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Emigration Policies of Major Asian Countries Sending Temporary Labour Migrants to the Gulf

Nasra M. Shah

Chapter in the volume:

Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries

edited by Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah

This is a chapter in the volume: Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah (eds.), *Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries*, Gulf Labour Markets and Migration (GLMM) Programme, Gulf Research Center Cambridge, 2018. For other chapters and the entire volume, please refer to www.gulfmigration.eu.

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Support: The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) receives support from the International Migration Initiative (IMI) of the Open Society Foundations (OSF), the National Priority Research Program (NPRP) of the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP- Kuwait) and relies on the institutional resources of GLMM partners.



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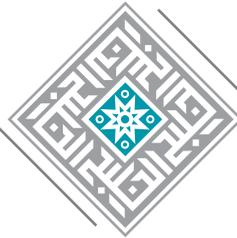
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First published 2018

Cover Photo: Imco Brouwer

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VII

Emigration Policies of Major Asian Countries Sending Temporary Labour Migrants to the Gulf

*Nasra M. Shah**

Abstract: The objective of this chapter is to outline the policies that have evolved in the major Asian countries from which migrants to the Gulf originate. The largest numbers of migrants presently in the Gulf countries are from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Nepal with each country having a stock of more than a million in the Gulf. The current situation has been enabled by a host of policies and legal frameworks that were put in place in response to the heightened demand for foreign workers in the 1970s, and generally persisting until now. The major thrust of the policies of sending countries centres on regulating, facilitating, maintaining, or maximising the outflows. Protection of relatively more vulnerable groups, such as female domestic workers, has also remained an important element with occasional bans and requirements of a minimum wage. A more recent development relates to concerted programmes and policies aimed at skill upgrading to make the workers competitive with workers from other countries. Moreover, policies for managing return migration are also gaining more traction now. Monitoring systems to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies, especially

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the ones relating to protection of workers, are weak or non-existent. Bilateral and multilateral efforts are, however, being made to enhance the benefits of migration for the sending and host countries, as well as the migrants.

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the seven Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, and Sri Lanka, with the largest outflows of migrant workers to the Gulf region in recent years. It highlights four different types of policies that are at the forefront of policy concerns and planning efforts of the sending countries: First, the desire to increase, or at least maintain, the level of outflows; second, effective regulation of the administrative structures that have been established to organise the outflow of migrant workers, including recruitment agencies; third, enhancement of competitiveness through skill development schemes, including pre-departure orientations and vocational training; fourth, protection of migrant workers, especially in low-skilled occupations and domestic service.

The chapter is organised into four sections. It begins with a description of the main features of migration to the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates [UAE]) from the sending Asian countries. The second section outlines the major policies of the seven Asian countries in terms of the major concerns spelt out by them in their policy documents regarding labour migration to the Gulf. The third section presents some results based on a focus group discussion with Asian labour attaches in Kuwait. The final section discusses some of the common elements of the major policies of sending countries and some of the specific emphasis they place conditioned by the nature of migration from a given country.

Main Characteristics of Migration to the Gulf

Before starting on a discussion of the major policies of each sending country, a brief description of the trends and patterns of migration from these countries is necessary to understand the differences and similarities that are likely to underlie the priorities and emphasis in their relative policy goals. In 2015, four of the seven countries had policies to raise emigration and three had policies to maintain it (Table 7.1). Thus, the general thrust of the policies is to prevent a decline in outflows and to enhance it as far as possible. Since they all send at least half of their migrants to the six GCC countries, this region carries a high degree of primacy in their policy focus.

Table 7.1: Views and policies of major origin countries on emigration, 2013 and 2015

Major Origin Country (Asian)	View of emigration 2013	Policy on emigration 2013	Policy on emigration 2015
Bangladesh	Too Low	Raise	Raise
India	Satisfactory	Maintain	Maintain
Indonesia	Too Low	Raise	Maintain
Nepal	Satisfactory	Raise	Raise
Pakistan	Satisfactory	Raise	Raise
The Philippines	Satisfactory	Maintain	Maintain
Sri Lanka	Satisfactory	Maintain	Raise

Sources: UN, Population Policies 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/WPP2013/wpp2013.pdf>; United Nations, World Population Policies Database, http://esa.un.org/poppolicy/about_database.aspx.

Several of the sending countries maintain accessible and active databases showing the annual outflow of registered migrants, according to various characteristics such as gender, occupation, and skill level. Bangladesh, Pakistan, Philippines, and Sri Lanka provide the most updated information. Data on outflows from India could be found in the annual report of the Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs, until this ministry was merged with the Ministry of External Affairs in January 2016. Annual reports for Nepal also provide some data on outflows. Data for Indonesia are hardest to find and are available only in periodic reports prepared by international agencies such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Table 7.2 shows a time series of outflows from the seven sending countries, based on these sources.

Since 1990, annual outflows to the GCC countries from most Asian senders have seen a remarkable increase. In the case of Pakistan, the annual outflows increased by almost 20 times from 41,611 persons in 1990 to 822,032 in 2016. The outflows from Bangladesh and India increased by about six times and from the Philippines by four times. Thus, the general policies to increase or maintain the level of outflows have been highly successful and offer scope for optimism. Indonesia seems to be an exception with a decline in the annual outflow of migrants from 2007 to 2014. We do not know how much of this decline is caused by the outflow of Indonesians to other countries as opposed to the GCC, since we could not find such data.

Table 7.2: Trends in annual outflows from Asian countries, by destination, 1990-2016

Countries of Origin	Receiving Countries						Total
	Bahrain	Kuwait	Oman	Qatar	KSA	UAE	
Bangladesh							
1990	4,563	5,957	13,980	7,672	57,486	8,307	97,965
1995	3,004	17,492	20,949	71	84,009	14,686	140,211
2000	4,637	594	5,258	1,433	144,618	34,034	190,574
2005	10,716	47,029	4,827	2,114	80,425	61,978	207,089
2010	21,824	48	42,641	12,085	7,069	203,308	286,975
2015	20,720	17,472	129,859	123,965	58,270	25,271	375,557
2016	72,167	39,188	188,247	120,382	143,913	8,131	572,028
2016(%)	12.62	6.85	32.91	21.04	25.16	1.42	100
India							
1990	6,782	1,077	34,267	-	79,473	11,962	133,561
1995	11,235	16,439	22,338	-	256,782	79,674	386,468
2000	15,909	31,082	15,155	-	58,722	55,099	175,967
2005	30,060	39,124	40,931	50,222	99,879	194,412	454,628
2010	15,101	37,667	105,807	45,752	275,172	130,910	610,409
2013	17,269	70,072	63,398	78,367	354,169	202,169	785,444
2014	14,220	80,419	51,318	75,935	329,937	224,033	775,862
2014 (%)	1.83	10.37	6.61	9.79	42.53	28.88	100
Indonesia ¹							
2007	-	-	-	-	-	-	696,746
2010	-	-	-	-	-	-	575,804
2014	-	-	-	-	-	-	429,872
Nepal							
2008/9	-	410	-	54,732	45,044	24,057	124,243
2010/11	-	7,981	-	35,943	62,499	24,047	130,470
2013/14	-	8,979	-	103,850	75,026	42,542	230,397
2014/15	4,168	9,634	3,470	124,050	96,887	53,094	291,303
2014/15 (%)	1.43	3.31	1.2	42.58	33.25	18.23	100
Pakistan							
1990	2,516	1,338	8,364	1,367	7,943	20,083	41,611
1995	1,424	3,898	934	632	77,373	28,681	112,942
2001	1,173	440	3,802	1,633	97,262	18,421	122,731
2005	1,612	7,185	8,019	2,175	35,177	73,642	127,810
2010	8,226	153	37,878	3,039	189,888	113,312	350,147
2015	9,029	164	47,788	12,741	522,750	326,986	919,458
2016	5,877	770	45,085	9,706	462,598	295,647	822,032
2016 (%)	1	0.09	5.48	1.18	56.28	35.97	100

Table 7.2 (contd.)

Philippines ¹							
1990	5,804	5,007	7,453	7,138	169,886	17,189	212,477
1995	4,131	9,852	4,603	9,691	168,604	26,235	223,116
2000	5,498	21,490	4,739	8,679	184,724	43,045	268,175
2005	9,968	40,306	5,308	31,421	194,350	82,039	363,392
2010	15,434	53,010	10,955	87,813	293,049	201,214	661,475
2014	18,958	70,098	15,880	114,511	402,837	246,231	868,515
2015	21,428	86,019	22,274	133,169	406,089	227,076	896,055
2015 (%)	2.4	9.6	2.48	14.86	45.32	25.34	100
Sri Lanka							
1998	7,116	28,834	4,294	12,576	59,397	21,883	134,100
2000	6,477	33,633	4,964	12,137	61,359	32,815	151,385
2005	3,751	36,157	3,562	35,953	76,210	36,371	192,004
2010	7,052	48,108	6,367	54,676	70,830	42,310	229,343
2014	3,972	43,528	5,750	84,571	80,539	50,192	268,552
2015	3,719	38,451	7,077	65,111	74,910	43,601	232,869
2014 (%)	1.6	16.51	3.04	27.96	32.17	18.72	100

Source: Compiled by the author from various sources and databases of the countries of origin, incl. ILO 2010; ILO 2011; ILO 2013a; ILO 2013b; ILO 2016.

² in particular cells indicates lack of data rather than the absence of any migrants.

¹ Outflow to all countries of the world, including GCC.

There are substantial differences in terms of the specific destination country in the GCC to which migrants from Asia go (Table 7.2). Looking at the most recent outflows, the majority of migrants from Bangladesh went to Oman or Saudi Arabia. A majority of Indians and Pakistanis as well as Filipinos went to either Saudi Arabia or UAE. Destinations of Sri Lankans were more varied and most went to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE. In the case of Nepal, Qatar was the most prominent destination country followed by Saudi Arabia. Being the most populous GCC country, Saudi Arabia has attracted the largest number of migrants within the region.

GCC destinations accounted for more than 95 per cent of all migrants in the case of India and Pakistan and about 88.4 per cent in the case of Sri Lanka. Nepalese, Bangladeshi, and Filipino workers have explored markets beyond the Gulf countries. About 58 per cent of Nepalese workers headed to the GCC and a very substantial proportion went to Malaysia in 2014-15. About one-fourth (24.5 per cent) of Bangladeshis went to destinations other than the Gulf in 2016. Also, about 60 per cent of all Filipino workers and 66 per cent of new hires went to the GCC while the rest headed to a number of other countries in 2014 (Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: Total outflow from Asian country to GCC, latest year

Country	Year	Total Outflow	# to GCC	% to GCC
Bangladesh	2016	757,731	572,028	75.4
India	2014	804,878	775,862	96.4
Nepal	2014/15	499,620	287,135	58.3
Pakistan	2016	839,353	822,032	97.9
Philippines	2015 ¹	1,437,875	896,055	62.3
	2015 ²	515,217	327,058	63.5
Sri Lanka	2015	263,307	232,869	88.4

Sources: Compiled by the author from various sources and databases of the countries of origin, incl. ILO 2010; ILO 2011; ILO 2013a; ILO 2013b; ILO 2016.

¹ Total land based workers.

² New land based hires, including top 10 destinations.

Table 7.4: Estimated stock of migrant workers in the six GCC countries from the seven main origin countries

	Migrants to the GCC						Total Migrants to GCC ¹
	Bahrain 2014	Kuwait end 2012	Oman 2010	Qatar 2013-2014	Saudi Arabia 2013	UAE 2013-2014	
Bangladesh	98,221	190,171	107,125	150,000	1,500,000	700,000	2,745,517
India	257,663	692,525	465,660	545,000	2,000,000	2,600,000	6,560,848
Indonesia	29,553	14,036	25,300	39,000	1,500,000	85,000	1,692,889
Nepal	722	55,486	n.d.	400,000	500,000	300,000	1,256,208
Pakistan	48,991	120,040	84,658	90,000	1,500,000	1,200,000	3,043,689
Philippines	29,722	161,742	15,651	200,000	670,000	525,530	1,602,645
Sri Lanka	7,627	109,860	10,178	100,000	550,000	300,000	1,077,665
Total Non-nationals²	683,818	2,299,691	816,143	1,986,174	*	7,800,000	

Sources: Compiled by the author from various sources and databases of the countries of origin, incl. ILO 2010; ILO 2011; ILO 2013a; ILO 2013b; ILO 2016.

¹ Total number of migrants to the GCC for each of these nationals.

² Total number of migrants in each GCC state.

Information on the total number, or stock, of migrants in each GCC country from each of the sending countries is not easily available and is not routinely published as part of GCC censuses. Estimates of the stock of migrants, based on various sources, are shown in Table 7.4. India had the largest stock of migrants in the Gulf (6.5 million), followed by Pakistan (3 million) and Bangladesh (2.7

million). Each of the other countries had a stock larger than one million in the Gulf. Consistent with the picture provided by annual outflows, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are home to the largest number of migrant workers in the Gulf.

Table 7.5: Gender composition of migrants in the six GCC countries from the seven main origin Asian countries

	Year	Male	Female	Total
Bangladesh ¹	2016	480,106	91,922	572,028
%		83.9	16.1	100
India	-	-	-	-
Indonesia ²	2014	186,243	243,629	429,872
%		43.3	56.7	100
Nepal ¹	2014-15	478,199	21,421	499,620
%		95.7	4.3	100
Pakistan	-	-	-	-
Philippines ^{2,3}	2010	154,677	185,602	340,279
%		45.5	54.5	100
Sri Lanka ²	2015	172,630	90,677	263,307
%		65.6	34.4	100

Sources: Compiled by the author from various sources and databases of the countries of origin, incl. ILO 2010; ILO 2011; ILO 2013a; ILO 2013b; ILO 2016.

¹ Numbers for GCC countries outflow.

² Numbers for migrants to all countries of the world, including the GCC.

³ New hires.

- data for India and Pakistan not available

Asian countries vary in terms of the gender composition of migrants they send to the Gulf. Migration from Nepal is primarily that of males, constituting about 96 per cent. In the case of Indonesia and the Philippines, more than half the migrants in recent years were female, and about one-third of those from Sri Lanka were female (Table 7.5). The sex ratio of outflows from Sri Lanka has changed markedly over the years. Almost three-fourths of all Sri Lankan migrants were female in 1997; since then, the trend has reversed and women constituted less than half of all migrants in 2008. The downward trend continued until 2015

(Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment 2015). Data on gender composition are not published by Pakistan or India.

Table 7.6: Skill level of migrants from Asian countries

	Number		%	
Bangladesh, 2016				
Professional	4,638		0.6	
Skilled	318,851		42.1	
Semi-Skilled	119,946		15.8	
Less/Unskilled/ Other	314,296		41.5	
Total	757,731		100	
Nepal, 2014/15				
Skilled	2,871		1	
Semi-Skilled	71,784		25	
Unskilled	212,480		74	
Total	287,135		100	
Pakistan, 2016				
Highly Skilled + qualified	24,682		3	
Skilled	335,671		40	
Semi-Skilled	152,235		18.1	
Unskilled	326,765		38.9	
Total	839,353		100	
Philippines, 2013¹				
Professional, Technical, Administration, Related	55,787		12	
Clerical workers	12,893		2.8	
Sales workers	9,220		2	
Service workers	230,030		49.5	
Production workers	147,776		31.8	
Other	9,182		1.9	
Total	464,888		100	
¹ Land based, new hires				
	Number	Males %	Number	Females %
Sri Lanka, 2015				
Professional + middle level	12,078	7	1,100	1.2
Clerical + related	11,025	6.4	1,447	1.6
Skilled	77,449	44.9	4,649	5.1
Semi-Skilled + Unskilled	72,078	41.7	10,203	11.3
Housemaids	-	-	73,278	80.8
Total	172,630	100	90,677	100

Sources: Compiled by the author from various sources and databases of the countries of origin, incl. ILO 2010; ILO 2011; ILO 2013a; ILO 2013b; ILO 2016.

Another characteristic that is likely to influence policy decisions of sending countries relates to the skill composition of the migrants. Data from five countries, except India and Indonesia, shown in Table 7.6, indicate that only a small percentage of migrants from Asia to the Gulf are highly-skilled professional workers. A vast majority are semi-skilled or low-skilled. Among women, a majority are domestic workers. About 57.3 per cent of migrant workers from Bangladesh were semi-skilled or unskilled in 2016, while the figure was 57 per cent for Pakistan. From the Philippines, almost half were service workers while 32 per cent were production workers in 2013. From Sri Lanka, 41.7 per cent of the males were semi-skilled or unskilled while 81 per cent of the females were domestic workers in 2015.

Major Policies of Sending Countries

This section outlines the main policies of the seven sending countries and presents some reflections and responses that such policies have generated among researchers. The main vision and goals of the emigration policies along with some of the strategies adopted to achieve such goals are highlighted.

Bangladesh

Planners as well as researchers recognise labour migration as a potential tool for socio-economic development and a very important instrument for poverty reduction in the country. Migration is considered an important livelihood strategy by and for Bangladeshis (Rahman 2011; Das et al. 2014). Manpower export is regarded as the safest, shortest, and lasting route to economic emancipation. Within this general vision, several policy endeavours have been made. A Ministry of Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment was established in 2001 to streamline and regulate migration. An initial emigration policy was established through the formulation of the Emigration Ordinance in 1982. This ordinance has undergone periodic revisions to accommodate the changing circumstances. In 2006, Bangladesh adopted an Overseas Employment Policy in order to “ensure the prospect of regular migration of long term and short term for both men and women from all parts of Bangladesh at a rational cost” (Islam n.d.). The key features of the policy were to eliminate irregular migration, protect the rights of migrant workers and their families, prevent misconduct in the recruitment process, encourage remittance flows through official channels, assist in re-integration of returnees, and allocate resources to strengthen the existing institutional structures. More recently, in January 2016, the Bangladeshi cabinet approved a revised and more detailed version of the 2006 policy entitled “Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment

Policy” (*Bangladesh News*, January 25, 2016). Six policy directives emphasised in the 2016 policy include the encouragement of safe migration, protection of migrants and their family members, ensuring facilities for and welfare of migrant workers, migration of female workers, associating migration with national development and proper planning for labour migration.

Focus on female workers is a relatively new concern in emigration policy. Bangladesh has had a history of periodically banning and then allowing labour migration of women workers (Siddiqui 2005). In 2003, the government eased restrictions on emigration of unskilled and semi-skilled women over age 35, but maintained a restriction on those aged less than 35. Subsequently, the minimum age for female migrants was reduced to 25 years (Belanger and Rahman 2013). The percentage of female migrants in the annual outflows has seen a marked increase from only a handful in the 1990s to about 16 per cent in 2016. The upward trend appears to be an outcome of the changed vision of the government about female migration. Migration of both men and women is now seen as an important strategy for enhancing socio-economic development at the national as well as individual level (Islam, n.d. (b)). Of all female migrants who went to the GCC countries in 2016, three-fourths went to Saudi Arabia. Some researchers argue that in the context of a patriarchal society where migration of low-skilled women is generally viewed in a negative manner, Bangladeshi women migrants face the risk of social stigma both before departure and upon return (Belanger and Rahman 2013).

Upgrading of skills is also seen as an integral part of this overall vision of maximising the benefits of labour migration (Islam, n.d. (b)). Bangladesh aims to reap the benefits of globalisation through developing a skilled workforce that would earn higher wages and remit larger amounts that can be used for development of the country. In the case of women, it appears that Bangladesh is open to the emigration of domestic workers and is trying to provide training for housekeeping skills through training centres.

Remittances are among the largest source of foreign exchange earnings in Bangladesh. From only about \$2 billion in 2001, yearly remittances increased consistently, to reach \$15.2 billion in 2015. A decrease in remittances occurred between 2015 and 2016, raising some worries. Over the years, the government has launched several incentivising programmes to encourage remittances through official channels. It has offered US dollar and other types of bonds for migrant workers, in addition to tax exemptions (Islam n.d).

While labour migration is perceived as a survival strategy that can pull Bangladeshi households out of poverty, some research shows that in the case of

persons whose attempts to emigrate fail, the households may be left in a worse situation than prior to the attempt to migrate. Das et al. (2014) estimate that migration failures may be as high as one-third of all attempts at migration, and the main cause of such failures is fraudulent agents and migrants' financial constraints. Rahman (2011) makes a similar argument on the basis of his research on Bangladeshi migration to Saudi Arabia and concludes that temporary labour migration does not necessarily translate into economic advantage for every migrant and his/her family, primarily since the cost of migration may far outweigh the financial benefits earned.

India

India has the largest stock of migrant workers in the Gulf, and the longest history of ties with this region. It views the level of emigration to be satisfactory and wishes to maintain it, as shown in Table 7.1. In response to the increasing outflows of labour migrants, India enacted an Emigration Act in 1983, replacing an earlier Act of 1922. A dedicated Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) was established in 2004 to oversee all matters relating to overseas Indians. The key objective of this ministry was to “establish a robust and vibrant institutional framework to facilitate and support mutually beneficial networks with and among Overseas Indians to maximize the development impact for India and enable overseas Indians to invest and benefit from the opportunities in India” (Government of India 2014-15). Diaspora engagement was at the heart of the ministry's activities. In terms of labour migration to the Gulf, some of the key concerns centred around streamlining and simplifying the migration process and facilitating migration. During the last decade, Memorandums of Understanding have been signed by the Indian government with all the Gulf countries, and mechanisms for following up the terms of agreements have been established.

In January 2016, the MOIA was merged with the Ministry of External Affairs, to achieve the broad principle of minimum government, maximum governance (TNN 2016). Since the merger of the ministries, information on annual outflows that was provided by the annual reports of the MOIA is no longer published. India does not maintain a public use database on annual outflows, unlike several of the other South Asian countries. Consequently, data on outflows for the last two years was not available.

Research scholars who have analysed the Indian government's approach seem to agree that despite the increasing volume of migrants, India does not have a stated policy on international migration (Gurucharan 2013; Khadria 2010). Gurucharan (2013) considers the policy framework based on the Emigration Act of 1983 to

be flawed in several ways. The policy continues to be ‘exit control’ based, whereby permission for emigration is granted in an arbitrary fashion. Gurucharan also points out various instrumental weaknesses such as lack of policy coherence and centralisation of authority in the Protector of Emigrants. While recognising the lack of a comprehensive policy on labour migration or overseas migration, Khadria (2010) observes that India’s policy has undergone a paradigm shift over the years, moving from “protective/restrictive to welfare/compensatory, to developmental/restorative.”

While data on gender composition is not published and is not highlighted as a policy goal, observation of labour markets in the Gulf suggest that Indian women play a fairly important part in a whole range of occupations ranging from low-skilled domestic workers to highly-skilled professionals such as physicians. Some regions such as Andhra Pradesh stand out in terms of sending domestic workers. The Indian government has implemented various policies, including periodic bans, on the migration of such workers.

Indonesia

The migration picture and policy of Indonesia is harder to construct compared to other South Asian countries due to the absence of a public use database and relatively less research on the subject. Researchers have lamented the absence of timely and accurate data to understand and analyse the patterns and issues in migration from Indonesia (Bachtiar 2011; Sukamdi 2008). In 2010, an IOM report provided a comprehensive description of various aspects relating to Indonesian migration, including its migration policy. Indonesia has established a Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration to oversee and regulate migration from the country, along with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs. Law number 39/2004 is the main piece of legislation that governs recruitment, placement, and protection of migrant workers.

The IOM 2010 study pointed out a number of loopholes and weaknesses that undermine the effective implementation of the laws. For example, the law does not cover migrants in an irregular situation. Also, it does not make provision for the protection of returnee migrants or for migrants to report any problems they are facing. It also points out other weaknesses such as lack of clarity regarding the responsibilities of various government departments and a lack of cooperation among them. A study by Barral (2014) makes a similar conclusion about the lack of clarity in how the laws are to be implemented and notes that the laws do not prescribe the state as the main stakeholder in ensuring the protection of migrant

workers. Recruitment agencies are appointed as the legitimate actors to manage the entire process of migration from locating a job to providing information and arranging the documentation for a migrant to proceed abroad. As observed by Barral (2014), all agencies are located in Jakarta and that increases the cost of migration for non-Jakarta residents. While the recruitment agents have facilitated the volume of migration, several problems have emerged as a result, including labour exploitation, human trafficking, and illegal migration.

Women employed in relatively low-skilled positions have remained a predominant part of all outflows from Indonesia. Women constituted about 78 per cent of all migrants in 2007, and their percentage declined considerably to 57 per cent (remaining a majority) in 2014 (UN 2015). In view of the problems faced by migrant workers, the government's response has been to impose bans on the departure of female domestic workers. Such bans were imposed on the migration of domestic workers to Malaysia, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria between 2009 and 2011 (Bachtiar 2011). A ban was also placed on their employment in the UAE. In 2015, the Indonesian President told his government to create a roadmap for ending the migration of female domestic workers in order to protect Indonesia's dignity. Commenting on the President's approach, Varia (2015) noted that the experience of other countries had shown that imposition of bans has little effect and those who are desperate to migrate as a survival strategy find illegal routes and ways to migrate and sometimes fall prey to traffickers. She suggests that a better strategy would be to expand vocational training and work opportunities in Indonesia so that workers move out of choice and not desperation.

Nepal

Compared to other Asian countries, Nepal is a relative latecomer to labour migration to the Gulf, even though it has a long history of informal migration to India. Nepal's efforts at regulating foreign employment began in 1985 with the Foreign Employment Act, with periodic interventions aimed at encouraging labour migration together with protecting the rights and security of migrant workers. As the volume of outflows from Nepal increased, the government was faced with new challenges to regulate as well as protect its workers. A new Foreign Employment Act was therefore legislated in 2007, along with specific Rules in 2008. Ensuring the security and safety of foreign workers was one of the core elements of the new Act.

Efforts at refining the legislative and regulatory framework governing labour migration have continued, and a Foreign Employment Policy was announced in

2012. The goal of this policy is to “ensure safe, organized, respectable and reliable foreign employment to contribute to poverty reduction along with sustainable economic and social development through economic and non-economic benefits of foreign employment” (Government of Nepal 2014-15, p. 37). The 2012 policy has seven “pillars,” including the promotion of foreign employment, developing a skilled workforce, simplifying procedures relating to migration, ensuring female workers’ rights, ensuring good governance, promoting national and international collaborative efforts, and encouraging the use of remittances for the migrant’s own “human development” as far as possible.

An evaluation of Nepal’s regulatory frameworks and policies was conducted by Sijapati and Limbu (2012). They concluded that Nepal suffered from a weak implementation of the existing national policies. A similar conclusion was reached by Liu (2015). Various private institutions involved in labour migration were ineffectively monitored, as were pre-departure training institutions. Migrants could obtain certificates indicating that they had received pre-departure orientation without sitting for the classes. Also, migrants continued to use a transit country as a migration route despite laws that prohibit this. Thus irregular migration, especially of females, continued through India in violation of the Nepal government’s regulations. The authors also concluded that the government’s efforts to sign bilateral agreements with host countries and appoint labour attaches have been very slow. They suggested that the government should encourage migrants to go to countries that have a good record of respecting human rights. This suggestion is notable in view of the fact that Nepalese workers have more varied destinations than Indian or Pakistani workers; about 58 per cent went to the Gulf countries while Malaysia was the other major destination receiving 39 per cent of all Nepalese workers in 2014-15 (Government of Nepal 2014-15).

Pakistan

After India, Pakistan has the largest migrant stock in the Gulf and was one of the first countries to encourage large outflows of migrant workers in the 1970s and 1980s. In the face of high population growth, high unemployment, and weak economic growth, manpower export is considered an important coping strategy that ensures a steady flow of remittances that benefit the government as well as families and individuals.

Pakistan’s migration policies and legislative frameworks go back to March 1979 when the Emigration Ordinance 1979 was issued along with accompanying rules.

The Ordinance addressed many major aspects to regulate and facilitate migration. The rules also emphasised the provision of pre-departure orientation and guidance to departing migrants. It laid down the details for the licensing and operation of overseas employment promoters and penalties for those who did not abide by the rules. The 1979 Ordinance, followed by periodic amendments, has guided migration until the present.

An effort at formulating a revised policy was made by the government elected in 2008. A draft National Emigration Policy was prepared in 2009 but was not debated or approved by the Parliament (Government of Pakistan 2009). The main features of this policy focused on devising strategies to maximise the level of outflows and enhance Pakistan's market share of migrants in the Gulf and other countries, assisting migrants in financing migration costs, facilitating remittance inflows to Pakistan, and simplify migration procedures. Another feature of the policy was to encourage skill development of the workforce for emigration, including language training. It also emphasised the protection of migrants through various programmes such as a helpline and facilitating the reintegration of returnees. An evaluation of the 2009 Emigration Policy by Jan (2010) concluded that the policy was weak in terms of ensuring the protection of migrant workers and focused largely on Gulf countries, ignoring workers in other parts of the world. Jan also contended that the protective measures suggested by the policy were reactive in nature and did not address the fact that policies of the host countries in the Gulf are, in fact, often the root causes of problems faced by migrants.

A more recent attempt at formulating a National Policy for Overseas Pakistanis was made in 2013 by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis in partnership with ILO with a focus on maximising welfare and empowerment of the Pakistani diaspora working in different countries (ILO 2013b). A consultative workshop was held to present a draft proposal suggesting several areas to be highlighted such as ratification of ILO conventions related to rights of migrant workers, encouraging the participation of women in migration, recognising social protection as a basic human right, supporting social network associations in host countries, and establishing vocational and technical training courses to meet the demand for overseas employment.

Pakistan has made concerted efforts to establish training facilities for upgrading skills to enhance the marketability of migrant workers. A Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVET) was established in each of the four provinces and a related commission was established in Islamabad. A National Skills

Strategy was implemented from 2009-13, with an emphasis on competency-based training that would enhance demand-driven skills (ILO 2016).

It is estimated that only 0.12 per cent of all migrants proceeding for overseas employment are women (ILO 2013b; ILO 2016), which is considered to be very low. Social and cultural attitudes towards the education of women and their participation in the workforce remain major hurdles in achieving the government's vision of "skills for all." There is a need to design policies that encourage the social acceptance of women to enrol in traditional and non-traditional training courses.

Philippines

The attitudes and policies of the Philippines towards emigration are in sharp contrast to that of some other Asian countries. The main thrust of its migration policy was established in the 1974 Labour Code consisting of the goals to promote and facilitate overseas employment, protect Filipino migrants, and maximise the benefits of migration. This policy was subsequently elaborated and refined through various Acts and amendments. The Migrant Law of the Philippines is essentially "protective legislation" which provides that "the State does not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national development. The existence of overseas employment rests solely on the assurance that the dignity and fundamental human rights and freedoms of the Filipino citizens shall not at any time be compromised or violated" (IOM 2013). The development policy aims to create jobs in the Philippines and to ensure that Filipinos do not leave the country as a survival strategy under financial pressure, but as a matter of choice. The Filipino emigration policies are designed to cover all the stages, from pre-employment to recruitment, departure and arrival in the host country. Reintegration of returnees is also an important aspect of the Philippines migration policy. A return and repatriation programme offers loans, counselling, training and scholarships. A National Reintegration Center for Overseas Foreign Workers was established following an Act passed in 2010 that seeks to leverage the skills of returning nationals.

The Philippines is often cited as a success story in its ability to regulate and organise migration and to stand up for the rights of its migrant workers. A study commissioned by the IOM to rate the effectiveness of migration governance was conducted recently by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2016) in 15 countries, including the Philippines and some developed host countries such as Canada and Sweden. The Philippines was awarded the highest score on four of the five indicators used to measure migration governance. On a five-point scale ranging from a low

of “emerging” to a high of “mature,” the Philippines received a ranking of “mature” on its institutional capacity, migrant rights, safe and orderly migration, and regional and international cooperation; it received the second highest score of “developed” on labour migration management. In the midst of this positive evaluation, the Philippines is satisfied with its emigration level and aims to maintain it.

While the Philippines has been exceptionally successful in organising, managing and seeking protection for its migrant workers, a few gaps still remain. Irregular migration is one of those gaps (IOM 2013; Battistella and Asis 2017). Although the number of Filipino migrants in an irregular situation is not known, domestic workers seeking shelter at the embassies or government shelters in the GCC host countries is an indicator. It is believed that better coordination among government agencies deputised to administer the migration policy is needed to reduce irregular practices in migration and for reducing unnecessary delays and duplication of work (IOM 2013).

Women migrants comprise more than half of all Filipino migrants, a majority engaged in relatively low-skilled domestic services. A package of policy reforms was issued for household service workers in 2006, stating that domestic workers should be at least 23 years old, should have completed a certificate for household workers, and should earn a minimum salary of \$400 (IOM 2013). The latter provision of a minimum salary is, however, not always implemented and exemptions may be granted (Battistella and Asis 2011).

Sri Lanka

The Sri Lanka Labour Migration Policy was issued in October 2008 and approved by the Sri Lanka Cabinet in April 2009. The main goals of the policy were to develop “a long term vision for the role of labor migration in the economy, enhancing the benefits of labor migration in the economy, society, the migrant workers and the families, minimising its negative impacts and, finally, working towards the fulfilment and protection of all human and labor rights of migrant workers” (Ministry of Foreign Employment and Promotion 2008). The policy was designed to promote opportunities for all men and women to engage in migration for decent and productive employment in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity. Development of skills was considered an important element for enhancing the protection of migrant workers and their families. The policy focused on three main aspects, namely governance of the migration process, protection and empowerment of migrant workers and their families, and linking migration and development processes. It was recognised that there is a delicate balance between

the promotion of foreign employment and the protection of national workers, and the goal was to optimise this balance.

Within the broad framework of ensuring the welfare and productivity of migrant workers, a National Migration Health Policy was launched in 2012. The overall vision of this policy was to “safeguard the health of all categories of migrants throughout the migration cycle to contribute to the development goals of the country” (Ministry of Health 2012). Some of the strategies that the health policy proposed were the implementation of a standardised health assessment at the pre-departure stage for migrant workers, a coordinated plan to address the welfare needs of the families of single parent migrants, and a plan for child health protection, including nutrition programmes for vulnerable children of migrant workers.

Following from the framework to address all the stages of migration, including return and reintegration, outlined in the 2008 National Policy, a Sub Policy and National Action Plan on Return and Reintegration of Migrant Workers was issued in November 2015 (Ministry of Foreign Employment 2015). The above Sub Policy is to be implemented by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment. It includes service to returnees at “one stop centers at the district level” and the employment of migrant returnees to tap their skills and potential for national and personal development. The Sub Policy also proposes a review of the existing savings and investment schemes and credit and business development programmes to encourage entrepreneurial activity among returnees.

Since the beginning of large-scale labour migration to the Gulf and other countries, Sri Lankan women have formed a significant proportion of migrants, as mentioned earlier. The National Policy recognises the contribution of women migrant workers. In view of their particular vulnerabilities, the state aims to apply gender sensitive criteria in the formulation of policies and programmes. The Sri Lankan government’s focus on the health and welfare of the children left behind by women migrants is a notable effort in this regard.

Towards Implementation of Policies: Perceptions of Labour Attaches in Kuwait

In an effort to make a partial assessment of the effectiveness with which the policies of the seven Asian countries are being implemented in the Gulf, a group discussion session was held with labour attaches in October 2017, organised under the auspices of IOM, Kuwait. This section summarises the perceptions of the five attaches who participated and a sixth one who answered a questionnaire sent to the attaches

prior to the meeting. In broad terms, all the participants agreed that their respective governments still subscribed to the policy on migration indicated to the United Nations in 2015, confirming that their governments wished to raise, or at least maintain the level of outflows. Most attaches viewed overseas employment as an important solution to the problems of over-population, poverty, and unemployment in their home countries.

There was a general consensus that their governments were allocating sufficient resources in the home countries, but more could be done in the receiving countries. The work of recruitment agents was policed regularly and punishments were awarded to those who violated the law by cheating migrant workers. However, none of the attaches could provide a quantitative idea of how frequently such punishments occurred. They were also not certain whether such data were collected in any systematic fashion.

Most Asian countries have bilateral agreements with several of the GCC countries. In terms of the effective implementation of the terms of such agreements in the host countries, the attaches pointed out that these agreements were memoranda of understanding that were non-binding. Mechanisms for follow-up to monitor implementation were weak or non-existent, even if they were present in the written documents. The need for more effective implementation of such memoranda was clearly felt.

Commonalities, Differences, and Some Implications for the Future

There are several common features among the seven Asian senders. First, one of their major policy goals is to increase or maintain the level of outflows. Second, they have been able to achieve an upward trend in annual outflows until 2015 or 2016. Third, migration to the Gulf countries comprises at least half of the annual outflows for most countries, but a diversification is occurring in the case of some countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal. An inherent feature underlying the policies to maintain or increase the level of outmigration relates to the fact that the sending countries are essentially competing to send primarily low-skilled or semi-skilled workers to the same market. The host countries are therefore able to find new workers from new origins at lower wages.

Protection of workers and their families has been expressed explicitly as an important element of the migration policies of most sending countries. The focus on migrants' rights and decent work practices seems to have been influenced by the involvement of international agencies such as IOM and ILO who have often

provided financial and technical assistance in the formulation and evolution of the policies in some countries. Increased emphasis on the rights and working conditions of labour migrants, especially the ones in low-skilled and vulnerable occupations, including domestic workers, is evident in policy documents. Another influence on such policies probably emerges from regional cooperation processes such as the Colombo Process where sending countries seek a common platform for better regulation and protection of migrant workers.

Another common feature relates to the policies for enhancing the skills of migrant workers to enable better outcomes in the migration process and experience. Some countries, such as Pakistan, have established apparently large institutional arrangements to achieve skill development. The next few years will show the extent to which such efforts are successful in changing the profile of labour migrants, most of whom are currently low-skilled and semi-skilled workers.

The seven countries differ in terms of the role of women in migration. Women constitute more than half the outflows in case of Indonesia and the Philippines, and about 34 per cent in the case of Sri Lanka. Bangladesh has recently revised its policy on the migration of women, resulting in a major spike in the number of women migrants, constituting 16 per cent of all migrants in 2016. Nepal has less than 5 per cent women migrants, and Pakistan less than 1 per cent. Neither India nor Pakistan publishes any data by gender. Women, especially in domestic service, are regarded as being among the most vulnerable and the least protected workers since none of the GCC countries, except Kuwait, have labour laws to cover this group. The policies to deal with this situation vary from the current bans on outflows to most GCC countries as in the case of Indonesia to proactive policies of the Philippines that demand a relatively higher minimum wage than is generally prevalent in the Gulf.

Labour migration has been a source of invaluable foreign exchange earnings for the sending countries and the means of survival for many migrant households. Therefore, the current decline in oil prices which may slow down economic activity, and the consequent demand for foreign workers, is a source of worry for most countries. Given the fact that all the Asian origin countries have policies to either maintain or increase the level of emigration, a slackening demand for migrant workers may increase competition among origin countries. This, in turn, may have a negative impact on wages as well as the conditions under which prospective migrants would accept jobs.

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Migration to the Gulf: Policies in Sending and Receiving Countries

International migration is a ubiquitous reality in the Gulf states where foreign citizens are a majority in the workforce as well as in the total population of several states. Migration is instrumental in the Gulf nations' prosperity and at the same time regarded as a challenge to their identity. For many countries of origin in Asia, the Arab world and East Africa, migration to the Gulf is an integral part of the daily lives of tens of millions and a constitutive element of economies and societies.

On the sending side, there is a widespread view that emigrants serve the prosperity of their nation, through financial remittances, enhanced skills, and enlarged business networks, and that they must be protected in the countries where they live. State institutions have been created to look for migration opportunities and to defend the rights of their expatriate nationals in terms of living and working conditions. Fair recruitment and decent work have become an integral part of their agenda. Emigration is now regarded as a resource for national economies in the same way as trade, and a matter for external policies and politics.

On the receiving side, Gulf policies must address the challenge of admitting contract workers needed by ambitious development programmes and welfare goals, while tackling a number of migration-related imbalances: too much dependency on foreign labour; too few women in the labour force; too much unused education and wasted skills among nationals; too much money flooding out of the country in the form of workers' remittances; and too rigid regulations ending up in high levels of irregularity.

This book is about policies designed to regulate migration and protect the migrants and enable them to contribute to the prosperity of the Gulf and the development of their home countries. It brings unique knowledge to all those striving to improve current systems, from a state's as well as a migrant's perspective.

