

Pakistan: The Overseas Pakistani Foundation

Rashid Memon*

Introduction

In the wake of the large migrant flows out of Pakistan in the 1970s, the Overseas Pakistani Foundation was formed under the Emigration Ordinance, 1979. While registered as an autonomous company under the Companies Act 1913, it works under the administrative supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Manpower, and Overseas Employment.

The board of directors, which governs the organisation is appointed by the Federal government, and chaired by the Minister of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Employment.

Objectives of the Organisation

The overarching goal of the OPF is to guard rights and advance the social welfare of Pakistanis working or settled abroad and their families in Pakistan. Specifically, the objectives of the organisation can be categorised into the following:

1. Identify problems faced by emigrants and their families, and contribute to their solutions.
2. Grant scholarships and stipends for studies to deserving overseas Pakistanis children.
3. To provide financial support to community centres, mosques and libraries established overseas and for organising of seminars and national day events.

To realise the above goals, the OPF is also mandated to establish and manage vocational training institutions, housing societies and colonies, educational/religious institutions, foundation offices and branches, commercial, industrial or service enterprises, and health care centers. The OPF headquarters in Islamabad, and provincial counterparts and offices in countries of significant Pakistani presence carry out these efforts.

Specific Services provided by the OPF

Education and Training

The OPF participates actively in the education sector, and manages a boys' college in Islamabad as well as 22 public schools in the country. While OPF members are provided preferential treatment in these schools, the OPF has also managed to obtain reserved seats for the children of overseas employees in a number of public schools and colleges.

The OPF also organises vocational training, whereby it has enabled trainees to seek jobs both in foreign countries as well as locally.

Health and Emergency Services

OPF also has a presence in the health sector, and in return for financial support to certain hospitals such as the Al-Shifa Hospital in Rawalpindi, OPF members and their families receive treatment at preferential rates.

* Mr. Rashid Memon is of an economist and working as a Development Consultant at the Collective for Social Science Research, Pakistan.

In case of the death of an emigrant in a foreign country, OPF arranges for the transportation of the dead body to the residence of the deceased in Pakistan.

Repatriation of Pakistanis in emergencies

During the gulf war in 1991, and the Yemen crisis of 1994, the OPF played a prominent role in not only repatriating Pakistanis but also in channeling compensation from the United Nations to the affected people.

Pension Schemes

The pension scheme, while open for all OPF members, is particularly relevant for emigrants to the Gulf, since their tenures are fixed and return migration is inevitable. The scheme is flexible, and self-contributory. There are two main plans, depending on whether contributions are lump sum or annual, and the contributions are set at a minimum of Rs. 24,000 for the annual payment plan and Rs. 120,000 for the lump payment plan.

Table 1: Pension Plans offered by OPF

Type of plan	Contribution (Rs)	Payment of Contribution	Period of Payment	Maturity After (years)	Expected Monthly Pension (Rs)
A-01	120,000	Lump Sum		5	1896
A-02	120,000	Lump Sum		10	3362
A-03	120,000	Lump Sum		15	6059
A-01	24,000	Annually	10 Years	10	4226
A-02	24,000	Annually	15 Years	15	9179

Perhaps more importantly, the pension plan doubles as an insurance scheme, in case of the death of the subscriber (even prior to maturity of the payment period), the pension is forwarded to the subscriber’s nominee and then children, till the youngest child turns 18.

Remittance Card

The remittance card is a scheme initiated to encourage the channeling of remittances through former banking channels. In lieu of such transfers, expatriates are offered services such as duty free import (personal baggage) up to a limited amount and services such as free urgent renewal of passports and separate, fast track emigration counters at airports.

Housing

In an effort to help emigrants setup residence in Pakistan, the OPF has planned and established a large number of housing schemes in different cities of the country including Islamabad, Lahore, Gujrat, Faisalabad, Peshawar, Dadu, Larkana and Mirpur.

Publication

The monthly magazine “Yaran-e-Watan” regularly informs subscribers to the latest initiatives taken by the OPF.

For details please visit: <http://www.opf.org.pk>