuses while matching observations with projections has proved to be especially tricky.

UNUEHS (2005: 1) received wide publicity when writing that 'by 2010 the world will need to cope with as many as 50 million people escaping the effects of creeping environmental deterioration'. No evident empirical methodology was provided to calculate or monitor the numbers. When 2010 arrived with no clear approach for verifying or refuting the 50 million claim, some of the public material was removed and then was ridiculed by those claiming that climate change is not happening or is not a problem. A bigger problem arose when Tirado et al. (2010: 1756) published that 'the UN projects that there will be up to 50 million people escaping the effects of environmental deterioration by 2020' and then generated widespread media attention by repeating the figure in Tirado (2011), despite having no citations or evidence to back up this number.

Related to climate change specifically, Adger and Barnett (2005: 328) described 'New Zealand's creation of the Pacific Access Category, in response to concerns about climate change'. As the Pacific Access Category's information evolved, it continued to frame the programme as permitting a cohort of skilled and healthy citizens from a few Pacific countries to settle in New Zealand, provided they had a job offer. Environmental or climate reasons were never

mentioned in the official documentation or information. If climate change were a motivation, then there should be evidence for this. Instead, these authors seemed to prefer to construct the idea of climate change migration from the Pacific Access Category.

A few cases Pacific islanders in New Zealand aiming to claim climate change refugee status have emerged. These cases have thus far been declined (e.g. Burson 2013) even where the claimants were permitted to remain in New Zealand due to other reasons (e.g. Burson 2014). In December 2017, New Zealand floated the possibility of creating a new category of visas specifically covering climate change refugees, although it would apply to perhaps a hundred people from Pacific Island countries per year. Currently, no countries have a specific climate-related visa for forced migrants, but legal and political regimes are evolving in order to develop climate change migration as an official category, without entirely embracing scientific conclusions from across climate change, migration, and mobilities research.

From physical science, dozens of islands, mainly in the Pacific, have been observed empirically for changes under measurable sea-level rise (e.g. Rankey 2011; Kench et al. 2015). The islands are mainly accreting horizontally or changing shape, with a few diminishing in size, indicating an absence of evidence for drowning, sinking, or disappearing islands due to climate change. For instance, Biribo and Woodroffe (2013) found significant erosion and accretion around Tarawa Atoll, Kiribati, but attributed it mainly to local human action rather than sea-level rise. These nuances are frequently bypassed by the media and non-scientific organisations – and by some scientists.

When Albert et al. (2016) published on Solomon Islands locations changing under measurable sea-level rise, the media headlines emphasised climate change dooming the atolls. The paper's lead author responded that the media had misrepresented their science because only one-third of the 33 monitored islands had disappeared or severely contracted between 1947 and 2014 under measurable sea-level rise, not all of which was connected to climate change. Similarly, the Carteret Islands of Papua New Guinea were amongst the first communities suggested as being climate change refugees, whereas later work indicated non climate change factors as causing the people to move (Connell 2016).

Similarly, some islands in Vanuatu hit the international headlines as climate change refugees when a few villages were forced to move inland due to the encroaching sea. Ballu et al. (2011) researched the cause, discovering that most of the relative sea-level rise being experienced was due to tectonic subsidence, not due to absolute sea-level rise. Climate change is being attributed to the relocation of two villages in Fiji, Narikoso and Vunidogoloa, but authors making these links (e.g. McNamara and Des Combes 2015) do not provide evidence for the climate change connections. Green (2016) explains how the coastline erosion by these villages might have been exacerbated by attempts to stop it, such as through a sea wall.

Yet measurable sea-level rise up until now cannot factor in most of sea-level rise projected for the 21st century, which is expected to become evident between 2030 and 2050. Islands might yet disappear due to climate change, and it is sensible to plan for a variety of scenarios including mass migration. Little evidence exists of such substantive migration happening so far, despite numerous claims of it. Rather than constructing climate change migration entirely artificially or pretending that it cannot happen at a large scale, a balance is needed which recognises the actuality and potentiality of migration linked to climate change impacts, but which also adopts deep understandings of human population dynamics from other fields.

Beyond climate change migration

The diversity of migrants and non-migrants amongst human populations, and reasons for migrating and for not migrating, have long been published (Kunz 1973; Petersen 1958). While recognising how migration and mobilities theories have evolved, with discussions becoming less prejudiced and more introspective over the decades (e.g. Fiddian-Qasimiyeh et al. 2016), this rich literature yields important lessons for investigating climate change's impacts, or lack thereof, on migration and non-migration.

The first lesson is defining migration. What is the distance which someone must move in order to be termed a migrant? Moving ten meters could move across an international border while remaining effectively within the same residential block or on the opposite side of the street. This situation occurs along parts of the France–Monaco border such as along Avenue d'Alsace and along parts of the Belgium–Netherlands border, as in the adjoining towns of Baarle–Nassau (Netherlands) and Baarle–Hertog (Belgium).

In other places, moving ten meters could mean leaving the expected floodplain under climate change for several decades into the future. Pingelap is an atoll within the Federated States of Micronesia. Some parts of the atoll rise higher than 15 meters above sea level, but all the atoll's land sits within 300 meters of the ocean. In theory, the people could redesign and rebuild their community on the higher parts of their atoll to avoid impacts from sea-level rise, meaning that no one would move very far. They would do so because climate change is forcing them to move to new locations within their atoll, so they are climate change forced migrants, yet they remain living in Pingelap. For them, or others, buildings in the floodplain could be raised or ground floors opened with other storeys placed on top. People would end up living in the same location, now in the tidal zone, although they would be migrating upwards. Would these people be vertical climate change forced migrants, having migrated vertically to deal with climate change?

Second is attributing migration. Many coastal countries are mountainous, such as in Mauritius, or have reasonably high topography, such as in Costa Rica. In many locations in these countries, a relatively short move from coastal locations should leave people high enough above sea level to avoid the worst

expected impacts from sea-level rise until at least the year 2100. Such a move might not be feasible because so much land is already owned or otherwise allocated. Uses include natural heritage, ancestral land, cemeteries, resorts and golf courses, and agriculture. Meanwhile, moving inland on islands such as Comoros and St. Lucia might lead the people to live in volcano or landslide hazard zones. Consequently, people might leave their country because they are not permitted to move internally, or it is too dangerous to do so. In these circumstances, is the true or predominant cause of the movement climate change or would other factors supersede climate change, namely current land use practices or inadequate support for internal migration?

Third, lessons could be learned from other examples of migration linked to environmental changes. Volcanic eruptions have been involved in dozens of sudden, forced migrations over past decades, incorporating numerous instances when return was not expected to be an option or was assumed not to be an option. Examples are Tungurahua in Ecuador in 1999 (Lane et al. 2003) and Montserrat after 1995 (Pattullo 2000). Similarly, island communities from Greenland (Dugmore et al. 2007) to the Pacific (Nunn and Carson 2015) display long histories of abandoning communities, possibly through a combination of mass migration and dying out, with one factor amongst many likely having been climatic shifts. These analogies could assist in contemporary forecasting and planning of movement due to climate change impacts (Glantz 1988).

Migration overall, especially across international borders, has long been labelled as being problematic (e.g. Jansen 1970), especially if the number of migrants increases because an issue was not addressed, such as an eroding coastline or an economic downturn. For climate change, migration is discussed as both a way to deal with impacts from climate change such as inundation and as a failure to deal with impacts from climate change because few other options exist (Stojanov 2014; Tacoli 2009) – although sometimes the evidence demonstrates that it is neither, as in a case study in Nicaragua (Radel et al. 2018). Consequently, either migration or non-migration itself is not necessarily either a problem or an opportunity. Instead, how the migration or the non-migration is managed compels much more about how migrants and non-migrants fare, in addition to the communities where migrants go.

Conclusions

This paper has deconstructed many of the myths and much of the rhetoric surrounding discussions on forced migration of people due to climate change. An overview of examples appearing in the literature reveals what people are being told regarding climate change and migration alongside the discourses surrounding each case study. Without denying the potential for human migration linked to climate change, as well as the current situations where migration is happening due to climate change only, the results show that much of the discourse is not placed within deeper and broader understandings of migration and non-migration.

Connecting with the non-climate change scientific literature is generally absent as is placing climate change and responses to it within wider disaster, development, and sustainability domains. Instead, both scientists and the media frequently repeat uncritically specific themes, namely disappearing islands, vanishing coastlines, climate (change) refugees, and climate (change) migrants. Nuances, subtleties, complexities, and provisos are typically absent, despite them pervading choices and lack of options for human migration and non-migration which potentially has connections to contemporary climate change. Further consideration could also be given to the literature on non-human migration linked to climate change, such of plants and animals. The keys for understanding the reality of the intersection amongst climate change, migration, and non-migration tend to be resources and choices to make decisions rather than climate change per se as an inevitable and sole forcer of population movements.

Acknowledgement

This paper was completed as part of the Lancet Countdown project (Tracking the connections between public health and climate change) <http://www.lancetcountdown.org> which is supported by an unrestricted grant from the Wellcome Trust (200890/Z/16/Z).

References

- Adger, W. Neil and Barnett, Jon. (2005). Compensation for climate change must meet needs. *Nature* 436, p.328.
- Albert, Simon, Leon, Javier X., Grinham, Alistair R., Church, John A., Gibbes, Badin R., and Woodroffe, Colin D. (2016). Interactions between sea-level rise and wave exposure on reef island dynamics in the Solomon Islands. *Environmental Research Letters* 11: paper 054011.
- Ballu, Valérie, Bouin, Marie-Noëlle, Siméoni, Patricia, Crawford, Wayne C., Calmant, Stephane, Boré, Jean-Michel, Kanas, Tony, and Pelletier, Bernard (2011). Comparing the role of absolute sea-level rise and vertical tectonic motions in coastal flooding, Torres Islands (Vanuatu). *PNAS, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 108, pp.13019–13022.
- Biribo, Naomi and Woodroffe, Colin D. (2013). Historical area and shoreline change of reef islands around Tarawa Atoll, Kiribati. *Sustainability Science* 8, pp.345–362.
- Bronen, Robin (2008). Alaskan communities' rights and resilience. *Forced Migration Review* 31, pp.30–32.
- Burson, Bruce L. (2013). *NZIPT 800413*. Auckland: Immigration and Protection Tribunal.
- Burson, Bruce L. (2014). *NZIPT 501370–501371*. Auckland: Immigration and Protection Tribunal.
- Clark, Peter U., Shakun, Jeremy D., Marcott, Shaun A., Mix, Alan C., Eby, Michael, Kulp, Scott, Levermann, Anders, Milne, Glenn A., Pfister, Patrik L., Santer, Benjamin D., Schrag, Daniel P., Solomon, Susan, Stocker, Thomas F., Strauss, Benjamin H., Weaver, Andrew J., Winkelmann, Ricarda, Archer, David, Bard, Edouard, Goldner, Aaron, Lambeck, Kurt, Pierrehumbert, Raymond T., and Plattner, Gian-Kasper

- (2016). Consequences of twenty-first-century policy for multi-millennial climate and sea-level change. *Nature Climate Change* 6, pp.360–369.
- Connell, John (2016). Last days in the Carteret Islands? Climate change, livelihoods and migration on coral atolls. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 57, pp.3–15.
- DeLoughrey, Elizabeth M. (2007). *Routes and roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific island literatures*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Dugmore, Andrew J., Keller, Christian, and McGovern, Thomas H. (2007). Norse Greenland Settlement: Reflections on Climate Change, Trade, and the Contrasting Fates of Human Settlements in the North Atlantic Islands. *Arctic Anthropology* 44, pp.12–36.
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Elena, Loescher, Gil, Long, Katy, and Sigona, Nando (Eds.) (2016). *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Glantz, Michael H. (1988). *Societal Responses to Regional Climatic Change: Forecasting by Analogy*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Green, Michael (2016). Contested Territory. *Nature Climate Change* 6, pp.817–820.
- Griffin, Andrew (2017). Climate change could force more than a billion people to flee their homes, says major health report. *Independent*, retrieved from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/climate-change-global-warming-refugees-migrants-displacement-lancet-study-a8028341.html> Last accessed on April 11, 2021.
- Guzman, Andrew T. (2013). *Overheated: The Human Cost of Climate Change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hau'ofa, Epeli (2008). *We are the ocean*. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, U.S.A.
- IPCC (2013–2014). *Fifth Assessment Report*. Geneva: IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).
- Jansen, Clifford J. (1970). Migration: A sociological problem. Jansen, C.J. (Ed.), *Readings in the Sociology of Migration*. Pergamon.
- Kench, Paul S., Thompson, David, Ford, Murray R., Ogawa, Hiroki, and McLean, Roger F. (2015). Coral islands defy sea-level rise over the past century: Records from a central Pacific atoll. *Geology* 43, pp.515–518.
- Kunz, Egon F. (1973). The refugee in flight: kinetic models and forms of displacement. *International Migration Review* 7, pp.124–146.
- Lane, Lucille R., Tobin, Graham A., and Whiteford, Linda M. (2003). Volcanic hazard or economic destitution: hard choices in Baños, Ecuador. *Environmental Hazards* 5, pp.23–24.
- Macbeth, Helen, and Collinson, Paul (Eds) (2002). *Human Population Dynamics: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McNamara, Karen E. and Des Combes, Helene Jacot (2015). Planning for Community Relocations Due to Climate Change in Fiji. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Science* 6, pp.315–319.
- Næss, Marius Warg (2012). Cooperative Pastoral Production: Reconceptualizing the Relationship between Pastoral Labor and Production. *American Anthropologist* 114 (2), pp.309–321.
- Nunn, Patrick D. and Carson, Mike (2015). Collapses of island societies from environmental forcing: Does history hold lessons for the future? *Global Environment* 8, pp.110–133.
- Pattullo, Polly (2000). *Fire from the mountain*. London: Constable and Robinson.
- Petersen, William (1958). A general typology of migration. *American Sociological Review* 2, pp.256–266.

- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen (2000). Globalization and human integration: we are all migrants. *Futures* 32, pp.385–398.
- Radel, Claudia, Schmook, Birgit, Carte, Lindsey, and Mardero, Sofia (2018). Toward a Political Ecology of Migration: Land, Labor Migration, and Climate Change in Northwestern Nicaragua. *World Development* 108, pp.263–273.
- Rankey, Eugene C. (2011). Nature and stability of atoll island shorelines: Gilbert Island chain, Kiribati, equatorial Pacific. *Sedimentology* 58, pp.1831–1859.
- Stojanov, Robert (Ed.) (2014). *Migration As Adaptation? Population Dynamics in the Age of Climate Variability*. Brno: Global Change Research Centre, The Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.
- Tacoli, Cecilia (2009). Crisis or adaptation? Migration and climate change in context of high mobility. *Environment and Urbanization* 21, pp.513–525.
- Tirado, M. Cristina (2011). *Global Climate and Environmental Change: Implications for Food Production and Safety Systems. Presentation at the 2011 AAAS Annual Meeting (17–21 February 2011)*, Washington, D.C.: AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science).
- Tirado, M. Cristina, Clarke, Renata, Jaykus, Lee-Ann, McQuatters-Gollop, Abigail, and Frank, J. Michael (2010). Climate change and food safety: A review. *Food Research International* 43, pp.1745–1765.
- UNUEHS (2005). *As Ranks of ‘Environmental Refugees’ Swell Worldwide, Calls Grow for Better Definition, Recognition, Support*. Bonn: UNUEHS (United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security).
- Watts, Nick, *et al.* (2018). The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: from 25 years of inaction to a global transformation for public health. *The Lancet* 391, pp.581–630. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(17\)32464-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)32464-9)

10

OPPORTUNITIES AND VULNERABILITIES OF INTERNAL MIGRANTS IN BANGLADESH AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

*Mohammad Jalal Uddin Sikder, Selim Reza, Syed Nurullah
Azad and Fardeen Hassan Anton*

Introduction

Migration has long been a major source of livelihood for a large portion of the citizens of Bangladesh, both inside and outside of the country's existing borders (Abrar and Azad, 2004; Sikder, Higgins and Ballis, 2017 and Siddiqui, 2022). In recent migration debates in Bangladesh, international labour migration has received more attention from academics and policymakers while internal migration has been a predominant phenomenon in the country. This might be due to the large number of Bangladeshis who have been successful in finding employment abroad and the fact that remittances from international migration are one of the most dependable sources of foreign currency in Bangladesh. According to data from the last ten years (2013–2022), on an average 656,016 Bangladeshi workers went overseas per year for both long- and short-term employment (BMET, 2023). Following the recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, over 1.35 million Bangladeshis migrated overseas for short term labour employment 2022 (The Daily Star, 2023). In 2001, the volume of international remittances had risen to US\$2 billion. Bangladesh's remittances earning has increased by the end of the FY 2022–23. It increased to USD1691.66 million in May from USD1684.91 million in April of 2023 (Trading Economics, 2023).

Remittance earning per annum increased slightly in FY 2022–23. Currently it stands at BDT¹¹⁹¹⁷.89 billion vis-à-vis BDT1815.80 billion in FY^{2 2021–22} (Bangladesh Bank, 2023). So, we can discount the COVID-19 affected years of 2020³ and 2021 as aberrations and count on government's stated plan in the 8th *Five Year Plan* to build the sector better and achieve earning of US\$150 billion through remittance (GoB, 2020). Bangladesh is making fast progress both socially and economically. From various sectors there is no dearth of data to attest to that fact. The government is designing and steering growth in a

planned manner, so far, notwithstanding the remaining structural barriers in the economy and governance. In this context, remittance earning helps Bangladesh maintain steady macro-economic stability by maintaining a healthy forex reserve in USD. Remittance inflow to the country increased by 4.23% year on year to USD1.7 billion in December 2022. The year ended with USD21.29 billion sent home by workers abroad (BMET, 2023). International remittances contributed 4.87% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020, 6.03% in FY2021, and 4.56 % in FY2022. In FY2022, remittances accounted for 42.71% of total earnings from exports and 25.49% of import payments, and they also helped to enhance foreign currency reserves (Bangladesh Bank, 2022).

In contrast, research of internal or domestic migration in Bangladesh have received less attention due to a lack of national-level statistics. Internal migration is thought to be significantly more significant in terms of the quantity of individuals participating as well as the volume and significance of domestic remittance inflows. According to the Bangladesh Population and Housing Census 2011, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), 9.82% of Bangladesh's population migrated internally throughout their lifetime. Internal migration from rural to rural areas was 52.6% per thousand populations while it was 4.6% from urban to rural areas. On the other hand, urban to urban migration per thousand populations was 44.4% while rural to urban migration was 222.9 (BBS, 2014). However, the Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) in 2010 showed that remittances from rural–urban migration made up 17.28% of total rural household income, thereby contributing to the social and economic development of migrants' households (BBS, 2011). Remarkably, 21.1% households received remittances from domestic migration in contrast with 8.8% households from international migration (Hossain, Riad and Ahmed, 2016). Despite such a contrast in terms of contributions at the macro level and a definitive positive effect at the micro level, interventions to streamline internal migration management and its visible yet un-accounted multiplier effects on life and livelihood remain largely out of the hindsight of policy makers and the academia. Chowdhury (2023) lays down some key pointers to explain the internal migration sector:

- i External labour demand, in the readymade garments sector for instance, is significantly connected to internal low labour wage rates. This demand for labour is also due to the fact that internal labour market destinations are limited and the capacity of the agriculture-based rural sectors for offering year-round employment is limited too.
- ii Internal migration is also prone to shocks such as natural disasters and epidemics.
- iii Poverty level due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war exposes the fragility of the bottom half population of the economy.
- iv Internal migration is not totally discreet from the external migration scenario as most of the external migrants are from the rural areas. Decline in

foreign hiring impacts on the local economy shrinkage which promotes internal migration in turn.

- v Economic needs, natural disasters including climate change, and aspiration for better socio-economic access are drivers of internal migration. However, social causes have become a factor as new choices are made in lifestyle scenarios. After all, remittance remains the key factor in internal migration.

In spite of these, internal migration is not yet seen as worth documenting, standardising or streamlining in Bangladesh. As a result, it has not been prioritised in the policy documentations or strategy papers, particularly for poverty reduction purposes. In many cases, policy responses to internal migration have been quite negative, treating internal migrants as troublemakers in cities. This policy attitudes have made urban authorities deny offering basic public services and facilities to the migrants in cities.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed internal migration patterns in Bangladesh and critically affected the dynamics of migration inside the country. Due to the severe economic hardships caused by the implementation of lockdowns and travel restrictions in 2020, many internal migrants in Bangladesh especially those working in urban areas had to return to their village temporarily or permanently. During this period, rural-to-urban migration reduced substantially. However, agriculture and local services in rural areas were relatively unaffected by the pandemic while urban-based industries including manufacturing, hospitality establishments, and transport services experienced significant disruptions (Bangladesh Bank, 2021; Dorosh et al., 2023). This shift in economic prospects altered the decisions of potential migrants, resulting in changes in internal migration trends. Furthermore, the outbreak and associated lockdown measures hindered migrants' opportunities, increasing the likelihood that they lost their jobs, became destitute, and displaced. The most affected groups were daily wage earners and those from lower socio-economic groups. Therefore, the "new poor" group has emerged because of growing unemployment and a lack of access to basic essentials (Ahmed and Kamal, 2020; Rashid, 2020). It was estimated that 60 million urban poor people living in low-income settlements in various Bangladeshi cities struggled with challenges like unemployment, lost income, food insecurity (deficit and malnutrition), poor access to healthcare and medical facilities, and an increase in violence against women and girls (SGBV) because of the pandemic (BOIL, 2022; UNICEF, 2021). According to a study undertaken by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), the COVID-19 pandemic caused 16.4 million people to fall into poverty. Half of them experienced a decline in their income (Jamal, 2020). According to the survey carried out by Bangladesh Rural Advanced Committee (BRAC), rural people's daily income fell by 79% while urban inhabitants' fell by 82% due to the impact of COVID-19 (Miah et al., 2020). Unforeseen loss of income and restricted access to social safety programmes increased their vulnerabilities and exposed them to hardships that they were not prepared for (Alam, 2020; Barker et al., 2020; Raihan et al, 2022; Rahman, 2022).

When the lockdown was due to end, several workers re-migrated to cities, despite the pandemic risk, as one of the coping mechanisms to save their jobs or find new ones (Rahman, 2021; BOIL, 2022). At the same time, a large number of internal migrants stopped returning to their previous jobs because they began to perceive cities as hostile in terms of affordable living. Many of these individuals who had private jobs as well as small-scale trades and businesses in cities did not commit to return to cities (Sarker, 2021). This resulted in workforce shortages in several industries, affecting their operation and production targets. In addition, the epidemic increased demand for particular services and skills as people began adjusting to new ways of living and working. This created increasing demand for services provided by sectors like healthcare, sanitation, delivery services, and online retail. All these industries offered opportunities to internal migrants who had the necessary skills or are adaptable enough to take on new responsibilities. Some internal migrants were encouraged by the epidemic to think about moving to areas with better economic opportunities or where certain sectors were flourishing. For example, individuals may have migrated from urban areas that were facing economic downturns to rural areas or other areas where agriculture or other sectors were more resilient. This geographical mobility created workforce diversification throughout the country.

Existing literatures on internal migration in Bangladesh validate the need for having a thorough understanding of the diverse experiences that the internal migrants undergo in a variety of contexts. Such understanding is necessary to establish efficient policies and interventions that will meet the needs of internal migrants and strengthen their resilience in the face of subsequent crises. In this context, this paper investigates the need to reconsider the vulnerabilities and opportunities faced by internal migrants in Bangladesh. The key research question pursued in this paper is how COVID-19 lockdowns impacted internal migrants' chances of surviving and maintaining a living in both their places of origin and destination. In responding to this, the paper explores the factors that enabled a small number of internal migrants to effectively take advantage of the few chances available during the pandemic's recovery stage. Empirical evidence and contextual analysis presented in the subsequent sections help understand how opportunities and vulnerabilities in social structures and human resource capacity of communities can be an analytical framework for effectively measuring the effects of crises, like the COVID-19 outbreak, on internal migration.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is based on the understanding that crisis situations, such as pandemics or economic crises, render people more vulnerable and less resilient because they disrupt social and economic structures, leading to job losses, reduced wages, and economic instability. Because of this breakdown, people's livelihoods and financial security may be directly damaged, making them more vulnerable to poverty, debt, and other economic problems. The lack of stable

employment and income sources can make it more difficult for individuals to meet their basic needs, which increases vulnerabilities (Furceri, Loungani and Ostry, 2020; Leach et al. 2021; Joshi et al. 2021). However, during times of crisis, social order is frequently disrupted which can result in social isolation, loneliness, and a lack of social support networks. Examples of these disruptions include lockdowns and social distancing measures during COVID-19 (Hwang et al., 2020; ILO, 2020). Those with less social connections and support networks may be less resilient because they have less access to resources, information, and emotional support. The heightened fear and worry brought on by crises can lead to additional psychological sufferings such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress, further impeding people's ability to handle financial hardships and recover from them (Pietrabissa and Simpson, 2020; Bowins, 2021).

Every country had experienced challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but South Asian countries in particular had to deal with a more difficult situation because of their large population, insufficient health infrastructure, high rates of poverty, poor socio-economic conditions, weak social protection and community services, limited access to clean water and sanitation, and insufficient living space. These were essential to maintain physical distance and take necessary initiatives for controlling the effects of the pandemic (Rasul et al., 2021; Barai, 2021; Khan et al., 2022). The effects of the pandemic, for instance, had greater impact for women, slum dwellers, elderly and disabled people, migrant workers, children, and youth in South Asian countries. Women were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic in terms of lost income, greater responsibility for unpaid caregiving, and greater exposure to risks because of the overabundance of women in the health care and readymade garment industries, as well as the prevalence of gender-based violence (UNESCAP, 2020) which intensified systemic inequalities and increased vulnerabilities of some specific groups of people.

However, it is often perceived that crisis situations can also bring opportunities for people, even though they are typically accompanied with weaknesses and challenges. For example, gender roles may vary during crises, as men and women adopt various coping mechanisms, which often involves stepping outside of the roles that society has assigned to them (ILO, 2003). Some of those tactics are promoting and improving the status of women in society, empowering their economic independence and capacity to support their families. For example, during the Mozambican conflict, rural women took on agricultural duties traditionally carried out by men, such as harvesting and marketing, giving them more access to and control over earnings and surpluses (*ibid*, 5). According to Payne and Lipton (1994), diverse shocks or crises may cause a range of reactions, including avoidance, repartitioning, and systems of resistance or tolerance. However, crisis situations necessitate flexible solutions as both individuals and communities strive to overcome their difficulties. Individuals can acquire new skills, know-how, and information through adaptation that can all be facilitated by one's resilience and agency to handle the crisis and take

advantage of the opportunities that are available. Finding untapped potential, considering alternate options, and accepting new roles and responsibilities may all be made possible by learning from the crisis experience (Bundy, Pfarrer and Coombs, 2016; Murakami, 2021).

Crises can promote cooperation, solidarity, and teamwork between groups and between individuals too. Communities and individuals generate a sense of urgency and purpose when a crisis is present. Because of their shared experience, people are motivated to work together to solve problems that affect them all and to act in unison to resolve an issue (Buheji and Ahmed, 2020; Billiet et al. 2021; Suttie, 2022). Storr et al. (2021) made the case that crises could potentially to be a “source” of social capital. They found that during the COVID-19 pandemic in the US, locals created new networks and organisations, such as online mutual aid societies, to address shared needs. In addition to helping local residents by giving them access to food, medicine, and other necessities, these mutual assistance organisations also served as a place for solidarity and companionship. Local communities also developed socially separated “pods”. Few families joined together in these small groups to share childcare duties, enabling parents to work, and enhancing student learning in a sociable yet safe setting. To support people in coping with the crisis, communities also reinforced and reinterpreted pre-existing narratives of resilience and unity. Thus, during the COVID-19 pandemic, new and developing forms of social capital evolved, enabling members of various communities to meet their needs and tackle shared problems.

Methodology

This paper is built upon empirical data generated by the Jan Sahas India for a study on “*Internal Migration in South and Southeast Asia*”. The study used a mixed-methods approach. The study was particularly interested in understanding the situation of internal migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic in two districts of Bangladesh: Dhaka and Rajshahi. Savar upazila and Dhaka city (the capital city of Bangladesh) were chosen for Dhaka district, and Rajshahi city and Paba upazila were selected for Rajshahi district. The four selected sites are situated in the central and midwestern region of Bangladesh (Image 1).⁴ The reason this location was selected is that the 2011 census inter-division migration shows that migration to the Dhaka district is not an uncommon phenomenon as Dhaka’s concentration of economic and political institutions drew people from all over the region. The in-migration rate in the Dhaka division is 16.42%, while it is 9.40% in Rajshahi (BBS, 2015). However, the *Millennium Development Goal (MDG): Bangladesh Progress Report 2008* notes that the North Bengal region of Bangladesh carries a higher burden of poverty due to naturally triggered disasters (especially riverbank erosion and flooding) and is subject to a local phenomenon called *Monga*, interplay between a lack of jobs and food entitlement. The report identified that these two key factors contribute significantly toward creating a major rural to urban migration flow from that region (GoB, 2009).

A total of 100 internal migrants were identified using key informant interviews (KIIs) which were conducted with residents of the four cities as well as representatives of municipal corporations, local government officials, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and employers and officials of local and national enterprises/industries. Fifty of them were from Rajshahi district (25 each in Paba and Rajshahi city), and the remaining 50 were from Dhaka district (25 each in Savar and Dhaka city). Half of the 100 interviewees were female migrants. We purposefully sought out migrants who migrated from a rural to an urban location as short-term, seasonal, and circular migrants and had been there for more than two years. Four focus group discussions (FGDs) were also held in four different field sites. The study tried to include both formal and informal sectors when analysing occupational migration. The study also conducted interviews with representatives of the local and national government, city ward commissioners, and national NGOs like Bangladesh Rural Advanced Committee (BRAC) and Kormojibi Nari (Working Women) who specialise in supporting urban marginalised poor people. Officials from local and national businesses and industries, including PRAN-RFL Group⁵, RMG, cottage, cold storage, and rice mill factories, were interviewed because most of their workers were internal migrants. Additionally, this study included the observations of academics and researchers.

The fieldwork of this study took place over a six-month period (August 2021–January 2022). The initial interview provided specific information on rural to urban migration. The subsequent interview provided the individual with an opportunity to reflect further on their gains, risks and vulnerabilities within urban settlements. The interviews conducted with internal migrants were analysed to identify common themes in relation to COVID-19 social isolation and lockdown situation. The names and key identifying information of participants were changed to maintain anonymity.

Migrants' Profile

Most of the rural-to-urban migration in this study was temporary, seasonal, and circular, and it was mostly carried out in the destination (urban) areas. In Rajshahi district, most migrants worked in construction, RMG, small cottage and cold storage factories and rice mill, transport, and household sectors. In Dhaka districts, two-thirds of respondents were employed in RMG and manufacturing factories, construction, and household sectors and the rest of them worked as day labourer. Most female migrants worked as housemaids, general operator in the RMG industry or day labourer in the rice mill factories. Very few migrants commuted from villages/upazila to urban areas. The study observed those migrants who commuted every day because of good transportation connectivity. However, living expenses in cities are significantly higher than in rural areas, therefore residing outside of cities had another advantage.



FIGURE 10.1 Location of the Study Areas: Dhaka and Rajshahi districts ()
Source: “Digital Map”, Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Government of the People’s Republic Bangladesh. Available at: <http://www.lged.gov.bd/ViewMap.aspx>

It is revealed that most migrants are of working age. Seventy-five per cent of migrants were aged 21 to 64 years. More specifically, regardless of time, most migrants were between the ages of 25 and 29. According to research on internal migration in Bangladesh, many migrants are also young. Several studies and real research on rural-to-urban migration report that most migrants are under 30 years old, with female migrants being younger than male migrants (Afsar, 2001 and Sikder, Higgins, and Ballis, 2017). Regardless of where they lived or when they came from, 68% of total migrants in the study were married. Migrant households often had six members; in Rajshahi district, households typically had 6.25 people and Dhaka district households typically had 5.4 members. There were 225 family members overall in the migrant households: 126 men and 99 women. The quantity of dependents in these families was what stands out. The study indicated that 4.44% of migrant families also had older individuals who were too old to support themselves (those over 60 years old) and that 23.11% of migrant households had dependent children (those under the age of 15). Participants attributed the literacy deficiency to the need to work rather than a lack of access to schooling. Early school dropout rates were particularly high among migrants and female members of migrant households who married early.

In this study, 63% of overall migrants had more than one income earner in their households, while the rest were the only income earner in their family. It is worth noting that male migrants' households had more income earners than their female counterparts on average. Fifty-two per cent of total migrants had family members who were migrants and earned a living from migration. The current study discovered that while livestock and small-scale farming were key sources of income of the migrant households, domestic remittances had increasingly become an income source for them. While landed households encourage members of their families to migrate to locations with higher economic prospects, landless households are more inclined to move their entire families.

Nature and Pattern of Migration

The decision to move is influenced by a variety of individual and household elements. It is not something that is made at random or in a social vacuum. However, how decisions are actually made varies from individual to individual, from one household to another, and from one culture to another (Sikder, 2013). In this study, none of the respondents in Dhaka district disagreed that a lack of employment back home was the primary driver of migration. Although jobs were available in the agricultural sector, some participants claimed that it was challenging for them to work for low wage. Several individuals stated that increased income was their main ambition to fulfil by moving to a city. Circular migrants in Bangladesh work as rickshaw pullers and day labourers. Improved communication system and cheap fare influenced them to migrate. Both male

and female migrants in the Dhaka district were temporary and seasonal workers in the readymade garments industry. However, male migrants were mainly seasonal since they used to work for seven to eight months in the garment factories and construction sector before going back to the village to work in agriculture. However, male migrants intended to work in the garment factories permanently. Since they were men, they were unable to find employment in a garment factory because most of the positions were for females, and employers preferred to hire females.

Most of the respondents in Rajshahi were circular migrants who commuted and worked in Rajshahi city daily, and their journey to Rajshahi city took less than an hour. They have been migrating to the city for ten years on an average. They were also getting work by their village network. As their villages were adjacent to the city, their objective was to work in the city. Circular migrants who worked in the construction sector also tried to work in other districts in the construction sector. However, they were often cheated by the contractors who did not pay them properly. As a result, they do not wish to work in other districts and instead want to work in Rajshahi city. However, the primary reason for leaving home was to increase their earnings and gain instant access to cash money. They all stated that they would never want to work in agriculture because of the tremendous physical labour and low wage. A female activist working with urban poor people in different districts in Bangladesh described that:

All the men and women in our country once worked in the agriculture sector. By now agriculture has evolved as a non-profit sector. Many landowners now live in urban areas. Despite the poor harvest, they lease land to local farmers for sharing crops. As a result, farmers are losing profit as they need to share their harvest or profit to landowners. Farmers do not, however, receive a fair price from the local market because of the syndicate control of the market. They also receive no further incentives from the government as well. Several studies conducted in recent years have also shown that men were moving away from employment in agriculture because of this reason. In order to enhance their income, they had to move to the city. They stayed in the city all year long. When the harvesting time comes, they go to their village to plant, sow, and harvest paddy. In agriculture, they are paid between BDT600 (US\$7) and 700 (US\$8) per day. Fascinatingly, due to a decline in the number of men working in the agricultural sector, people today believe that only women now carry out agricultural tasks.

In the focus group discussion in four study areas, most respondents said they moved to the city for better pay. It was not just because they had large families, rather they intended to invest their income in agriculture or purchase homestead land in their village. As a result, nine migrants who previously were landless

now have homestead land that they purchased by spending their income in the city. Few respondents stated that their land was either eroded by river water or was constantly covered by water lodges, forcing them to migrate. A local stakeholder who worked in a reputed national NGO stated that climate change is causing individuals located in riverbank erosion zones to move to cities or other safe areas. Moreover, many families in the northern region are relocating out of their village so that their children could attend a good school in the city. According to him, this number will represent 10–15% of total population in Rajshahi division. The only reason people go from the rural to the city is to educate the next generation.

Five female domestic workers said that they migrated because they had recently got divorced and were being teased by the local villagers. They moved to Dhaka to get away from the abuse. According to three female migrants who worked in the garment industry, they migrated because they were trying to get admission into a college, therefore they needed to arrange tuition fees. This is evident in case of Khadiza Begum, a 22-year-old female migrant, who worked in a garment factory in Dhaka city, stated that she migrated to Dhaka two years ago after finishing higher secondary school. The only reason for moving to Dhaka is to pay fees for admission into a nursing school. She described that:

My hometown has a reputable Nursing Institute, and I got accepted there. However, I was unable to pay for my tuition. One of my female rural friends who had previously worked in a garment industry in Dhaka persuaded me to come and work there. If I work, I will be able to pay for my education. My classmate is also attending a national university in Dhaka on a part-time basis. So, my friend helped me get to Dhaka and stay at her house, and then she helped me find work at her factory... Because I was the eldest child, my parents did not allow me to migrate. My father, on the other hand, eventually relented and agreed to let me leave the village. I also persuaded the Principal of the Nursing Institute that I would study, but not on a regular basis. I planned to study semester by semester. For example, after working here for one year, I have already saved enough money to cover tuition fees for three months. Next month, I will return to my hometown to join a three-month nursing programme. Then I will take a break before returning to Dhaka to work in a garment factory once more... The management at my factory is very good, and they are presently aiding me in obtaining funds for my education. They advised me that if I leave my position, I could reclaim it at any time. I am hoping that if I can work here for another six months, I will be able to cover the remainder of my tuition. This year, I visited my village twice and stayed for three to four days each time.

This statement validates that Kadiza's decision to move from rural areas to the city was motivated by her desire to fulfil her dream of obtaining better education that could offer her better position as a nurse, which carries with it social

prestige and a reliable source of income in the future. Most of the migrants in Rajshahi and Dhaka initially planned to work for a couple of years in cities to earn as much money as possible before returning to their native villages for starting small businesses in order to improve their quality of life. Unfortunately, since they lacked social capital and agency, their circumstances were never altered, and they were trapped in poverty. In this study, for instance, we found four internal migrants, including one female migrant, who had come to Dhaka to work. However, using their employment network, they met individuals who served as middlemen in sending them to the Gulf countries. These migrants spent several years in Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan. Because they lacked social capital and agency, they were unable to capitalise on the earnings from international migration. They once more became internal migrants as a result. Tajul Islam, a 52-year-old male internal migrant who worked in Dhaka, experienced such a miserable circumstance. He explained his situation:

I moved to Dubai in 1996 and stayed there for seven years before coming back in 2002. At that time, I worked in a poultry farm in Dubai. My starting salary was around BDT9000 (\$177) per month. For the first few months, I did not get paid, but after that, I did. My salary back then was Tk 18,000 (\$352) each month. I sent remittance to my mother, father, and other family members using my income... I came from a poor family, so we didn't have a nice house. I constructed a big house for my family in the village with the money I earned in Dubai. My parents received my entire income. My three brothers moved to Saudi Arabia with the aid of my money. I took a holiday back to my village in 1998 after getting married. I sent my brothers overseas after that, but they finally grew apart with separated family thus and nobody took any family responsibility. In fact, they did not give or share any of their income to me. In this situation, I took a job as a CNG driver in Comilla district but left the country again in search of a second opportunity in Dubai. But I had to return home with empty hand because my work visa was not genuine, and I was forced to depart... At that time, I did not have much money or savings, so I started driving a CNG auto rickshaw in Dhaka city. Through a village friend who had previously worked in Dhaka, I was able to secure that job. My wife was then undergoing a critical uterus surgery, so I was forced to take out a loan. I had another accident in the meanwhile, breaking both of my arms. I had to stay in the house for a year as a result. After that, I was forced to take out loans and accumulate debt. I owed BDT500,000 (US\$7246) in 2015 because I had to leave my town and travel through the night to Dhaka. In the dead of night, I had to flee my village with my family as people demanded repayment of the money. I have already paid most of the debt. Right now, I am working as a rickshaw puller. Nobody gives me a CNG auto rickshaw because of my past track record of road accident and the damage that I had caused to vehicles.

The quote suggests that failed international migration may lead to internal migration. Because of the socioeconomic situation, this migrant's migration had been unsuccessful. He actually had no knowledge of how to use the money he was getting from overseas migration. He was compelled to migrate again. Similar scenario also applied to other internal migrants who had previously been internal, then external, and then internal migrants once more. The study's discussion of the nature and pattern of migration thus highlights the numerous complicated elements that affect individuals' decisions to migrate. The overall findings of the study highlight the complexity of migration decisions and the wide range of circumstances that migrants encounter before migrating.

Livelihood Challenges during the Lockdown

A complex web of events that affect migration narrative in Bangladesh were created by the COVID-19 outbreak. Internal migrants were frequently unfairly singled out and held responsible for the Coronavirus's spread (Rahman, 2022). Their marginalisation and prejudice because of stigmatisation made the migrants highly vulnerable in their workplaces and own communities. They were deemed to be security risks, which created distrust and alienation and had detrimental impacts on their social and economic well-being. Internal migrants experienced additional hardships because of this stigmatisation which also diminished their contributions to the places they migrate to and the communities they belong to. In this study, 12 female internal migrants who worked as a domestic worker in the cities—six each from the districts of Rajshahi and Dhaka—reported that their house owners had told them over the phone not to come to work once the COVID-19 outbreak's immediate lockdown began. Their regular jobs, namely their source of income, unexpectedly stopped. They became more vulnerable to sudden shocks, especially the domestic workers who had to live in slum areas with their families and were responsible for paying monthly house rent. Domestic workers, also internal migrants, are already perceived as expendables and they serve the social upper classes in urban spaces bearing a great deal of abuse over their stigmatised background as domestic workers (Ashraf et al., 2019). COVID-19 multiplied their dilapidated plight. This incident occurred to Mala Begum, a 42-year-old female migrant who worked as a *Chuta*⁶ domestic worker in several houses in Dhaka city. Despite her husband's meagre income, she had to meet her whole family's expenses (six members). She described that:

We were in danger once the lockdown started. During that period, I had only one job at one house. They had no choice but to keep me in the house because the main female member of the house passed away because of what was thought to be the COVID-19 virus, leaving them with no other option but to rely on me for support. My husband pushed me to leave the job due to his concern of contracting the virus. However, I was forced to continue

the job since I had to support my family's needs financially. Due to health concerns, other houses where I once worked refused to hire me. We were disappointed they did not allow us to work. Was it because they feared that we would spread the virus to others? I was able to get through these months because to only one job that I had at that moment. The salary was BDT4,000 (\$46) per month, however during the lockdown, this amount for us was almost comparable to BDT400,000 (\$4651). Believe me, we were in serious trouble. We have no agriculture land in my village. If we had been able to go back to the village during the COVID lockdown, we would all have been died. We could not pay rent for three months for this situation. Later, we were able to settle all our debts.

Three female domestic workers (two in Dhaka and one in Rajshahi) also said that despite their houseowner's strict instruction for not visiting their house during the lockdown, they received two months' salary by *B-kash*⁷. Mala was fortunate in that her landlord did not take three months' house rent at the time but instead collected the rent later. However, other internal migrants in Rajshahi and Dhaka districts were not considered waved out and were required to pay house rent. These internal migrants experienced significant difficulties during the lockdown. They found alternative work outside the slums at that time, but their landlord had not allowed them to leave the slum. All slum landlords strictly monitored who went outside their slum and thus they did not allow a rule breaker to enter the slum. These internal migrants were also victimised by their landlords due to their fear of contracting the virus and spreading the infection in the slum areas.

When COVID-19 imposed its first lockdown on March 23, 2020, RMG factories were closed for a month in Bangladesh. Following that, the government gave the factories permission to continue operation. 16 internal migrants who worked in the readymade garments factories in the districts of Dhaka and Rajshahi participated in this study and stated that they experienced severe stress since they were unsure of when the factories would start. Even when the factories were reopened after a month, four of the workers did not receive their jobs back. The majority of these workers ended up with smaller factories which in reality served as subcontractors for the larger factories. Solaiman Hossian, a 33-year-old internal migrant, stated that he and his wife both had lost their employment as a result of the COVID lockdown. They both had worked in a readymade garments factory. The factory was shut down and is now abandoned. He said that *'there is not a single job for us at the factory right now. I am so forced to drive an electric auto rickshaw to survive in Dhaka city'*.

While the CNG drivers, electric auto rickshaw drivers, manual rickshaw pullers were adversely affected by the lockdown, most of them obtained shelters, managed housing, and jobs in cities through their village-based social networks. As a result of their contacts, many of them had no trouble migrating. One male rickshaw puller in Dhaka whose wife was also a migrant domestic worker said that:

My wife used to work as a domestic worker while we stayed in Dhaka, and my three sons now attend school and live with their grandparents in the village. Our migration, job searching and finding a job all these were not a difficult problem because of my local contacts. For example, after arriving in Dhaka, I was able to get a job immediately as a rickshaw driver. My village friend acted as a guarantee and convinced the rickshaw owner to give me a rickshaw. As a result, we experienced no problems during or after the migration.

Although the migrants benefited from using their social network to get jobs and housing in the city, during the shutdown they suffered more than other internal migrants because their daily income was their only source of support, and it was stopped. They typically resided in an area of slums but at the same time some of them lived in a building. Typically, friends combined the rent for a single flat in a building, living in better conditions than slums provide. However, the lockdown prompted them to leave the house because it was unclear when the lockdown would end, and they would be able to resume work. Most significantly, other tenants objected to the building owner and persuaded for throwing them out because they were worried that these internal migrants would spread the virus. As a result of this circumstance, 32% respondents claimed that they had no choice but to leave the city and return to their villages. But they also had to work hard to go home. Because the public transportation was not running, they had to pay a higher fare to reach their villages. However, everywhere they went, they were asked where they were from. When it was discovered that they were from the city, the villagers thrashed them with sticks and told them to return to the city. The villagers also blamed them to spread virus. Jahangir Alam, a 42-year-old migrant in Dhaka who worked as a seasonal worker in a readymade garments factory, recounted the situation:

Some people went back to their homes after the initial lock down, while others continued to live in misery. Since I didn't have my own home in my village, my family and I initially set out to visit my in-laws' parents. By bus and rickshaws, we made the tough journey there. The people in the village where my in-laws' parents live stopped us since they knew that we worked in the readymade garments factory and came from the city. Later, local government officials helped us out by setting up transportation and giving us money for going to my own parent's house. When we got to my parent's village, the locals would not let us enter in. Then, due of her influence, my sister-in-law, a political figurehead in the area, assisted us in getting into the house. After a day, the locals returned and instructed us not to leave the house. We agreed.

Like this case, four male internal migrants also stated that they were able to finally arrive in their villages, but their community and own parents refused to

let them in. They had to spend 15 days in the cow herd. It was difficult for them to remain in the same situation with their wives and children. Therefore, internal migrants have been unfairly accused of being security risks and blamed for the COVID-19 outbreak in the stories mentioned above (Mahmud and Islam, 2021; Sakamoto, Begum and Ahmed, 2020). The stigmatisation of this disadvantaged population and job losses had led to significant challenges and vulnerabilities. Instead of being rewarded for their contribution and determination in the origin and destination areas, internal migrants became targets for blame and mistrust during the pandemic.

Government Services and Social Protection for Internal Migrants

The idea of social protection substantially integrates with “decent work” and a dynamic definition of poverty. Poverty has to be seen from two angles that encompasses the process of poverty as well. It needs to be understood from the rights-based approach where a lack of right to informed choice in decisions and exercises is pursuant to economic, social and political fields. It also needs to be seen as arising out and condition of deprivation (Sen, 2009). However, in both the angles, the key factors are *vulnerability* and *risk*. Social protection is an agenda primarily for reducing vulnerability and managing the risk of low-income individuals, households and communities with regard to basic consumption and social services (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite, 2003).

Vulnerability has to be mitigated in order to reduce poverty, which in turn ensures development with protection. Experts are divided based on their discipline and development perspective. Understanding the idea of *decent work* as a key concept and standard in addressing relative poverty is important. It directly attacks the status quo of exploitation and forced labour while one strives out of the poverty cycle. In MDGs, decent work was merely a sub-component of poverty eradication goal. In SDG, however, decent work is at the fore (SDG 8): ‘*Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*’, and it is also mainstreamed across the agenda (ILO, 2024). While Bangladesh has more than 80 formal social protection policies for vulnerable groups, it often fails to reach the target population due to lack of proper mechanism, politicisation of the process, corruption and so on. Consequently, poor people have to rely heavily on achieving various forms of informal social protection (Azad, 2017). Again, if we look at poverty – protection from a macro-economic perspective, successive governments here have done well to put in place elaborate social protection measures to address hunger, chronic destitution and certain aspects of severe vulnerabilities. However, the focus has mainly been on absolute poverty. Tackling relative poverty and how social protection can help it, is something that needs more serious attention now (ibid, 2017).

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) allocated BDT5,729 million (approximately US\$67.81 million) to help those who lost their jobs as a result of the

public movement restrictions put in place to combat the second wave of COVID-19 infections. By the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, around 12.4 million families received their share of the allocation. According to a total of 10 million feeding cards for vulnerable groups, a total of BDT4504.4 million (approximately US\$53.34 million) already allocated at the upazilas and urban areas (Newage Bangladesh, 2021). The COVID-19 limits affected low-income people, and the Prime Minister's Office announced five incentive packages totalling BDT3,200 million (approximately US\$378.86 million) for them. Day labourers, river and road transport employees, and small business owners would all receive financial aid in the amount of BDT2,500 (US\$29.56) each. Additionally, during the two-week lockdown after Eid-ul-Adha⁸, low-cost rice and flour made available to the urban poor through open market sale (OMS) schemes. People who called the helpline number 333 for assistance also received food. The Prime Minister's office approved 23 stimulus initiatives worth BDT1,240,530 million (approximately US\$14,670 million) earlier this year to help the economy recover from COVID-19 (TBS, 2021). The 20 million people who became impoverished as a result of the pandemic, including returnee migrants and those who lost their jobs in both the formal and informal sectors, Karmasangsthan Bank (Employment Bank), Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), and Palli Sanchay Bank (Rural Savings Bank) distributed BDT15,000 million (US\$177.34 million). However, the Ministry of Finance provided an additional BDT12,000 (US\$142 million) for the creation of rural jobs (*ibid*, 2021).

In this study, only six respondents (two in Dhaka and four in Rajshahi) reported receiving government assistance during the COVID-19 lockdown and afterwards. The government sent BDT1600 (US\$19) by mobile phone transfer to two female respondents in Rajshahi area, and the other respondents received food assistance, such as 10kg of rice, lentils, and cooking oil. In Rajshahi City, two female internal migrants said that the government's efforts to aid the destitute resulted in the same person receiving money or food more than once by using the same cell phone number under multiple names. The genuine person, however, was deprived. However, there were instances of nepotism where local government leaders helped people who were close with them. The majority of respondents indicated that in order to prevent corruption, the government should determine who is actually in need and thus offer both financial and food support through the military troops.

The majority of respondents claimed they had never come across any information about government aid. Those in the know, mainly migrants in Dhaka, said that during the COVID-19 closure, the local administration provided aid to those in need. Assistance from local governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is typically given to those who possess a local national identity card. They were informed that since they were "not locals", they should go back to the village and ask a representative of the local government for help. They argued that regardless of where they were from or where they were located, they should have received assistance because they were truly in need.

Internal migrants who were employed in the readymade garments factories stated that due to a government decision, all employees got 60% of their monthly salaries while the factories were in shutdown. The factory resumed the following month, but they only received 80% of what they were owed. It should be noted that migrants who worked as seasonal workers in the readymade garments factories received no wages from their employers. The government instructed factory owners to provide wages for all employees, but these individuals were not included because they were seasonal workers who came to the factory to work only 3–4 months and had not been employed for more than a year. Although the government provided financial support to the readymade garments factories so that they could pay all of the workers' salaries, the factory owners deliberately made a distinction and excluded the workers' rights. However, one respondent reported that they paid through the owners of the factories. In reality, workers were unaware of the amount of funding the government had allocated for them.

It was also found that migrants employed full-time or seasonally at readymade garments factories received little help from their own villages. The local authorities refused to give them any food and cash aid. One official from the local government stated that since the government had previously given the garment workers cash incentives, the needs of them weren't taken into consideration. But there was no clear instruction from the government side who would not get it. The lockdown announcement also made it difficult for migrants in readymade garments sector to arrange transportation. They were not given any assistance from the government or their own factories. Internal migrants in Dhaka City said that the factory could have arranged for transportation or food for them, but they did nothing. According to one male respondent, when they moved unexpectedly to the village, after that virus was spread. It might not have been as horrible if workers and employers cooperated.

Despite the absence of legal social protection for internal migrants, the study indicated that these individuals were given informal help by a variety of groups and organisations. For instance, few of the female internal migrants who worked as domestic workers received assistance from house owners. They received a monthly salary via B-kash even though they did not work at that time, which really helped me during this difficult time. Many of them were given food help by neighbours, friends and relatives. In reality, local shops additionally offered goods on loan. Thus, it is clear that in times of crisis, informal support systems perform better than formal ones. Because despite categorical lacking in social protection and entitlement from the state and system, especially during and in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19, a great deal of the impending vacuum in entitlement has been filled by active extension, seeking and utilisation of social capital and due to an increasing use of digital platforms by the semi-urban and rural poor who are in continuous flux of internal migration.

Transformative Divisions of Labor and Wage Revision

During the COVID-19 lockdown in Bangladesh, the unique conditions provided chances for the formation of new divisions of labour as individuals sought creative ways to adapt. People explored new pathways and used varied ideas and abilities to find new work opportunities, resulting in higher earnings in certain sectors. The study discovered that due to the COVID lockout situation, workers were needed in numerous occupational sectors. In Rajshahi areas, for instance, it was shown through interviews with local businessmen that the majority of their workers are internal migrants. Both during and after the initial COVID lockdown, they were at work in the rice mill. They were employed under a contract; therefore, the employer did not want to dismiss them. They were also keen about staying put. These workers can never go outside the boundaries of the mill. Because of the lock down, they were unaware of what was going on outside. Due to the lockdown, there were extremely high requests for rice in the entire Rajshahi division and surrounding districts. Compared to the period before COVID, they received more contracts. Day and night shifts were required, and workers received better pay than usual.

In the rice mill factories, most of the male internal migrants reported working alone before COVID. They brought their spouses, children and other family members to work when they realised, factories needed extra workers. The COVID lockdown caused them to migrate to work in the city after previously working in the agricultural or household sectors. Workers at the cold storage for potatoes in Rajshahi district also said they were present inside the factory during the first and second lockdowns and didn't miss any days of work. Due to a lack of transportation at the time, their potatoes were in high demand. They did receive a good wage, in reality. Due to the intense labour demands, these migrants had no intention of returning to their village. One male migrant shared his story that he brought in four people, including his wife and two daughters, and that he had already leased six (6) decimals of agricultural land, using the excess money to buy and sell rice. What we can observe is that migrants always use their extra labour forces in their houses to diversify and increase their incomes when the opportunity arises.

Due to a lack of workers in their enterprises, local businesspeople put pressure on hiring people from rural areas to work in their factories. During the shut-down, there was a lot of work pressure on those who worked in the puffed rice mills. The interruption caused the output of other districts to be suspended. As a result, there was a sharp rise in demand for the puffed rice produced in their factory. Puffed rice was in higher demand in local market as Ramadan (Fasting) approached. Sahana Begum, a 28-year-old female internal migrant from the Rajshahi district said she had never migrated to a city. However, she learned about the owner of the puffed rice mill factory through a relative, and they needed worker. She accepted to work because she had recently divorced and was worried about how to provide for her own children. The distribution of labour between those who formerly worked in houses and are now employed was visible.

The COVID shutdown additionally assisted internal migrants in improving their ability to bargain for wage increases with employers, particularly female migrants in the Rajshahi district. One female migrant in Rajshahi who worked in rice mill factories, for instance, received BDT300–400 (US \$4–5) per day before COVID and BDT600–700 (US\$7–8) per day during and after the lockdown. Two further female migrants in Rajshahi stated that they learned about the manpower shortage in various factories during the lockdown. They were employed by a large PRAN-RFL company, but during the lockdown they left their jobs and joined a small rice puff factory since they were given a higher wage than PRAN-RFL. In the same situation, internal migrants working in the construction sector in Rajshahi and Dhaka said that they were willing to continue working when the home's owner asked them to. Since they could stay on the construction side, they chose not to go outside. However, they benefited from receiving higher wages than they would have otherwise. The case of higher wages in some rural and semi-urban areas during and immediately after COVID-19 is also confirmed by another recent study⁹. Seasonal workers used to work in their villages or other towns' local construction industries prior to the COVID shutdown, but they moved to the cities during the lockdown due to high demand and higher earnings, and they experienced no problems at work. These internal migrants claimed that more lockdown was something they desired because it would enable them to earn more earnings.

The Pursuit of Opportunities

Internal migrants developed proactive methods to improve the conditions and well-being in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic's lockdown measures. They were actively looking for and developing options that would assist them throughout the lockdown in a variety of ways, including work, a means of subsistence, access to resources, and overall resilience. The focus was executing plans to improve the circumstances and prospects of internal migrants, while also taking into account their particular needs and vulnerabilities during the crisis. In this study, circular migrants in Rajshahi and Dhaka who had previously worked as day labourers began to sell goods on the streets during the initial shutdown. Due to their long migration experiences in the cities, they generated creative ideas for managing their livelihood and enduring this crisis. They concluded that street sellers might run viable operations at this time.

Street vendors said that they faced difficulty for a week. Police arrived to forcibly remove them when they delivered their goods, only to return when they noticed the police had departed. After a week, however, no one was harassed by the police or the local government. The reason for this was that if they did not provide vegetables and commodities, the city population would be unable to exist. Despite the fact that they only brought a small number of products to market, they were able to achieve a profit that was twice as high as any previous period. The reason

behind this was that there were no products available on the market at the time. One male street vendor in Dhaka city described that:

The lockdown was lifted, and the market slowly started to open. Since then, our pain has diminished. Prices for vegetables have risen dramatically in recent years. There were large losses the previous year. However, this year's lockdown, which resulted in a shortage of labour, seeds, and fertiliser, increased the production expenses for farmers. Everything was therefore more expensive at that time. Many farmers' crop output goals were not met despite the minimal rainfall. Due to a lack of water, no crops could be grown in the lowlands. As a result, there weren't enough vegetables in the market to meet the demand. As a result, the price increased naturally, and we also made money.

Two female migrants in Rajshahi district said that they attempted to stay in the city by selling vegetables during the lockdown since people needed food. This was apparent to Momotaz Begum, a 50-year-old female circular migrant who worked as a street vendor and sold vegetables in Rajshahi city.

We had problems for a week during the initial lockdown. When we brought our belongings, police arrived to forcibly evict us, only to return when we saw the police had left. However, no one was harassed by the police or the local administration after a week. The reason for this was that the city residents would not be able to survive if we did not bring veggies and commodities. They were in desperate need of our product. Later, the municipal government exempted food suppliers from any restrictions. However, our sales item was declining, and we were having difficulty finding customers. At the same time, because I could sell the products at high prices, my profit margin remained unchanged. Products were not coming in from other districts because of the lockdown. As a result, our items were in high demand. So, there were few customers, less supply, higher demand, and higher profit.

Individuals had shown a tremendous ability for innovation and ingenuity during the COVID-19 lockdown, adopting fresh ideas and looking for chances to start new businesses. People were forced to use their imaginations to think outside the box and adapt to the new situation due to the restrictions imposed by the lockdown. Female and male, internal and external market migrants alike initiated, got trained and got down to businesses or self-employments being vendors basically to go door to door to provide services that they picked up during training under the COVID-19 lockdown and immediately after (Azad, 2023). This was also confirmed by Azad (2017) study. People started new initiatives, experimented with digital platforms, and got involved in online enterprises during this time, which was marked by a rise in entrepreneurial

spirit. People were inspired to think creatively as a result of the lockout, finding new methods to solve problems and seizing opportunities as they presented themselves. Tajul Islam, a 52-year-old internal migrant in Dhaka served as further evidence of this. He explained that:

Although they now live in the village, my family and I formerly resided in Dhaka. I was unable to keep them in the cities because of COVID lockdown, so I sent them back to the village. I was worried about what lenders would do to my families because I had a large amount of debt and was unable to repay it. Nevertheless, the lockdown situation softened people's hearts, I did feel at all glad that they had not done anything improper. However, we also faced survival issues in the village. In the interim, my older daughter opened a beauty salon in my house using the little money she had saved and the YouTube tutorials she found out about makeup on her own. She was getting business even from remote locations, and thanks to God, she was making more money than I was. I have already purchased four decimals of extremely little agricultural land, which is currently being cultivated. My wife is currently taking care of my agricultural field, but when I go to the village, I also tend to this land. I bought this land with the help of my daughter's income and paying my debt. I was first concerned for my family, but it appears that things are going well in the village. My feeling is that if our income stays the same, I won't go back into the cities. At this age, it is exceedingly challenging to work in cities and live alone.

Here, it is clear that the number of persons who were able to take advantage of these chances was quite small. Individuals may not be forced to develop their own ideas and skills to deal with difficult circumstances due to lack of awareness and limited financial access.

Opportunities and Vulnerabilities of Migrants in Times of a Pandemic

Poverty reduction initiatives in Bangladesh have seen direct inputs from remittances where rural and semi-urban areas get the direct benefit of remittances. It has directly addressed lowering of relative income gap in gender line as well although not in absolute terms (Azad, 2017). Remittances and its multiplier effects have had a positive spill-over effect on many sectors allowing a positive growth in those, not to mention social gains from changed outlook and greater exposure. Migration and remittances impact cut across a broad range of sectors and programmes like education, agriculture, urban planning, health, and so on. Research shows that despite the increasing inflow of remittances, from both internal and external sources, migrants' inclusion in society in terms of provisions/entitlements and access to general amenities, especially, that of both the internal and external market focused female migrants has not been affected

positively by the remittance earning (Azad, 2018). It did not commensurate the high remitting pattern of female migrants either. Impact of migration on development is already in the high visibility and yet there is a clear need to further optimise and maximise the effects of migration at all levels in the country.

Bangladesh experiences *multiplier effects* from migration that helps enable human capital investment, propels economic development (Osmani, 2005) and alleviates poverty (Siddiqui and Sikder, 2014; Stalker, 2008). Investment in human capital and resources is one of the priorities at the household level (Siddiqui and Mahmood, 2015). A recent baseline study on Bangladesh on the relationship between short-term contract international labour migration (STIM), poverty reduction and development as part of a 10-year-long study from which panel data is to be generated, supports this linkage between migration and poverty reduction (ibid, 2015). Basically, discussions on overall contribution of internal and external migration and weaving both as part of a single continuum that will accelerate skill development process and up the overall remittance at the same time is absent. Programmes for development and intervention schemes are being taken separately targeting both the streams of migrations.

The effects of rural–urban migration can surely be seen as an answer to underdevelopment in the rural areas. Poverty, unemployment and natural hazards appear to be the main reasons for outmigration from rural areas. Researchers tend to switch to other areas of investigation like urban planning and employment creation as soon as they find the preference of people to move into a city. This reinforced *urban bias* in thinking, planning and problem solving will not get us far. While better accessibility to public amenities and resources available in the urban areas can and should always be planned, but not as a measure to mitigate the woes of rural maldevelopment. Climate change and other under-development problems are plaguing us and causing increased and unmanageable rural to urban migration. We are currently in a see-saw condition in development, especially in regard to poverty reduction. Chowdhury (2023) sums it up aptly:

The COVID-19 pandemic stalled poverty reduction and affected the poor negatively far more. Although employment levels improved in the post Covid situation, earnings have not reached pre-pandemic levels yet. It caused significant reverse migration to the rural areas but the rates of rural to urban migration are rising again. In fact, rural population growth rate in Bangladesh has now gone minus but urban population growth rate is very high which means internal migration is rising. (Macrotrends)

This entire situation of internal migration, caused by maldevelopment in the sending and then launching regions/localities/areas in the first place, with a bare minimum level of long distant job scoping through often unscrupulous intermediaries, and then without absorption capacity of the destination host

communities; is not helped by the fact that Bangladesh at the end of the day is a country of surplus labour. On the downside surplus labour may even account for a further reduction in welfare of the migrating poor in Bangladesh (as measured in 1 USD/Day standard) (Azad, 2017). One section of this surplus, the internal migrants, do not even enjoy any welfare entitlement from the government (Afsar, 2005; Rahman, et al., 2016), as their movements are totally unaccounted and undocumented due to lack of any such authority who would undertake this job. This approach of World Bank, UNDP of defining poverty has been heavily criticised under heads like “the poverty of poverty lines” (UN, 2009, Muhammad, 2015).

The unemployment and underemployment problem causes downward pressure on wages giving rise to adverse socio-economic indicators. Over the past decade or so the real wage has increased to curtail poverty incidence. Despite the rising real wage, the absolute level of wages remains very low compared to other countries. Lower labour costs have helped Bangladesh with international competitiveness such as in the export-oriented apparels sector. For Bangladesh the main challenge now, and has been so for some time now, is how to create additional and good jobs to give a further push to wages. This needs to be accompanied by overall improvement in productivity, which is the ultimate precondition for an improved welfare situation (Razzaque, 2017). To offset the adverse effects of COVID-19 on the internal migrants, especially on their marginal and poor section, to offset the effects on overall poverty, welfare and labour employment (for both the internal and external/overseas markets), government and other stakeholders could initiate a few steps. *Stratification and standardization of labour* (making labour market tighter) skill and wage wise is doable with regional variations.

Therefore, before the increasingly complex and layered process of internal migration goes out of hand, it is high time that academia and policy makers in Bangladesh pay more attention and get serious about streamlining internal migration management process. Not only from the right-based approach of entitlement and social protection, but the problematic could also be seen as and thought out from a functionalist perspective of labour economics. Its utility value in reducing unemployment and orderly management of the labour force in the country is of no lesser consequence. Increasing employment in the domestic labour market to increase domestic demand is vital. Again, it will reduce vulnerability of the rural poor, address economic growth ensuring adequate level of social protection and access to entitlements for the masses and in turn help accentuating in the overall wealth creation in the country. Seen from any angle, it is a winning proposition to focus and streamline internal migration sector.

Conclusion

This paper presents new knowledge by unfolding various forms of opportunities and vulnerabilities of internal migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. It argues that crises not only create vulnerabilities but also provide

opportunities for collaboration, fostering a sense of community, and developing support systems. People engage with one another and create networks that provide assistance and support in difficult situations. These networks can act as an informal safety net by giving people the information, resources, and emotional support they need. They can also operate as forums for exchanging best practices, knowledge, and skills, promoting resilience in both individuals and communities. However, each of these issues varies from individual to individual and from community to community within the social structure, which requires further understanding. While the findings of this study confirm the need for comprehensive social protection mechanisms for the internal migrants, policy responses are essential for ensuring improved working and living conditions of specific vulnerable groups of migrants, such as domestic workers and rickshaw pullers, in cities. In spite of its enormous contribution to Bangladesh's development progress, internal migration still remains unregulated in the country. For sustained and balanced growth, there is a need to decentralise economic opportunities at local levels and to formulate policies to regulate internal migration. Further studies on these areas will help bring new insights and thus benefit policy makers and practitioners.

Notes

- 1 Bangladeshi taka, the currency of Bangladesh.
- 2 Financial Year (FY): The calendar year that begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following year.
- 3 World Bank estimates have projected that overall remittances sent home by Bangladeshi migrant workers will drop to \$14 billion in 2020, representing a roughly 25% decrease from the previous year (Aneja and Islam, 2020).
- 4 Bangladesh is divided into eight administrative divisions: Dhaka, Mymensingh, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Barisal, Khulna and Rangpur, subdivided into 64 districts or *Zila*. These districts are further subdivided into 492 sub-districts or *Upazila*, each with its own police station (except for those in metropolitan areas) and are further divided into several unions made up of multiple villages or *Gramgulu*.
- 5 The PRAN-RFL Group is renowned for its broad range of industries, which includes food and beverage, plastics, and agricultural equipment. With operations in over 145 countries, it is one of the biggest corporations in Bangladesh. With its global headquarters in Dhaka, Bangladesh, PRAN-RFL Group has over 10,000 employees. See also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PRAN-RFL_Group
- 6 Two different kinds of domestic worker exist: *Chuta* (temporary) and *Bandha* (permanent). *Chuta* domestic workers often work for specific hours/tasks each day. It is evident that *Chuta* workers work in numerous houses in addition to one specific one. Their job is completed under fixed-amounts, hourly, or fixed-amount contracts. Additionally, *Bandha* domestic workers spend the entire day working at one particular house. Their agreements are for a set number of months. As can be seen, a *Chuta*'s income is significantly more than a *Bandha*'s at the end of the month (Hossain, 2016).
- 7 A mobile phone app-based financial service available in Bangladesh, run by BRAC Bank Limited as a subsidiary under the control of Bangladesh Bank. Rocket, Nogod, Upay and some other similar services have also come up fast.
- 8 Since Bangladesh is a Muslim country, the country celebrates the two most significant religious festivals for the vast majority of its citizens. *Eid-ul-Fitr* (which commemorates

the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting) and *Eid-ul-Adha* (which honours Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael as an act of obedience to God) have been assimilated into Bangladeshi culture.

- 9 The study was concluded in May and reported in June 2023. It was primarily quantitative but a mixed-method study of 344 migrants and family members that included internal migrants, using convergent parallel design method (probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling technique to select from beneficiary database, plus network sampling, and other qualitative tools like FGDs, KIIs), was conducted in six (6) districts of South-Western, South-Eastern regions, and in the Dhaka district. It was done by RMMRU for Skills-21, ILO (Azad, 2017).

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Jan Sahas India for giving us the opportunity to carry out the research on which the paper is written.

References

- Abrar, C. R., & Azad, S. N. (2004). *Coping With Displacement: Riverbank Erosion in North-West Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Ranjpur-Dinajpur Rural Society (RDRS) and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).
- Afsar, R. (2001). Sociological Implications of Female Labour Migration in Bangladesh. In R. Sobhan & N. Khundker (Eds.), *Globalisation and Gender: Changing Patterns of Women's Employment in Bangladesh* (pp. 91–166). Dhaka: University Press Limited.
- Afsar, R. (2005). Internal Migration and the Development Nexus: The Case of Bangladesh. In T. Siddiqui (Ed.), *Migration and Development: Pro-Poor Policy Choices* (pp. 39–70). Dhaka: University Press Limited.
- Ahmed, I., & Kamal, S. M. (2020, 4 June). Bangladesh at work in the era of COVID-19: Job Creation and Inclusive Growth, *Bdnews24.com*. Dhaka.
- Retrieved from <https://bdnews24.com/opinion/features-analysis/bangladesh-at-work-job-creation-and-inclusive-growth-in-the-era-of-covid-19>.
- Alam, S. (2020, 21 September). Covid-19 and the Indefensible Position of Internally Displaced People in Bangladesh, *The Daily Star*. Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/news/bangladesh-will-not-feature-modi-biden-meeting-3352256>.
- Aneja, A., & Islam, S. T. (2020). *Bangladesh faces a crisis in remittances amid COVID-19*. World Economic Forum, Cologne. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/bangladesh-faces-a-remittances-crisis-amid-covid-19/>.
- Azad, S. N. (2017). *Tracer Study on Returnee Migrants' Economic Programme under the Skills-21 Project*, ILO. Part of 4 Policy Briefs for ILO – WIF Project, The Policy Brief was on Convergence between Migration, Employment, and Social Protection in Empowering Women in Communities of Origin, Supported by International Labor Organization (ILO). Dhaka. (mimeo).
- Azad, S. N. (2018). *Social Exclusion and Migration – Policy Implications from Convergences and Divergences. Outcome of a research under Prokash Project. Supported by British Council – FCDO*. Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU). Dhaka. (mimeo).
- Azad, S. N. (2023). *Tracer Study on Returnee Migrants' Economic Programme under the Skills-21 Project*, ILO. A project commissioned by the European Union in 2018. The study is an assessment of skills development Programme under Skills-21 Project of

- ILO in collaboration with TVET Institutes under DTE, with TTCs under BMET, and with UCEP-OKUP-HELVETAS Consortium. Dhaka. (mimeo).
- Bangladesh Bank. (2021). *Economic and Financial Stability Implications of COVID-19: Bangladesh Bank and Government's Policy Responses*. Financial Stability Department, Bangladesh Central Bank, Dhaka. Retrieved from https://www.bb.org.bd/pub/special/covid19_26092021.pdf.
- Bangladesh Bank. (2022). *Quarterly Report on Remittance Inflows in Bangladesh July-September 2022*. Bangladesh Central Bank, Dhaka. Retrieved from https://www.bb.org.bd/pub/quarterly/remittance_earnings/july-september_2022.pdf.
- Bangladesh Bank. (2023). *Monthly Data of Wage Earner's Remittance*. Bangladesh Central Bank, Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://www.bb.org.bd/en/index.php/econdata/wageremittance>.
- Barai, M. K. (2021). COVID 19 in South Asia and the Way Forward: An Introduction. *South Asian Survey*, 28(1), 7–19.
- Barker, N., Davis, A., López-Peña, P., Mitchell, H., Mobarak, A. M., Naguib, K., Reimão, E. M., Shenoy, A., Vernot, C. (2020). *Migration and the Labour Market Impacts of COVID-19*. (WIDER Working Paper 2020/139). World Institute for Development Economic Research (WIDER), United Nations University (UNU), Tokyo. Retrieved from <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Working-paper/PDF/wp2020-139.pdf>.
- BBS. (2011). *Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010*. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka.
- BBS. (2014). *Bangladesh Population and Housing Census 2011: Socio-economic and Demographic Report (National Report Volume: 4)*. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka. Retrieved from http://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/National%20Reports/SED_REPORT_Vol-4.pdf.
- BBS. (2015). *Population Distribution and Internal Migration in Bangladesh*. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka. Retrieved from http://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/PopMonographs/Volume-6_PDIM.pdf.
- Billiet, A., Dufays, F., Friedel, S., & Staessens, M. (2021). The Resilience of the Cooperative Model: How do Cooperatives deal with the COVID-19 Crisis? *Strategic Change*, 30(2), 99–108.
- BMET. (2023). *Overseas Employment and Remittances (1976–2023)*. Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka. Retrieved from <http://www.old.bmet.gov.bd/BMET/viewStatReport.action?reportnumber=24>.
- BOIL. (2022). *Cities' COVID Mitigation Mapping Project Dhaka, Bangladesh: A Displaced City, Exploring the Secondary Impact of COVID-19, Social-Economic Disruption Resulting Migration from Cities*. Bangladesh Open Innovation Lab (BOIL), Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/cities-covid-mitigation-mapping-project-dhaka-bangladesh-displaced-city-exploring>.
- Bowins, B. (2021). *States and Processes for Mental Health Advancing Psychotherapy Effectiveness*. Cambridge: Academic Press.
- Buheji, M., & Ahmed, D. (2020). Foresight of Coronavirus (COVID-19) Opportunities for a Better World. *American Journal of Economics*, 10(2), 97–108.
- Bundy, J., Pfarrer, M. D., & Coombs, W. T. (2016). Crisis Situations Necessitate Flexible Solutions as Both Individuals and Communities Strive to Overcome their Difficulties. *Journal of Management*, 43(6), 1661–1997.

- Chowdhury, A. (2023, 4 July). Internal Migration: A Problem or a Solution? *The Financial Express*. Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/reviews/internal-migration-a-problem-or-a-solution>.
- Dorosh, P., Pauw, K., Pradesha, A., & Thurlow, J. (2023). COVID-19 and the economic recovery in South Asia: Economywide Modelling scenarios for Bangladesh and Nepal. *Early View*. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/aepp.13355>.
- Furceri, D., Loungani, P., & Ostry, J. D. (2020). *How Pandemics Leave the Poor Even Farther Behind*. International Monetary Fund (IMF), Washington, D.C. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2020/05/11/blog051120-how-pandemics-lea-ve-the-poor-even-farther-behind>.
- GoB. (2009). *Millennium Development Goals: Bangladesh Progress Report 2008*. General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/MDG%20Progress%20Report%2011.pdf>.
- GoB. (2020). *Eight Five Year Plan July 2020–June 2025: Promoting Prosperity and Fostering Inclusiveness*. General Economic Division, Planning Commission, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka. Retrieved from http://www.plancomm.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/plancomm.portal.gov.bd/files/68e32f08_13b8_4192_ab9b_abd5a0a62a33/2021-02-03-17-04-ec95e78e452a813808a483b3b22e14a1.pdf.
- Hossain, M. (2016). বাসায় কাজ করা মহিলা অর্থাৎ বৃদ্ধাদের নিয়ে একটি ফিচার রচনা [A feature essay on a woman who works at home]. somewhereinblog, Dhaak.] Retrieved from <https://m.somewhereinblog.net/mobile/blog/mhku007/30145514>.
- Hossain, M. Z., Riad, M. M., & Ahmed, J. U. (2016). Rural–urban Migration in Bangladesh and Its Nexus with Some Socioeconomic Indicators at Origin and Destination. *International Journal of Social Relevance & Concern*, 4(12), 1–14.
- Hwang, T.-J., Rabheru, K., Peisah, C., Reichman, W., & Ikeda, M. (2020). Loneliness and Social Isolation during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Psychogeriatrics*.
- ILO. (2003). *Poverty and Employment in Crisis Situations: The Gender Dimension*. National Policy Group, Policy Integration Department, International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/—emp_ent/—ifp_crisis/documents/publication/wcms_116437.pdf.
- ILO. (2020). *From Crisis to Opportunity for Sustainable Peace: A Joint Perspective on Responding to the Health, Employment and Peacebuilding Challenges in Times of COVID-19*. International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_761809.pdf.
- ILO. (2024). *Decent Work*. International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva. Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org/topics/decent-work#:~:text=Goal%208%20of%20the%202030,the%20ILO%20and%20its%20constituents>.
- Jamal, E. O. (2020, 13 July). How three economic impacts of Covid-19 could spell danger for Bangladesh, *The Daily Star*. Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/the-overton-window/news/how-three-economic-impacts-covid-19-could-spell-danger-bangladesh-1929277>.
- Joshi, T., Mainali, R. P., Marasini, S., Acharya, K. P., & Adhikari, S. (2021). Nepal at the Edge of Sword with Two Edges: The COVID-19 Pandemics and Sustainable Development Goals. *Journal of Agriculture and Food Research*, 4. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666154321000405>.
- Khan, M. A., Naqvi, H. A., Hakeem, M. M., ud Din, G. M., & Iqbal, N. (2022). Economic and financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Asia. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 29, 15703–15712. Retried from <https://link.springer.com/article/>

- 10.1007/s11356-021-16894-9#:~:text=The%20confidence%20lost%20by%20the,the%20small%20and%20medium%20businesses.
- Leach, M., MacGregor, H., Scoones, I., & Wilkinson, A. (2021). Post-pandemic Transformations: How and Why COVID-19 requires us to Rethink Development. *World Development*, 138(105233), 1–11.
- Mahmud, A. & Islam, M.R. (2021). Social Stigma as a Barrier to Covid-19 Responses to Community Well-Being in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Community Well-Being*, 4(315-321).
- Miah, A. S. M. J., Islam, T., Anika, I. A., & Swarna, N. R. (2020). *Economic Impact of COVID-19 and Way forward for Bangladesh*, Dhaka. Retrieved from http://www.brac.net/images/news/downloads/Economic-Impact_PPT_9%20June_final.pdf.
- Muhammad, A. (2015). *A Model of Neoliberalism. The Case of Microfinance and NGOs*. Volume 66, Issue 10. Bangladesh. Retrieved from <https://monthlyreview.org/2015/03/01/bangladesh-a-model-of-neoliberalism/>.
- Murakami, K. (2021). Learning in Retirement: Developing Resilience and Becoming a Resourceful Practitioner of Life. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 28(March). Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2210656120301343>.
- Newage Bangladesh. (2021, 8 April). Bangladesh allots Tk 572cr for Jobless People for COVID-19 Restrictions, *The New Age Bangladesh*. Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://www.newagebd.net/article/134813/bangladesh-allots-tk-572cr-for-jobless-people-for-covid-19-restrictions>.
- Osmani, S. R. (2005). *The impact of globalization on poverty in Bangladesh*. (Working Paper No. 65). International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva.
- Payne, P., & Lipton, M. (1994). *How Third World Rural Households Adapt to Energy Stress: The Evidence and the Issues*. International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, D.C.
- Pietrabissa, G., & Simpson, S. G. (2020). Psychological Consequences of Social Isolation During COVID-19 Outbreak. *Frontiers Psychology*, 11. Retrieved from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02201/full>.
- Rahman, M., Sadique, M. Z., Sadique, M. Z., Bari, E., & Salma, U. (2016). *Advancing the Interests of Bangladesh's Migrant Workers Issues of Financial Inclusion and Social Protection*. (CPD Working Paper 112). Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301655467_Advancing_the_Interests_of_Bangladesh's_Migrant_Workers_Issues_of_Financial_Inclusion_and_Social_Protection.
- Rahman, M. H. (2022). *Analyzing COVID-19 Impact on Income and Internal Migration Pattern in Bangladesh*. Bachelor of Arts, East Delta University, Chittagong. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358286281_Analyzing_COVID-19_impact_on_income_and_internal_migration_pattern_in_Bangladesh.
- Rahman, S. S. (2021, 6 May). Internal Reverse Migration Amid COVID-19: A Case Study of Bangladesh, *The Migration News*. Retrieved from <http://www.themigrationnews.com/news/internal-reverse-migration-amid-covid-19-a-case-study-of-bangladesh/>.
- Raihan, S., Bidisha, S. H., Uddin, M., Ahmed, M. T., Nahar, M. A., & Ahmmmed, S. (2022). *Impact of COVID-19 on Labour Market and Migration in Bangladesh*. South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM), Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://sanemnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Report-Employment-Survey.pdf>.
- Rashid, H.-U. (2020, 22 June). করোনায়া় ঢাকাছাড়া ৫০ হাজার ভাড়াটয়া়া (50,000 tenants outside Dhaka in Corona), DW News. Bonn, Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/bn/%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%B0%E0%A7%8B%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%9F%E0%A6%A2%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%95%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9B%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A1%E0%A6%BC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A7%AB%E0%A7%A6%E0%>

- A6%B9%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9C%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%AD%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A1%E0%A6%BC%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9F%E0%A6%BF%E0%A7%9F%E0%A6%BE/a-53900166.
- Rasul, G., Nepal, A. K., Hussain, A., Maharjan, A., Joshi, S., Lama, A., ... Sharma, E. (2021). Socio-Economic Implications of COVID-19 Pandemic in South Asia: Emerging Risks and Growing Challenges. *Front Social*, 6. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8022444/>.
- Sabates-Wheeler, R., & Waite, M. (2003). *Migration and Social Protection: A Concept Paper*. (Working Paper - T2). Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and Poverty, University of Sussex, Brighton. Retrieved from <http://www.issa.int/ger/layout/set/print/content/download/39544/772256/file/2sabates-wheeler.pdf>.
- Sakamoto, M., Begum, S. & Ahmed, T. (2020). Vulnerabilities to COVID-19 in Bangladesh and Reconsideration of Sustainable Development Goals. *Sustainability*, 12(13), 5296.
- Sarker, S. (2021, 21 September). Of Pandemic and Urban-rural Exodus, *The Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/columns/of-pandemic-and-urban-rural-exodus-1632150015>.
- Sen, A. (2009). *Risks, Vulnerability and Poverty in Bangladesh: Issues and Evidence (Variations on a Theme)*. Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS). Dhaka. (mimeo).
- Siddiqui, T. (2022). *Impact of Migration on Transformation to Sustainability: Poverty and Development in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).
- Siddiqui, T., & Mahmood, R. A. (2015). *Impact of Migration on Poverty and Local Development in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC) & Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).
- Siddiqui, T., & Sikder, M. J. U. (2014). *Migration of the Marginalised: Domestic Workers and Rickshaw-Pullers in Dhaka City*. Dhaka: Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).
- Sikder, M. J. U. (2013). *Remittances and Social Resilience: A Study of migrant households in Bangladesh*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Monash University, Melbourne.
- Sikder, M. J. U., Higgins, V., & Ballis, P. H. (2017). *Remittance incomes and social resilience among migrant households in rural Bangladesh*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Stalker, P. (2008). *Protecting Migrant Workers: Governance of Labour Migration in Asia and the Pacific*. International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva. Retrieved from https://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/handle/1813/87731/pub08_28.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
- Storr, V., Haeffele, S., Lofthouse, J., & Grube, L. E. (2021). Crisis as a Source of Social Capital: Adaptation and Formation of Social Capital during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *COSMOS + TAXIS*, 9(5+6), 94–108.
- Suttie, J. (2022, 14 February). The Many Ways We Helped Each Other During COVID. *Greater Good Magazine*. Berkeley. Retrieved from https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_many_ways_we_helped_each_other_during_covid#:~:text=Some%20called%20elderly%20neighbors%20to,collect%20masks%20for%20essential%20workers.
- TBS. (2021, 13 July). Tk 3200cr Stimulus for the Poor Announced, *The Business Standard (TBS)*. Retrieved from <https://www.tbsnews.net/coronavirus-chronicle/covid-19-bangladesh/pm-announces-5-stimulus-packages-low-income-people-274210#.YO3IbLIIm5F8.facebook>.
- The Daily Star. (2023, 13 January). Where did most Bangladeshi Migrant Workers go in 2022? *The Daily Star*. Dhaka. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/where-did-most-bangladeshi-migrant-workers-go-2022-3219506>.

- Trading Economics. (2023). *Bangladesh Remittances*. Retrieved 16 July 2023, from Trading Economics, New York. <https://tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/remittances>.
- UNESCAP. (2020). *COVID-19 and South Asia: National Strategies and Subregional Cooperation for Accelerating Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery*. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok. Retrieved from <https://repository.unescap.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12870/895/ESCAP-2020-PB-COVID19-South-Asia-national-strategies-subregional-cooperation-recovery.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- UNICEF. (2021). *COVID-19 and Migration for Work in South Asia: Private Sector Responsibilities*. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Kathmandu. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/12656/file/Report%20-%20COVID-19%20and%20Migration%20for%20Work%20in%20South%20Asia%20Private%20Sector%20Responsibilities.pdf>.
- United Nations. (2009). *Rethinking Poverty, Report on the World Social Situation 2010*. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. ST/ESA/324.

11

CIRCULAR LABOUR MIGRATION AND WOMEN IN THE INDIAN SUNDARBANS

Subjective Experiences of Gendered Belonging

Anuradha Sen Mookerjee

Introduction

Migration is a gendered phenomenon. While the drivers of migration impact men and women differently and patterns of circulation differ based on gender, the totality of the migration experience in terms of the risks, vulnerabilities, needs, exclusions, relationalities and interdependence that are involved in the migration process significantly differ on the basis of gender. Inquiries of migrant cultures and social realities of migrant journeys have engaged with the cultural and materialities perspective, tracing the temporal and socio-spatial dynamics of embodied migration processes based on the experiences of migrants and their families. Migrant subjectivity offers insight into what goes into the understanding of attachment and relatedness, which comprehensively informs the migrant's sense of 'belonging', i.e. emotional connection and personal feelings regarding a particular group, place or social location and the influence of it on the trajectories of migration. Particularly for circular migration, "which refers to repeated migration experiences between an origin and destination involving more than one migration and return" (Hugo, 2013), it is significant how belonging influences and shapes these repeat migration processes that keep bringing the migrants back to the place of origin and sending them off to the destination. This essay traces how gendered belonging in their particular spatio-temporal context, impacts circular internal migration processes through the complexities in migrant subjectivities. I analyse the life histories of women in the context of labour migration in the Indian Sundarbans. The Sundarbans that has salt-tolerant mangrove forests, the place being criss-crossed by rivers, mudflats and small islands, lying in the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal are shared by Bangladesh and India. Both women and men in the small islands of the Indian Sundarbans, resort to

circular migration as a prominent livelihood strategy. This study is based on ethnographic data collected from Sundarban island villages in the Canning and Kakdwip blocks of South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal and Kolkata. It traces the socio-spatial dynamics of gender to analyse the changing nature of belonging of those influenced by migration to space and place. Situating migrants and their families in terms of their subjectivities and practices, I explore how migration is experienced in the ecologically fragile translocal village communities of the Indian Sundarbans, subjectively and affectively, in context of gendered spatialities (both material and symbolic) in the post COVID-19 context. I analyse the complex and layered socio-spatial dynamics of gender that emerge from the women's narratives of navigation of the structures of patriarchal constraints through agency and access to resources. I demonstrate how gendered belonging influences circular labour migration, which through its influence on relational arrangements, in turn shape the nature of belonging to the place the circular migrants keep returning to, i.e. "home". I argue that over time changes in gendered belonging that emerges through material and symbolic context of circular labour migration is found to bring about shifts in gender arrangements within the household space, which in turn brings about transformative changes in gender relations in the space of the community.

Context of Circular Migration and Gender in the Indian Sundarbans

Circular migration in particular often involves movement from peripheral locations, with the migrant living in both the origin and destination. The life histories I explore need to be situated within the meaning of the Indian Sundarbans as a region, the latter being understood as a spatial entity constituted through performances, shaped through practices, discourses, relations, and connections that come together, being connected in historically contingent ways in peoples' cultural, economic, and political contexts and struggles (Paasi, 2010, 2298). In this essay investigating gendered belonging, I focus on the origin and belongingness pertinent to space and place of the origin in the Indian Sundarbans.

The Sundarbans is the stretch of mangrove forests, lying on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal, shared by Bangladesh (60%) and India (40%). The Indian part of the Sundarbans is spread across 54 inhabited and 48 forested islands along the Bay of Bengal coast in southern part of the state of West Bengal that are highly vulnerable to climate variability experiencing Severe Cyclonic Storms (SCS) regularly destroying human settlements and livelihoods. The Indian part of the Sundarbans delta with forests and small islands lies within the state of West Bengal (WB), covering an area of 9,630 square kilometres of coastal-saline agroclimatic zone spread across the districts of North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas and partly shares the maritime border with Bangladesh. The 54 inhabited islands spread over 5,400 square kilometres, are part of the active Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) delta, routinely devastated by floods and storms. The 4,200

square kilometres of forested area spread across 48 forested islands are the natural habitat of the protected, Bengal Tiger that has made Sundarbans famous when in 1987 West Bengal entered the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources list of World Heritage Sites. The islands of the Indian Sundarbans region are protected by 3,500 kilometres of earthen embankments that are raised mud quays called *bādh* in Bengali, which are built to protect the areas under cultivation from the saline river water. Describing the region as “being shaped by tidal waves where everything looks transient and fleeting”, with “disaster more as a frequent, mundane and every-day phenomenon”, Mukhopadhyay (2016, 3) describes that the forested land which disappears under water every six hours during high tide is the abode of wildlife, while the islands where people live are formed of low, flat alluvial plains, with erected mud embankments around them to prevent their submergence, with the forests and the islands being connected by tidal rivers flowing around them. Mathurakhanda, one of the villages where I conducted ethnographic research for example, lies on one end of the Bali Island in the Gosaba block and has the Bidyadhari river flowing all around the island, with the river flowing out to the Bay of Bengal.

The inhabitants of these islands depend on natural resource-based activities, with 59% of the workers engaged in agriculture, which is mostly rain-fed single crop cultivation and 5% being involved in fishing as per the Census of 2011 and collecting non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as honey, bee wax, firewood, tannin bark, *nypa fruticans* (golpata) among others (Mistri and Das, 2018, 148), with fishing as an activity being routinely affected by environmental legislations enforced on the region (Mistri and Das, 2015). Scholarship on Sundarbans have observed the linkages between one single storm surge and two to three years of complete crop failure in the region, followed by years of low yielding rate in agriculture on account of soil salinity and absence of fresh water for irrigation and noted how stringent environmental legislations, hydro-climatic hazards, degrading riverine environment, lack of storage facility for perishable crops, poor connectivity with big cities, inadequate market infrastructure and market intelligence and human–tiger conflict, together contribute in making lives of people hazardous in the Sundarbans region in India (Mistri and Das, 2018). Jalais (2010, 5) has pointed out, “Sundarbans region as a whole is considered ‘down’ because it is infamously one of the poorest and least well- connected regions of WB”. Mistri and Das (2018, 164) in their study on peoples’ overall concern regarding the environmental change in Sundarban concludes that while people perceive environmental risks to be moderately affecting their livelihoods, they are mostly concerned about micro-risks including their own family, community and local incidents rather than a holistic concern for the Sundarbans or the people around the world and the non-human nature including wildlife and mangroves. Saha and Goswami (2020) observing the nexus of biophysical and infrastructure stresses have noted that together with limited local employment opportunities have over time affected agriculture and rural livelihoods in these areas, giving rise to male outmigration.

The Indian Sundarbans, as a region has been historically been informed by migration, with migrants being moved to these islands from places far from West Bengal, such as Chotanagpur, Hazaribagh, Manbhum in present-day Jharkhand, from Balasore in Orissa and from the Arakan coast in Myanmar, as well as from various districts of Bengal, such as Bankura, Birbhum, Midnapur, Nadia, Jessore in the middle of the nineteenth century by the British after the East India Company (EIC) acquired the civil administration of Bengal (Chatto-padhyaya 1987: 59–60; 1999: 14, Jalais, 2010). Recent studies of migration from the Sundarbans region have observed the extensive out-migration and the challenges faced by migrants engaged in informal sectors as unskilled workers (Hajra and Ghosh, 2018). At least one member from three-fourth of the households (HHs) have been migrating out from the region in search of work (Mistri, 2013, p. 94; Ghosh, 2012, p. 77), as people of Sundarbans region find it difficult to find more than six months of employment in a year, are compelled to diversify their jobs in the lack of livelihood activities in the region (Mistri and Das, 2018, 148–149). Some studies have commented on the family of migrants who are left behind reporting psychosomatic stress disorder living far away from male migrants (Das and Ghosh, 2022). In the post-partition period, circular out-migration performatively informed the Indian Sundarbans region spatially, with large numbers of male outmigration to other Indian states to pursue economic opportunities; some women also seasonally migrated to different states, with many of them taking up domestic worker jobs in the nearby city of Kolkata, with some of them also migrating to Delhi.

Rural women of the Indian Sundarbans region are located in adversity resulting from poor socio-economy, education and health parameters and gender-based discrimination. They face problems of hunger, absence of care and attention, hard physical labour, less income and wealth, power, violence, poor social status and are under-represented in policy and decision-making (Datta, R. and Mete, 2022). They often migrate into the urban areas for work where they are often subjected to deprivation. Scholarship on women's empowerment in the region have observed the additional barriers to women's empowerment in the region, due to a male dominated society, illiteracy, lack of economic independence and conservative social structure with religious obscurantist practices and beliefs (Sardar, 2022). During my field research, I was travelling in Mathurakhanda village in a *toto*, a motored vehicle used for plying passengers in the island, with few women who had attended a discussion that I had conducted in a local NGO site. The passengers in the *toto* included a middle-aged woman farmer named Ganga, who had participated in the focused group discussion. Just as we were approaching her house, she told the *toto* driver to stop as her house was just across the field. The *toto* driver, a local teenager, responded to Ganga, “your house, is it? It is your husband's house; what do you mean saying it is your house?” In response, Ganga did not stand up for her claim to her home; instead, she quickly rephrased her statement saying, that it was indeed her husband's house and not hers. While quickly

getting down from the *toto*, she smiled and told me, that she has much to share, and we must separately meet up. This incident spoke much about not just how ownership of property is gendered, with property of the household being considered to be “naturally” belonging to the husband, but how women in this community despite being farmers and food producers who participate in the rural markets, continue to be perceived socially and symbolically as household subject of labour. It also demonstrated how gender often operates through the unquestioned acceptance of power of men in the community that manifests in this case through mild public rebuke for how Ganga perceived her relationship with her home. Kabeer (2005, 15) has pointed out that, empowerment has been observed to be rooted in how people see themselves which is also critically intertwined “with how they are seen by those around them and by their society”. That the teenager male *toto* driver who was driving a vehicle on a public road in the community thereby a figure in the public space of the community, did not hesitate to question Ganga’s verbal claim to her house reveals that social sanctions do not strongly curb or regulate such utterances to women, who have limited social power.

Circular Labour Migration and Gendered Spatialized ‘Belonging’

Understanding migration as a performative, necessitates an understanding of migration in spatial terms, recovering migration in terms of relationalities. The understanding of exclusions through engendering of the migration discourse is strongly associated with not only the analysis of the presence of women in various streams of labour migration and the focus on circularity but the engagement with migrant cultures from the perspective of materialities, embodiment and identities (Christou and Janta, 2019), the affectivities of embodied mobilities (Christou, 2011, Christou and King, 2011) and the shaping of identities. Subjective understanding of migrant identity, i.e. how the migrant conceives her or his own self, articulation and conceptualisation of migrant status, requires the exploration of social life of the migrant in which ‘belonging’ is a critical constituent (Jha and Singh, 2021, 11). Scholars have observed that the concept of belonging makes it possible to facilitate understanding beyond “patterns of group formation to what is relationally and materially at stake – the real consequences that people confront” (Kuurne and Vieno, 2021, 281). The study of belonging enables the analysis of attachments, linkages and relatedness that uncovers spatial complexities involved in the social, emotional and affective experience of migration as a social process. “People may feel that they belong to something without necessarily describing this feeling as an identification or identity”, and the choice of using the concept of belonging enables scholars “to emphasize the fluid, unfixed, and processual nature of diverse social and spatial attachments” (Lähdesmäki et al., 2016). The exploration of spatial belonging that results from migration and translocal processes, with belonging to a place being approached as materialized and embodied

experience, facilitates the understanding of how space functions to connect the diverse dimensions and relationalities of belonging.

Belonging has been understood as social locations, identifications, emotional attachments and ethical valuations, that are distinct from the ‘politics of belonging’, which highlight political dimensions that position people within, or as outsiders of groups and/or collectives (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Antonsich (2010) argues “that belonging should be analysed both as a personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)”. May (2011) has noted that belonging brings to light the actively lived aspect of social structures offering a complex person-centred and dynamic approach. She has argued that the focus on belonging allows for investigation “of the mutual influence between self and society”, and of how everyday practices that are often taken for granted and unconscious, while intertwined in trajectories of time and space, are generative of social change.

Gendered analysis of labour migration, as pointed out by Sen (2022, 112–113) cannot rely on national data as migrants no longer fit into the old boxes, in terms of categorization of migrants, making it necessary to undertake qualitative studies that capture the flows of movements, complex and multiple motivations that are revealed in the migration histories of individual women. In a study of individual women migrants, she shows that many women migrants have been at some point a participant of family migration, consisting of the entire household or a fragment, while others have experienced single migration mostly as child domestic workers, with migration patterns including multiple spatialities, including rural–rural, rural–urban, urban–rural, employment migration, marriage migration, associational migration (Sen, 2022, 114). In context of the complex spatialities of belonging, this study of circular labour migration is situated within the “structures of feeling” within spaces of homes, communities and workspaces to understand the workings of belonging in context of gender in the Indian Sundarbans.

Circular Labour Migration and Girl Child: Power and Agency

Banu Mondal, a 42-year-old woman from Amtali village in the Indian Sundarbans, located in Gosaba block, South 24 Parganas district had travelled for more than four hours with her husband Hemanta to Kolkata’s New Town area to start a job as a domestic worker. According to Banu’s employer her skin had sun burns, her hands and feet wore visible signs of hard labour. Her husband had looked distinctly urban and rather removed from working in the sunny agricultural fields, in a comfortable pair of pants and shirt. He was a 50-year-old man, who had attended school till senior secondary level, wrote poetry and had interest in literature. Banu mentioned that she had just finished sowing paddy for the monsoon crop sometime back. She belongs to a very poor family. Her home does not have a bathroom nor a toilet. They use the toilet of her

next-door neighbour who is Hemanta's younger brother. Banu lives in Amtali with her husband Hemanta, her daughter-in-law Tulsi, who had completed her graduation degree, and her three-year-old granddaughter, Bonu. Her 25-year-old son who is a college dropout is a migrant worker in Kolkata and works with a delivery company. Banu was the only uneducated member of the family.

Hemanta mentioned that they are small farmers who cultivate 4 bighas of land (1 bigha is equivalent to 0.33 acres in West Bengal). While the family cultivates 2.5 bigha of their own land, they additionally rent 1.5 bighas of land for cultivation. They cultivate paddy during the monsoon and are mono crop growers. Hemanta had mentioned that they do not lack food in the family but lack money. Hemanta runs a small shop in the Amtali market, which is not a profitable enterprise. He mentioned to Banu's employer that his five-year-old granddaughter Bonu has a huge tumor in her neck and he went with his daughter-in-law for her treatment to All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi, where they stayed for a month and have spent a large amount of money and have incurred debts, necessitating that Banu take up a job in Kolkata. As the chances of the girl's survival from the recommended modality of treatment had been slim and they decided to pursue a different route of treatment and are now consulting a reputed homeopathic doctor in Gosaba, in the Sundarbans. During her interviews, Banu referred to her husband as her "malik" (meaning "the owner") and I was told that Hemanta did most of the talking when the couple arrived at the employer's house in Kolkata. During the first meeting, Banu kept standing in her employer's presence despite being asked to sit while her husband was comfortably seated. Clearly within the boundaries of the physical space of the employer's living room, Banu was distinctly lower in the power hierarchy from her husband, as she chose to stand in her husband's presence. Also, Hemanta had mentioned that he had come to put Banu for work, demonstrating not only his complete control over Banu's labour power but also the absence of freedom on her part to independently sell her labour.

Banu mentioned that she and her daughter in law were the main farmers in the family and her husband supported them as and when needed. Her son had no interest in farming, like many young people in the Sundarbans and preferred doing jobs in the nearby city of Kolkata, even though his wife, while being educated still helped with the family's cultivation needs. Clearly, education offered his son the status or alibi to absolve himself of farming responsibilities; while his educated wife was still located within the agricultural labouring space of household and tied to responsibilities connected with the land and social reproduction. However, the education has earned Banu's daughter-in-law the freedom to pursue her daughter's medical treatment in Delhi, even though she was accompanied by her father-in-law Hemanta, in her husband's absence as he was working in Kolkata.

Banu grew up in Amtali village and was the second among the three daughters. Her mother had lost a male child both before her birth and one after her birth. Her father was so upset with her birth as a girl that to secure her life

from her father's fierce angst in having a girl-child, Banu was sent away to be raised in her mother's uncle's house located at some distance in the same village. She was raised by her uncle's wife, while her mother gave money to the aunt for buying Banu's daily quota of milk. Banu as the girl-child abandoned by her parents, did not have access to schooling. She grew up acquiring skills of farming and being very attached to the elderly aunt, who was like a mother to her. When Banu was 8 years old, her uncle and aunt who were an elderly couple invited their elder daughter, her husband and three young children to move in with them to help with their cultivation needs. The elder daughter's husband upon discovering the aunt and Banu's mutual fondness for each other resolved to send Banu back to her father's house. Banu was beaten and scolded and, in several instances, dragged physically and sent to her father's house. Banu was emotionally attached to her aunt, and she kept going back to her despite the violence she faced at the hands of the husband of the aunt's daughter in that house. Banu's emotional dependence on the aunt and her family who were placed in a powerful social location reveals that as a girl-child she was disempowered on account of gender-related inequalities that further intensified the effects of poverty on her as she failed to choose any alternative space for herself. Finally, a friend's family who had already migrated to Kolkata found 8-year-old Banu domestic work with a family in Kolkata. Sen (2022) in her study of single women migrants and women single migrants who are domestic workers in South Kolkata, has mentioned that the most common pattern is that of young girls under fourteen who travel from village to city, is that they usually find employment as live-in domestic workers.

Banu wanted to return to the village, to her aunt as she was beside herself in being separated from her. Initially she went back to the village for about ten days, after a month and half of work in the city, and had a harder separation from the village after her mother passed away when she was 12 years old. Gradually she settled in her life as a domestic worker in the city and she received love and affection from her employers, visiting the village after every few months of work. Banu's traumatised separation from her paternal family on account of discrimination as a girl child and thereafter her adopted family, gave rise to emotions in her that informed her belonging to her village as a social space and the place of her origin. There was no particular home with which she identified as a teenager, but Amtali village represented familiarity to her. Banu's employers gave her security of space and emotions as she felt loved by the employers. While the social space as seen from Banu's experience is informed by gender-based discrimination, both by her parents and in her aunt's place, her initial migration to the city was not empowering as it was merely fulfilling survival needs and not contributing to a sense of independence.

Over time Banu found friendship with a girl named Shobha who was educated and in a relationship with a young boy named Hemanta when they were in their late teens. Banu got to know Hemanta, after being introduced by Shobha and she developed familiarity with him. After a few years 15-year-old Shobha moved from Amtali to Kolkata with her brother and sister-in-law to

find employment as a domestic worker; however entire Amtali village was shocked when they got to know that Shobha had passed away shortly after moving to Kolkata. After Shobha's death, Banu met Hemanta occasionally when she used to return back to the village from the city and over time she developed a strong fondness for him. According to Banu, while Hemanta was not romantically interested in her at all, Banu had made it her purpose to get married to Hemanta. She garnered support of the local political party members in the village to put political pressure on Hemanta to marry him, much to Hemanta's consternation. Her years of migrant work and life, according to Banu played a significant role in enabling her to find the courage to go ahead with marrying the person she related in her imagination. The space within the home and community for Banu had been hostile to her on grounds of gender and her experience of being a migrant worker had helped her through survival to find the mental strength to stand up for herself and shift her terms of negotiation. Sociological scholarship has highlighted the mutually constitutive nature of self and society. May (2011, 364) has contended that belonging is an appropriate concept for studying the relationship between the self and society as it is person-centred and takes us into the everyday where the official and unofficial spheres interact, thereby allowing to view the relationship between self and society as complex and through its dynamic nature offers an opportunity to examine social change. This particular act on Banu's part demonstrates how she configured her belonging to the village with a man she had come to admire and imagine romantic attachment and the institutional presence of the organized political mechanism which played a role in ordering the community life of Amtali. In the absence of family members who belonged to the symbolic and material space of "home", where one could put up one's plea for a hearing with senior family members as is the convention in many homes in West Bengal, Banu had identified with the village in the Indian Sundarbans spatially and as a place to be her "home". She had identified the political party, situated in the official sphere as the informal justice provider in the village and involved it to interact with her unofficial personal agenda to marry Hemanta, with the successful outcome that he was compelled by the party to marry Banu. Here one can see how agency was constituted through migrant work and power in the community was reclaimed as Banu sought the freedom for herself to marry the person of her choice. Gendered social disadvantage of self in this case was reconstituted to advantage through interaction of the official and unofficial sphere to generate agency. It was not clear if Banu paid the party officials to force Hemanta to marry her. Once married, Banu was subject to severe verbal and domestic abuse by Hemanta as he hated the way she manipulated him into marrying her using political and community pressure. According to Banu, he was often provoked by his mother and sister who had very little acceptance of her as his wife within the confined space of her new home of her in-laws, to beat Banu at the smallest of conflicts. Thus, while Banu demonstrated agency in marrying Hemanta and exercising choice, it was not agency that is generative of

empowerment as through the process she had not really challenged power relations. Following marriage, Banu had one son with Hemanta but there remained a major faultline in the marriage due to the way in which it was executed. Banu mentioned that following the birth of her son she had always slept in a separate bedroom and there was no intimacy in the marriage. Banu was reconstituted in disempowerment spatially through the control of her body within her new home and her belonging to the space of her new home was severely gendered as power lay with her husband for all decisions within the household.

Banu primarily engaged in rice farming and has been the main farm worker for her nuclear family for the last 26 years. She sometimes worked as a waged agricultural labourer that fetched 300 rupees daily wage. Her husband Hemanta manages a shop in the village. On several occasions Banu went with other women in the village to work on the paddy fields of Andhra Pradesh for sowing rice seedlings using the transplantation method. Her work was highly appreciated for efficiency. According to Banu, she found some respect grudgingly from her husband and his family over the years as she was the primary worker behind the family agricultural income and was knowledgeable of the farming process. Hemanta distractedly engaged in cultivation and displayed a stronger interest in literature and writing poetry. Within Amtali's village community, Banu became fairly popular as a cook.

Emotions of acceptance in the role of the rice farmer amidst the multitude of problems that Sundarbans agriculture routinely faces due to cyclones and storm surges, as Hemanta's wife and a reputed cook within the community shifted Banu's feelings of belonging within both the household space and the community space in Amtali. Banu's belonging to her home and community had been negotiated in her favour which was nonetheless gendered. She recounts that her experience as circular migrant to Andhra Pradesh was critical to providing her strength to cope with her adversities. With Banu's granddaughter needing critical medical treatment, her daughter-in-law and Hemanta took her to Delhi, where they spent a lot of money for medical treatment. The absence of money flow led the family to identify Banu as the labouring body to find employment as a domestic worker in Kolkata. She mentioned that her neighbours do not know that she is away for domestic work to the city. For them, Banu is away with her son in Kolkata. It reveals that while temporary migrant work has been the mechanism to respond to her challenges, migrant domestic work for women in Kolkata is not looked upon with as much respect in Amtali's village community, which has a large migrant population. Comparatively migrant agricultural work commands more respect. It demonstrates that domestic work as part of care work that is mostly undertaken by women occupies a lower position in the gendered work hierarchy.

Circular Labour Migration and Agency

Gita Mondal is a 40-year-old domestic worker in Kolkata hailing from Ramganga village in Patharpratima block of the Sundarbans in the South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal. The Gobadia river flows hardly 100 metres away from the Ramganga village embankment at low tide and their house is most vulnerable to damages in the event of storms and cyclones. Three-quarters of households in Patharpratima block live below the poverty line, with financial indebtedness being widespread in the area (DRCSC, 2013). Landholdings have often become fragmented through generations, with many families being left with only homestead of approximately 0.09 hectares apiece. Gita has two teenage children, a boy and a girl, who live with her husband in their home in the Sundarbans. She mentioned that she has three sisters who are older than her and three sisters who are younger to her. According to Gita, her father was a womanizer who was also lazy in nature. He had a fishing business but could not succeed much due to his lack of efforts and he was also got embroiled in several legal cases. Gita's family had about 30 bighas (1 bigha being equivalent of 0.33 acres in West Bengal) of cultivated land but gradually they lost their land as his father sold the land on financial compulsions. She had three unmarried sisters at the time of her mother's death who were younger than her and she felt responsible to raise the sisters. Gita mentioned that she was not interested in attending school and due to the unstable home condition, she was inspired to migrate at a very young age to Kolkata to work as a full-time domestic worker on a small salary of 110 rupees (equivalent to 1.32 USD) per month. Her mother desisted her, but Gita did not listen to her mother. With survival being the primary issue in the Sundarbans, Sil (2016) has observed that education and health are not given high priority. He points out that despite high primary school enrolment, there is very high non-attendance in upper primary levels. When Gita's mother passed away in a few years' time, her father became an alcoholic and was hardly at home. Often, he would be found lying in the village streets in a drunk condition. With her migrant work in Kolkata over the years, Gita was able to get her younger sister study till middle school and pass the standard eight exams. She was able to marry off two of her sisters, giving them jewellery and money as dowry. According to Gita, "When my mother died, my sisters became very vulnerable; so, I decided to support my three sisters. Over the years, I made jewellery for them with the money I was gifted by my employers during the Durga Puja". When her younger sisters were married, her employer asked her about her future plans and counselled her to get married. After much consideration, Gita agreed to marriage. She chose her husband, who belonged to an extremely poor landless family. Her husband's father like many of Sundarbans' poor and landless inhabitants used to go to the uninhabited forested islands to gather wood and made a livelihood out of forest produce. He was killed by a tiger when he went to the forests one day. The widowed mother-in-law raised their three children single handedly. Gita said

that she went against the advice of family members regarding the choice of groom, and it did not bother her to marry a poor person who had a lot of financial debts. She mentioned, "We all work to earn our living. Why should I discriminate a man for being poor?" Both of Gita's decisions to support her sisters with money and education and thereafter her own marriage was freely taken by her and demonstrates the ability on her part to make and act on her own life choices, even in the face of others' opposition.

After her marriage, Gita and her husband initially lived in the Sundarbans where her husband worked in the fishing trawlers that went to the sea as it fetched him a larger income in comparison to fishing using small boats. While Sundarbans' rivers earlier were profitable for fishing, the pressure on the waters have led to the yield of fish in Sundarbans' river being drastically low. It has led to fisherfolks seeking out higher income by participating in fishing trips to the Bay of Bengal in large and powerful mechanized boats i.e. trawlers (Chacra-verti, 2015). Gita worked as agricultural labour while staying at home while her husband went with trawlers as going fishing with the trawler meant a journey of more than a month and a half or sometimes even two months at a stretch in the sea. It meant no daily income and that compelled families to make ends meet by women selling their labour, if waged work was locally available. The struggles of the landless families in Sundarbans are distinctly different to land-owning families. Gita mentioned, everyday food was a struggle for her family, and it was dependent on their wage income. Food security together with the damage caused by natural disasters are massive twin challenges to women like Gita in the Sundarbans who have been documented by scholars to be mostly responding to the needs of their families.

Gita mentioned that while her husband loved and cared for her, her mother-in-law had little acceptance of her as a daughter-in-law, leading to a hostile space for her within the family. According to Gita, her mother-in-law preferred her elder sister-in-law as the latter had fair complexion and Gita is a dark-skinned girl. The prejudice and discrimination in terms of skin colour worked to Gita's disadvantage within the household and within the community. To pay back the debts of the family, Gita's husband migrated to Delhi to work alongside her husband's elder brother and wife who were already migrants to Delhi. While Gita also wanted to migrate to Delhi, along with her children, she was advised to remain at home and take care of the three children of the elder sister-in-law and her mother-in-law. Gita's wage income provided for the family expenditures at their Sundarbans home. Gita's husband had a very hard time with the Hindi language as it was his first time in Delhi city. After some months, he fell sick in Delhi and came back to the Sundarbans. While within Gita's home there was a differential acceptance of her on account of her skin colour, what the difference demonstrates is that married women are often subject to control within spaces of their homes of their husbands and it is often the mother-in-law who represents the patriarchal project in everyday life of the household, which is a gendered space.

One major material acquisition of Gita and her husband, after he came back to the Sundarbans was a fishing boat. It was their only asset. They had put together their savings to buy it and they went for fishing on a daily basis in the river around their island. During phases of their life when they came back from being a migrant, to live in their village in the Sundarbans, they would take up fishing for livelihood. Fisheries, including the harvesting of shrimps, have been a major source of income in the Sundarban islands, which have a population density of 1,100 persons per square km, compared to the national average of 382 per square km, making poverty among island households twice as high as national rates (The Citizen, 2014). As a material object the fishing boat was their lifeline in the island and played a significant role in the shaping of their belonging to the village. Yet this belonging was gendered as the home space was constituted through practices that discriminated Gita. In addition, Gita could go fishing only when her husband was around. When her husband was away with trawlers, Gita had to search work as an agricultural labourer. She could not hire a labourer or request a known male relative to accompany her for fishing and the community was also a gendered space for Gita.

After some years, Gita came to know that while she was taking care of the three children of her sister-in-law in the village, instead of paying back debts her brother-in-law and sister-in-law were saving their income for their nuclear family. This led to a family conflict and Gita and her husband decided to migrate to Mayur Vihar in east Delhi. Gita found employment as a domestic worker in three households while her husband worked in three jobs, as cleaner in high rise residential towers, and in two shops. Gita mentioned that suddenly one evening after some altercations her sister-in-law told her that no longer they could eat from their kitchen nor cook there. Gita had no utensils and could not cook that night and was compelled to have dinner at a neighbour's house in Delhi. The incident led Gita and her husband forming a separate household in Delhi. It caused much trauma for her, and it was her employer who asked her why she was feeling so upset. Upon learning that she was without a home and a kitchen, her Punjabi employer gave her 2,000 rupees to buy utensils and also gifted her blankets, a mattress and a steel wardrobe for her use. Gita's employer counselled her to stay strong through the crisis and assured her of financial support. However as soon as Gita took her things home, her sister-in-law took away the steel wardrobe. She said that it was an adjustment of costs borne by her in offering Gita and her husband accommodation and food in their initial time in Delhi. This totally devastated Gita and once again her employers came to her rescue. They supported her with things to help her put together a kitchen and a bedroom. The memory of the conflict in terms of being refused usage of the sister-in-law's kitchen space and the receipt of items for personal use from the employer highlights aspects of materiality that hold an important place in the migrant's world. The emotions that intertwine the migrant and the employer of domestic work plays a crucial role in how migration as an adaptive process is perceived by the migrant. While wage labour for

migrant women is often highly exploitative as highlighted by Sen (2021, 113), Gita's positive experiences with her employers and lifelong continuity in terms of migrant domestic work demonstrate that her positive experiences kept her going on her journey as a circular migrant. Recognising the value of migrant work for her, Gita recounted that she too engaged in value creation, and she felt recognised as a trusted and efficient worker. Also, while as a live-in domestic worker Gita's salary was small and it was a distress sale of labour but through the relationships she built with her employers she managed to secure other safety nets that enabled her pursuit of greater self-reliance. It particularly offered her relief during the times of the COVID-19 pandemic when domestic work had been discontinued in Kolkata. Because of her savings Gita could tide over the months when there was no work for her due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and at the same time she had work offers awaiting her in the period following the end of the country-wide lockdown in India. While Gita's husband now lives with the children in the village and makes a living through fishing, Gita works as domestic worker in Kolkata. While she earns a salary of 10,000 rupees, the employers look after her like a family member and she receives much needed support for her health and children's education from them. She mentioned that she had told her husband that now they must save to make gold jewellery for her daughter's marriage. Gita sounds happy with her achievements in supporting her sisters and her children with her efforts. While she has not broken any stereotype, she has greater decision-making power in carrying out her social roles and responsibilities. It is demonstrative of how Gita's effective agency and resources have shaped her capabilities, offering her the potential to live the life she wants.

Male Outmigration and Gender relations: Transformative Agency

Twenty-seven-year-old Parul Sarkar of the Mathurakhanda village in the Bali island of Gosaba block is a woman farmer. As a child, she belonged to a very poor landless family in the neighbouring Amlamethi village in Bali. Her father used to go to the forests to fetch firewood and honey and mother worked as agricultural labourer. On one occasion, while visiting the forests her father broke his spine and her mother had been inflicted with severe gut diseases the treatment of which cost the family a lot of money. As the parents were not able to manage enough resources to make ends meet, they sent 11-year-old Parul off to Kolkata, and her primary education was nipped in the bud. She had completed school till the fourth standard and was sent away as a child worker to live with a family in Kolkata. Parul recounts that with her salary, she was able to buy her parents 10 kathas (one katha is equivalent of 0.03 acre in West Bengal) of land prior to her marriage at the age of 17 years. Parul mentioned that the land that was bought with her salary as a migrant worker, had been registered in her father's name. At the time of the interview, Parul had been married for 11 years with two children, her son being 9 years old and daughter

being 7 years old. Her husband over the last ten years has been working in stone chips production in Kerala, a destination state where many workers migrate from the Indian Sundarbans. He visits her once a year and rest of the time they telecommunicate. Parul referred to her husband as her “malik” meaning “owner” and mentioned that she consults her husband over mobile phone regarding household decisions pertaining to the cultivation and their children. Parul’s husband Sukanta mentioned on the phone that without Parul’s active contribution to the cultivation needs, he would possibly have been unable to get past the challenges of the time of the pandemic and children would have been out of school. According to him, he is able to continue with his migrant work that keeps him away for long months at a stretch and make money for the family only because of the lead role that Parul has taken to be a self-sufficient farmer. He mentioned that she is an efficient money manager, and she manages all payments independently.

According to Parul, both her mother-in-law and father-in-law did not like her for the initial 5 years of her married life as she did not receive gifts of gold ornaments for her marriage from her maternal family nor did she know work related to paddy cultivation. In addition, her in-laws did not allow her to go outside the village for the initial 5 years of marriage. She mentions that while in Kolkata she was looking after a 5-year-old girl who was emotionally attached to her. However, despite that girl’s requests for Parul to visit her in Kolkata, she was unable to travel to Kolkata as her in-laws declined her requests to visit her past employers in the city as according to Parul’s mother-in-law, girls who work in Kolkata have “bad” character. On several occasions Banu had mentioned that since she has come out from home, she had to now put up with many situations. It reveals that woman’s space continues to be socially perceived as being “ideally” limited to home, a space that is ideationally having virtues of sacredness, which is supervised and where the woman is subject to control. Family based control mechanisms operate, often circulated through actions by other older women that is constrictive to women’s mobility and regimes of migration. Consequently, the home of her in-laws emerged as a space of gendered belonging for Parul, and she says she felt miserable living there.

Parul’s family has 1 bigha of land which belong to her in-laws; she cultivates this land for the summer and her parents-in-law cultivate the monsoon paddy crop. Three years back, Parul and her husband bought ten kathas of land for their own homestead to which she has since moved after they built their house; she grows vegetables (potatoes, brinjal, chillies, onions, among others) and undertakes fruit farming (mango, wax apple, lemon, guava, papaya, bananas) on the land around her house. In the small fishpond next to the house, she cultivates fish that she sells them in the local market. It demonstrates that agriculture and fishing as resources offer a medium to Parul for the exercising her agency. She mentioned that she buys the rice grains after deciding together with her husband on which variety of crop to buy and then processes it for

making rice saplings to be planted in the field. With a hired labour, she undertakes farm activities that involve physical hardship. Since she has care giving responsibilities of her two young children, during the time of sowing of rice saplings she has a sister from my maternal family who comes by and stays with her to look after them. She herself goes to the market to buy rice seeds and also organizes the purchase of water for the cultivation through water suppliers in the village.

Parul is member of a SHG (Self-Help Group) of women in the village and she saves 50 rupees with the group every month. Some time back she took out a loan of 45,000 rupees that she is paying back now from the money she makes from agriculture and from the money her husband sends her. In 2020 during the pandemic, Parul's husband fell sick with COVID-19 in Kerala and he was without any work for eight months. During that time, Parul mentioned that her COVID-affected husband was looked after, at least partly, by the employing company and she mentioned that without the support of the employer her husband might not be alive. She mentioned that she sent money for his housing and food by taking a bank loan through the SHG as no casual labour jobs were available in the village during the pandemic. Parul recalls the period as one of massive hardship for her family. She said they were unable to buy food and her father sent her bags of rice which he had received from a public food security programme. Her brother used to occasionally come and give them some money to buy essential items. Parul reasoned, "it is my husband's migrant work that keeps us going. How can we raise our two young children or cultivate our field unless we have money to buy seeds and water? I felt extremely helpless when he was down with COVID in Kerala. I used to cry a lot. Nobody stood by us, not even my mother-in-law. As a family we depend on both my husband's wages as a migrant worker and my money from paddy and vegetable farming." It reveals the diversification of income sources and co-dependence on agricultural and migrant income for agricultural families with small land holdings in the Indian Sundarbans. It also reveals the significant role of institutionalised credit access through the distribution of rural bank loans without collaterals to women SHG members, that have an empowering role in enabling the defining of priorities by women through the enforcement of loan claims. Over the last three years Parul has a cumulative loan of 4 lac rupees, incurred over the months of non-income during COVID and the construction of their house. According to Parul, through her participation in the SHG and access to bank loans, she has felt empowered in tiding over financial crises in the family and she is now recognised by her mother-in-law as a contributor to the household economy. She gives her mother-in-law 1,000 rupees every month and her husband's mother also confides to Parul about her needs. Kabeer (2005) has observed that "Resources are the medium through which agency is exercised. ...The way in which resources are distributed thus depend on the ability to define priorities and enforce claims." Parul mentioned that seeing that now she makes reasonable profits selling vegetables, fruits, fish and paddy, looks after her husband's

income and ensures family savings, other than successfully constructing a house with a fishpond, her mother-in-law showers affection on her that was previously absent. Paul's success in defining financial priorities for the family, helps her connect to her husband's family further and she now feels she belongs with her husband's family and can claim support from her husband's parents. The shifting in the ways of Parul's belonging through her association with the creation and distribution of resources took place in the context of male out-migration and her pursuit of livelihood as a farmer that in turn shaped the terms in which resources were available to her and came to redefine her agency. It led to the reshaping of her claims to the household and community space and demonstrates her empowerment through her capacity to make strategic choices. Referring to the house where Parul lived with her two children, Parul said that since it has been built by her husband and her, so she can refer to it as "my house"; she clarified that she did not consider her parents-in-laws' house where she lived after her marriage as "my house". In the processes that shape gender relations, material relations play a significant role and are factors that shape belonging to the household space.

Parul pointed out that she has to often interact with men in the community who sell water for the fields or seeds for cultivation. It sometimes attracts negative comments from onlookers in the community that as a married woman she is interacting with men, when her husband is away from home. She said that her being alone at home with her children, with her husband being away, also sometimes attracts adverse comments from people in the community. Parul explained, "Often I need to visit Gosaba to visit the bank and buy things from the market as it is less expensive there and then I hear that people have been talking that I am a woman with a questionable character as I am away from home and my children for long hours. People talk behind my back that I live alone and so they think men visit me at night. There are two big lights on the front and back of our house. Despite that people talk that our house is not having enough lights outside. Nobody has the courage to tell this to me directly. My husband is fully aware of my daily life and there is complete trust between us. Sometimes when I need to plant vegetable, I might request a man to help me. It gives rise to speculation that the man is helping me because he likes me as a woman. The truth is that I have hired a man for labour and I am paying him wage as per prevalent rates for helping me with my vegetable farming. I must stay here and be there for my work and my children and I cannot be restricted by these social attitudes to young married women". Parul demonstrates transformative agency as an empowered woman in not only actively exercising decisions as a farmer woman who heads her household but also in leading her life in ways that challenges community-based power relations, bringing motivation and purpose to back her actions. Women like Parul who are small farmers belonging to migrant households, often entirely manage their cultivation needs by themselves. With cultivation being a complex multi-activity process involving material engagement in the field, there is conflict between the

perceived space of women's belonging within homes in the social imagination and the reality of women farmers' working lives within the community, with high levels of male out-migration being prevalent in these communities. Women despite being visible in the agricultural fields, on village roads and girl children in schools, continue to be imagined and socially constructed in embodied ways as the 'maternal body' or the 'sexualised body' which is encased within the boundaries of the house and activities of child rearing with woman's labour in the domestic and work domains being persistently devalued.

Conclusion

Banu's narrative reveals her suffering as a girl child abandoned by family and subsequently being sent off for migrant work, while Gita's narrative shows her being deserted as a child by a father who was absent to her life and not present for her three younger sisters that led to her opting for migrant work. For Parul, her education was nipped in the bud by her parents, and she was sent off for domestic work to the city, her parents selling her labour for the household survival. It exposes a gendered pattern of spatial discrimination of girl children within the household and thereby within the community in context of poverty and absence of livelihood opportunities, whereby systematic neglect of girl children take place with households exercising power over their minds and bodies. Women in the origin villages of Sundarbans with migrant husbands undertake full responsibilities of cultivation of lands and raise children even as husbands (migrant or non-migrant) continue to be head of households, with decision-making being sometimes shared. In all cases, the spatial positioning of girls and of women in context of migration both as an idea and a social reality shapes their belonging to the household and the community. Nonetheless there is a shift in women's agency and resources that occur through participation in the circular labour migration process, and it is found to be directly beneficial for the second-generation girl children. For Gita and Parul, their daughters are both studying and as for Banu's granddaughter, she has access to education and health that is clearly a priority for the family. While Banu had been abandoned by her parents, her granddaughter enjoys the attention from her family that does not discriminate her on grounds of gender, and she is looked after by her parents and grandparents and not forced to migrate and sell her labour. Clearly there is a slow shift in the terms of recognition of girl children. Strong gendered belonging to the home space and community in each case have over time shifted through demonstration of various forms of agency to be less starkly gendered belonging in these particular experiences.

In a group discussion at Parul's house on gendered belonging to the household in which they live with their husbands and/or extended family (including the in-laws) and raise children, Sabita, an educated woman farmer pointed out, that women in her experience are born in homes of fathers, then they are in homes of husbands after marriage and then later in life they are in their son's

home. She observed that never does the residential property i.e. the material structure identified as “home” is identified as belonging to the woman (referring to women in the community in the Indian Sundarbans under study). She argued that house ownership followed a male line. However, Parul intervened and said that she stood by her joint ownership with her husband of her house, that it was as much hers and she said, times are changing for women. With women like Banu, Gita and Parul who have been successful in bridging the ‘us/them’ divide along gender lines within their respective households to some extent, gradual shifts are taking place within households in the Indian Sundarbans at the interface of gendered relational arrangements of circular migration. Migration emerges as an influencing relational process that intersects with many other parameters including developmental interventions like SHGs for example, in bringing about shifts in how women and girls belong to the household.

Sen (2022, 105) has observed the proletarianization of migrants in urban employment. Both in Gita and Banu’s case, none of the parents were working as wage labourers; however, with the spatialized discriminatory dynamics of gender, these girl children were proletarianized into wage labour. Studies have shown that majority of migrant urban workers who are in insecure and ill-paid jobs, often find themselves in need of subsidy that in many cases are provided by the rural economy, with short-term or circular migration being a means of survival and a livelihood strategy of families linked to accumulation regimes (CWDS, 2012). Parul’s husband Sukanta for example needed money from the village during the COVID affected months when he was not having employment. It was Parul who took out a loan and sent him money for his food and accommodation in Kerala at that time. Deshingkar (2008) observes that the persistence of circular migration can be traced to mutual cooperation and assurance between sending families and the migrants themselves. Not only mutual cooperation and assurance between migrants and families but also the employers in context of domestic workers are found to be crucial in informing of agency through the meaning and purpose that is involved in the choice of migration. Other than security of a family home, a rural household with old grandparents are often considered a ‘safe space’ to look after the young children of migrant workers, alongside the care and support from urban employers at times of crisis are factors that intertwine the destination city and the rural places of origin that comprehensively contribute to the persistence of circulation. For places like the Indian Sundarbans, that lack employment and livelihood opportunities, both due to absence of development and are challenged by environmental factors and climate change, while being closely located to Kolkata city, there is hardly any separation in the survival strategies in the village and the city.

Banu and Gita’s migrant lives and Parul’s life in the migrant family space in the village demonstrate how migrant experiences have influenced the gendered nature of belonging to their home villages. Their emotions for home, their socio-spatial struggle over resources and the patterns of influence within their

agrarian households and community spaces have affected the journey of their agency in relation to empowerment. They have not only not only exercised choice in the course of their respective decision-making trajectories challenging existing power relations, they have informed transformative change within their households and community, that is demonstrative of the interrelatedness of self and society. Changes in belonging as seen in these cases from the Indian Sundarbans take place both deliberately with the desire in women to belong and habitually through work being done with their labouring bodies and with materials, in ways which result in concrete action and symbolic assessments of the work being done by women and men together for the household. It informs how women belong to their households through relationships whereby the woman who wants to belong connects with others, motivated by the hope of moving towards secureness in social space that in the process brings a definitiveness to how women belong in the collective life of the community. The women in this essay have taken the support of the labour migration process, being migrants and by being part of migrant households, to produce and reproduce spaces of practical support for themselves and establish a position for themselves within the household and community. Changes emerging through collectively shared arrangement of socio-economic life embedded amidst processes of circular labour migration involving interdependence and intersubjectivity at the household level between men and women, are instrumental in bringing about transformative changes in gender relations with shifts in gendered belonging.

Bibliography

- Antonsich, M., 2010. Searching for belonging—an analytical framework. *Geography Compass*, 4(6), pp.644–659.
- Chacraverti, S., 2014. The Sundarbans fishers coping in an overly stressed mangrove estuary. International Collective in Support of Fishworkers.
- Chattopadhyaya, Haraprasad, 1987. *Internal Migration in India: A Case Study of Bengal*. Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi.
- Christou, A., 2011. Narrating lives in (e) motion: Embodiment, belongingness and displacement in diasporic spaces of home and return. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 4(4), pp.249–257.
- Christou, A. and King, R., 2011. Gendering diasporic mobilities and emotionalities in Greek–German narratives of home, belonging and return. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 20(2), pp.283–315.
- Christou, A. and Janta, H., 2019. The significance of things: Objects, emotions and cultural production in migrant women's return visits home. *The Sociological Review*, 67(3), pp.654–671.
- Christou, A. and Kofman, E., 2022. *Gender and migration: IMISCOE short reader* (p. 123). Springer Nature.
- Curran, S.R., Shafer, S., Donato, K.M. and Garip, F., 2006. Mapping gender and migration in sociological scholarship: Is it segregation or integration? *International migration review*, 40(1), pp.199–223.

- Centre for Women's Development Studies, 2012, Gender and Migration: Negotiating Rights A Women's Movement Perspective (Key Findings)
- Das, D. and Ghosh, U., 2022. *Those Who Stay Behind: Lived Experiences from Indian Sundarbans Amidst Climate Change and Migration*, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group. Kolkata
- Datta, R. and Mete, J., 2022. The Socio-Economic Status of Females of Sundarban Regions in West Bengal. *Journal of Applied Development Economics*, 1(1), pp.33–41.
- Deshingkar, P., 2008. Circular internal migration and development in India. Migration and development within and across broader: Research and policy perspectives on internal and international migration, pp.161–188.
- Development Research Communication and Services Centre, 2013. Reconnaissance Study of five Blocks in Sundarbans, India under CCDRER project, 2012-2013 <https://www.drcsc.org/CCDRER/docs/Reconnaissance%20Study%20Report.pdf>
- Fargues, P., 2008. *Circular Migration: Is it relevant for the South and East of the Mediterranean?* European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
- Ghosh, A., Nanda, M.K., Sarkar, D., Sarkar, S., Brahmachari, K. and Ray, K., 2019. Application of multi-dated sentinel-2 imageries to assess the cropping system in Gosaba Island of Indian Sundarbans. *J. Indian Soc. Coast. Agric. Res*, 37, pp.32–44.
- Ghosh, A., 2012. Living with changing climate–impact, vulnerability and adaptation challenges in Indian Sundarbans. Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, 91.
- Goswami, R., Roy, K., Dutta, S., Ray, K., Sarkar, S., Brahmachari, K., Nanda, M.K., Mainuddin, M., Banerjee, H., Timsina, J. and Majumdar, K., 2021. Multi-faceted impact and outcome of COVID-19 on smallholder agricultural systems: Integrating qualitative research and fuzzy cognitive mapping to explore resilient strategies. *Agricultural Systems*, 189.
- Hajra, R. and Ghosh, T., 2018. Agricultural productivity, household poverty and migration in the Indian Sundarban Delta. *Elem Sci Anth*, 6, p.3.
- Hugo, G., 2013. What we know about circular migration and enhanced mobility. *Migration Policy Institute*, 7(8), pp.1–10.
- Impact Of Environmental and Climatic Changes on Food Production and Livelihood Baseline Study Report* Development Research Communication and Services Centre, Kolkata https://www.drcsc.org/CCA/Docs/Impact_of_Climate_Change_on_Food_and_Livelihood.pdf
- Jalais, A., 2014. *Forest of tigers: people, politics and environment in the Sundarbans*. Routledge.
- Jalais, A., 2010. Braving crocodiles with kali: being a prawn seed collector and a modern woman in the 21st century Sundarbans. *Socio-Legal Rev.*, 6, p.1.
- Jensen, K.B., 2017. Female child domestic workers' limited agency: Working and living in the private homes of employers in Bangladesh. *Risk, protection, provision and policy*, pp.87–102.
- Jha, S. and Singh, P.K. eds., 2021. *Home, Belonging and Memory in Migration: Leaving and Living*. Taylor & Francis
- Kabeer, N., 2005. Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1. *Gender & development*, 13(1), pp.13–24.
- Karmakar, S., 2021. Gender and Climate Change: The Condition of Women in the Indian Sundarbans. *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1, pp.1–5.
- Kuurne, K. and Vieno, A., 2022. Developing the concept of belonging work for social research. *Sociology*, 56(2), pp.280–296.
- Lähdesmäki, T., et al., 2016. Fluidity and flexibility of “belonging” Uses of the concept in contemporary research. *Acta Sociologica*, 59(3), pp.233–247.

- May, V., 2011. Self, belonging and social change. *Sociology*, 45(3), pp.363–378.
- Mistri, A., 2013. Migration and sustainable livelihoods: a study from Sundarban biosphere reserve. *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(2), pp.76–102.
- Mistri, A. and Das, B., 2015. Environmental legislations and livelihood conflicts of Fishermen in Sundarban, India. *Asian Profile*, 43, pp.389–400.
- Mistri, A. and Das, B., 2017. Migration in response to environmental change: A risk perception study from Sundarban biosphere reserve. In *Climate change, vulnerability and migration* (pp. 147–166). Routledge India.
- Mistri, A., and Das, B. (2018). Migration in response to environmental change: A risk perception study from Sundarban biosphere reserve. In S. Irudaya Rajan & R. B. Bhagat (Eds.), *Climate change, vulnerability and migration*. New Delhi: Routledge
- Mukhopadhyay, A., 2016. *Living with Disasters*. Cambridge University Press.
- Paasi, A., 2010. Regions are social constructs, but who or what ‘constructs’ them? Agency in question. *Environment and Planning A*, 42(10), pp.2296–2301.
- Quisumbing, A., Meinzen-Dick, R. and Malapit, H., 2022. Women’s empowerment and gender equality in South Asian agriculture: Measuring progress using the project-level Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (pro-WEAI) in Bangladesh and India. *World development*, 151
- Rajan, S.I. and Bhagat, R.B. eds., 2017. *Climate change, vulnerability and migration*. Taylor & Francis.
- Saha, S. and Goswami, R., 2020. Destinations of male outmigration and their drivers in Indian Sundarbans. *Space and Culture, India*, 8(1), pp.111–142.
- Sardar, A. 2022. Empowering women through alternative livelihoods in the coastal areas of the Sundarbans, West Bengal, India. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, Volume 10, Issue 7 July.
- Sen, S., 2021. Gender and migration: A contemporary view. In *Home, Belonging and Memory in Migration* (pp. 103–120). Routledge India.
- Sil, A., 2016. Reaching the unreached in Sunderbans. *Community Eye Health*, 29(95), p.S10.
- The Citizen, 2014. Women on the Edge of Land and Life In the village of Dakshin Shibpur, located on the Indian Sundarbans Delta, November https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/7/1495/Women-on-the-Edge-of-Land-and-Life?infinite_scroll=1.
- Yuval-Davis, N., 2006. Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40(3), pp.197–214.

INDEX

A

Asian Middle Class 38, 41
Abraham, Anu 11, 43, 45, 47
Adhikari, Jagannath 11, 80
Afghanistan 11, 17, 20, 21, 27, 31, 57, 59, 62, 65, 67, 69, 72, 92
Afghan Diaspora 56–60, 62, 66, 68–76
Afghan Diaspora Organizations (ADOs) 57
Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) 63, 77
Afghan National Diaspora Engagement Policy (ANDEP) 63, 72, 75
Arakan Province 143
Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace & Human Rights (ARSPH) 156
Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) 156

B

Bangladesh 156–157, 159–161, 173–197
Bangladeshi migrants 1, 14, 140
Bangladesh Rural Advanced Committee (BRAC) 175, 179
Baral, Chiranjivi 11, 80
Bhutan 8, 17, 23–24, 29–32,
Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan 3, 13

C

Care Givers 143–144
Chain Migration 40
Circular Migration 39, 166, 204–205, 222

Climate change 11–12, 96, 100–102
Climate change migration 166–170
Climate change refugees 165, 167
Consumer Pyramid Household Surveys (CPHS) 9
Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 103
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 103
Chowdhury, Mehdi 11, 16
Cultural Assimilation 134

D

Danish Refugee Council (DRC) 58
Decolonial perspective 11, 36, 49
Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE) 89, 114
Dhaka 123, 127, 149, 178–194
Diaspora 11–12, 56–75, 100–1, 147
Digital Labour 147
Dominant Migration Pathways 128

E

Economic Development 17, 33, 41, 58, 85, 87, 106, 174, 195
Emigration 2, 7, 24, 39, 41
Erdal, Marta Bivand 11, 35
Ethnographic Longitudinal Study 123

F

Foreign Employment Board 88–9, 91, 93, 111–12, 114

- Foreign Employment Policy 85, 87, 101, 107–8
 Foreign Employment Act 86, 107–8, 112, 144
 Foreign Employment Rules 107, 108, 114
 Focus group discussion 182
- G
 Genocide Day 143
 Global Compact for the Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) 84
 Global Risk Generation 126
 Global Risk Society 124, 126
 Gulf Migratory Corridor 1
- H
 Hawala system 60–62
 Human Development Index (HDI) 17
 Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act, 2007 86, 108
 Hypermobile Global Citizens 136
- I
 International Migration 1–2, 11, 16–33, 40, 47, 67, 101–2, 106, 127, 174, 184–85
 Internal Migration Policies 110
 International Migration stock 2
 Integration Policies 7, 12, 100
 India 1–3, 5, 8–10, 17–25, 32, 56, 65, 69, 81–83, 88, 91, 93–94, 102, 114, 132, 142, 147, 160, 178, 204–7, 2010, 217
 Indian Sundarbans 13, 204–210, 212, 218–19, 222–23
 International Organisation for Migration (IOM) 102
 International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 103
 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) 103
 International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) 103
 Immigration Act, 1992 108, 109
 Immigration Rules, 1994 108
- K
 Karachi 44, 48
 Khatiwada, Padma Prasad 12, 100
 Kelman, Ilan 12, 164
- L
 Large-scale surveys 126
 Livelihood Strategy 80, 128, 131, 205, 222
 Local Government Operation Act 2017 108, 110
- M
 Marchand, Katrin 11, 56
 Maldives 8, 17–9, 24, 30–2
 Migration Development Nexus 37, 53
 Migration Data Portal 5, 9, 16–7, 26, 31, 59
 Migration Policy Institute 3
 Mookerjee, Anuradha Sen 13, 204
- N
 Nepal 1, 8, 11–2, 17, 21–2, 28, 31, 69, 80, 81–95, 100–112, 115, 117–18, 147
 National Population Policy 85, 87, 108, 110
- O
 Outward–Migration 1, 71
 Outward–remittances 10, 15
- P
 Pacific Access Category 166, 167
 Pakistan 2, 5, 8–9, 17, 20–1, 23, 26, 31–2, 56, 59, 60, 62, 67, 69, 72
 Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) 189
 Palli Sanchay Bank (Rural Savings Bank) 189
- Q
 Quasi–longitudinal 11, 47
- R
 Rajan, Irudaya S. 1
 Rai, Mahendra 12, 121
 Rashid, Syeda Rozana
 Return Migration 5, 7, 42, 80, 81, 83
 Reintegration 70, 80–6, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93–4, 96, 101, 104, 107, 111–13, 116, 118
 Rohingya 12, 19, 142–150, 152, 156, 159, 160, 161
 Rural households 63, 92, 201
 Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (RERP) 92, 119
- S
 Sayed, Nasrat 11, 56
 Sengupta, Sucharita 12, 142
 Skilled Workers Arrival Database for Employment Support (SWADES) 94
 Social Network 187
 Social space 125, 126, 135, 211, 223
 South Asia 1–12, 16–8, 32, 33, 35, 36, 41, 43, 48–9, 62, 129, 130, 138, 143
 South Asian Migration 1, 2, 34
 Sri Lanka 8, 17–8, 22–24, 28, 31, 69, 91
 Stigmatization of migrants 46

Subedi, Mahendra 11, 80
Subjective Experiences 204
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
11, 84, 96, 103, 105, 107

T

Transnationalism 58, 78–9
The Small and Medium Enterprises
(SMEs) 92
The Ministry of Labour, Employment and
Social Security 114

U

Umbrella Association of Afghan Medical
Professionals (DAMF) 64

United Nations High Commissioner for
Refugees (UNHCR) 130, 142
Urban Middle-Class 128, 136

V

Vulnerabilities of Internal migrants 173, 196

W

Wadood, Syed Naimul 11, 16
West Bengal 205–7, 212, 214, 217
World Bank 7–9, 56, 62, 67–68, 196

Y

Youth Migration 121–22, 125, 129, 136, 138
Youth Mobility 55, 121, 139