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Regional Conference Demands Considering International Migration as Means of Reducing Poverty

Over the last few decades, migration has become an increasingly important factor in the economic development and livelihood strategies of poor people in Asia. Globalisation is transforming labour markets in the region and migration, both internationally and internally within Asian countries, is expanding rapidly. Remittances from international migrants now exceed the value of official development assistance in the region.

With the increasing importance of migration in Asia, governments recognise the need to put in place comprehensive policies designed to maximise the contribution of migration to economic growth and poverty reduction. While innovative programmes for migrants have been introduced in many Asian countries, national and sub-national development plans currently do not focus on the importance of migration to national development or seek to increase benefits and opportunities for poor migrants.

An essential first step in evolving pro-poor migration policies is to review existing experience in Asia and to use this to stimulate discussion on appropriate policy frameworks. It is in the context that the conference on *Migration, Development and Poor-Policy Choices in Asia* was jointly organised by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK and Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), Dhaka University, in Dhaka on 22 – 24 June 2003. The aim of the conference was to identify key changes in policies, institutions and practices needed to increase choice for poor people to benefit from voluntary economic migration, and promote equitable and sustainable economic growth.

Over the last year, DFID had been undertaking a programme of work on migration and migration policies in Asia together with governments, research institutes and civil society to identify 'good practice' in international and internal migration policy. In this connection, a number of

studies was commissioned by DFID, which provided inputs to the Dhaka Conference. These included comprehensive 'country studies' on migration, which documented what is known about flows of internal and international migrants, levels and uses of remittances, and government policies. Reports were prepared on Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan and Vietnam by leading researchers from these countries.

DFID is the UK Government Department responsible for international development. It has an £800 million annual programme in Asia focusing on poverty reduction and the achievement of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. It works in many developing countries in the region. The Dhaka Conference is one of the main policy dialogues that DFID has organised in Asia in 2003. On the other hand, RMMRU is one of the leading research institutions on migration in South Asia.

Addressing the opening session as the Chief Guest, Mr. Reaz Rahman, State

Minister for Foreign Affairs, stressed the need for coordinated policies for creating a viable and humane migration regime. Dr. David Carter, High Commissioner of the UK to Bangladesh, stated that migration is an important feature of globalisation and on the whole contributing to poverty reduction. He added that in Bangladesh remittances are increasingly getting vital to the well being of the

economy. Professor S M A Faiz, Vice Chancellor of the University of Dhaka, presided over the inaugural session. Professor Ronald Skeldon of the University of Sussex presented the keynote address.

In the first working session, country papers on India, China and Pakistan were presented by Ravi Srivastava and S K Sasikumar, Huang Ping and Frank N. Pieke, and Haris Gazdar respectively. The session was chaired by Dr. Nguyen Van Tien of Vietnam. Country papers on Vietnam and Bangladesh were presented at the second working session by Dang Nguyen Anh, Cecilia Tacoli and Hoang Xuan Thanh, and Tasneem Siddiqui and Rita Afsar respectively. This session was chaired by Dr. Tiejun Wen of China. In the following working session, group work to identify and discuss key issues from the country presentations on internal and international migration were conducted.

The second group work to identify and prioritise key policy changes and activities for government, civil society, private sector and donors in the five countries and in the region was held on the second day. In the working session, two papers were presented by Rosalinda Baldoz on 'International Migration from the Philippines', and on 'International Migration from Sri Lanka' by Sharmila Daluwatte. This session was chaired by Dr. Pervez Tahir from Pakistan. Reflections on the synthesis paper were offered by Dr. Manolo Abella of ILO and Mohammad Shahidul Haque of IOM. Maroof Zaman of Foreign Affairs Ministry chaired the session. Group work to prioritise next steps was conducted in the last session of the second day.

The draft 'Conference Statement' was the agenda for group work in the first session of the third day that was followed by a plenary

discussion. Dr. Rohini Nayyer from India chaired the session. Dr. Manolo Abella, Dr. Frank Laczko of IOM, Geneva and Dr. Antero Vahapassi of ADB were the designated discussants of this session. The closing session of the conference was chaired by Professor Tasneem Siddiqui of RMMRU. Mr. Shamsar M Chowdhury, *Bir Bikram*, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the Chief Guest. Mr. Jeremy Clarke, Chief of Regional Policy and Strategy in Asia, DFID, offered the vote of thanks.

An open session was organised by RMMRU in order to disseminate the conference highlights. Dr. C R Abrar of RMMRU gave the welcome address. Professor Skeldon presented the summary of deliberations, and Dr. Manolo Abella presented the conference recommendations. The session was chaired by Professor Rehman Sobhan, Chair of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

During the conference, two documentary films – 'My Migrant Soul' directed by Yasmine Kabir, and 'Home and the World' directed by Rahul Bose – were screened. Drik organised a photograph exhibition at the venue on migrant workers in Asia. A cultural show was organised on the second night of the conference that was rounded off with a dance performance by *Nrittanchal*. Among others, Mr. Reaz Rahman, Minister for State for Foreign Affairs, former Law Minister Mr. Abdul Matin Khasru, and Professor Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank attended the programme. Exhibition of publications and visual aides on migration by RMMRU, and another exhibition of publications by University Press Limited was organised on the occasion.

The Conference brought together eighty participants from across Asia, including senior government officials from Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan and Vietnam, representatives of international development organisations, representatives

of civil society organisations, and other experts from various countries in the region.

Reporter:
Shahzada M Akram

FINAL STATEMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Migration is an increasingly significant factor in the economic development of Asia, and in the livelihood strategies of many poor people within the region. It is an integral feature of a globalising world. The purpose of this conference was to identify ways to enhance the positive development impact of migration, increase choice for poor men and women and enable them, their communities and their economies to benefit from internal and international migration. Senior government representatives from Asian countries, academics, members of civil society and representatives from development and international agencies participated. The conference was organised jointly by the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit of the University of Dhaka (RMMRU) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID). It was strongly supported by the Government of Bangladesh.

2. The conference considered five country case studies of internal and international migration in Asia. These were in Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan and Vietnam. It reviewed both the status of migration in each country as well as current government policies. It also identified good practice in migration policy and programmes in Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

B. KEY CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

3. Following an extremely rich series of discussions and working group activity, the Conference concludes that, in Asia:

- context specific and judicious policy interventions can help to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks to migrants.

It is important that policies are based on understanding of social and cultural factors, issues of identity, history, kinship and other networks;

- policy interventions need to be identified and implemented effectively for the benefit of poor people and different segments of society will have roles within this;
- migration has already had a significant impact in many countries. Internal migration in particular is a strong contributor to pro-poor development;
- the relationship between migration and poverty is a critical one, but one which needs to be understood better at a number of different levels;
- migration is an increasingly important feature in a globalising world with more people moving in a greater variety of ways. It is expected that this trend will continue;
- although not all migrants are the poorest people, the process of migration does affect the poorest, both directly and indirectly and there remains significant potential to harness the benefits of migration to improve poor people's livelihoods;
- the economic role that migration plays in local and national development and how this might further be directed to poverty reduction needs to be recognised;
- political and kinship relationships between migrants and non-migrants can be a constraint or an incentive to migrate;
- development policies are currently failing to address migration issues and do not take into account migrants interests. For example, of 48 (I) PRSPs developed, only two made positive references to migration;
- remittances from international migration represent a significant global financial flow. The scale of internal remittances is largely undefined;
- it is critically important to consider the gender implications and impact of migration, both directly and indirectly: either as

- migrants or as heads of households women and men can be both advantaged and disadvantaged by the process;
- migrants are vulnerable to exploitation and lack access to essential public services. Local and national institutions face challenges in providing adequate support services to migrants and their families;
- irregular migration and trafficking need to be considered in a broader migration framework. These elements can have a detrimental effect on individuals and society at large;
- the voices of poor migrants are weak and fora and mechanisms are needed to enable that voice to be heard and responded to. The voices of some diaspora are strong and need to be engaged in facilitating pro-poor change. Enabling migrants to retain their

regional organisations and development agencies working in the region. **The Conference offers the following specific proposals to those engaged in making and implementing policy on migration in Asia:**

General

a) Migration needs to be effectively integrated into development dialogue, planning and implementation e.g., through PRSPs and other national planning mechanisms or poverty reduction frameworks. (b) Agencies concerned with migration need to consider carefully the links with poverty reduction and development. (c) Policy and planning needs to be based on a stronger empirical foundation, particularly with its effect on internal population movement, including the short-term mobility that often typifies the poor. Data should be collected more systematically using recognised comparable methodologies. (d) More effective dissemination/awareness-raising of effective and relevant information is needed to increase the awareness of migrants and members of their families to their rights, needs and opportunities. (e) Regional initiatives are needed to explore pro-poor policy on migration and development in Asia, and share good practice on internal and international migration. (f) It should be ensured that migration and its links to development are firmly on the agenda of existing international processes¹. (g) Gaps in legislation need to be addressed more effectively; implementation of existing laws monitored and amended where discriminatory; and new laws introduced where appropriate. (h) Sending and receiving countries should ratify the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the rights of all migrants and members of their families, as well as the ILO Conventions 97 and 143 (both on labour migration) and Convention 181 (on private recruitment agencies). (i) Private sector should be encouraged to implement inclusive labour laws, to include migrants in employer insurance schemes, etc. (j) Civil society and the media need to play a more proactive role and provide a more positive and balanced discussion around migration. (k) Mechanisms should be identified by which best practice in managing migration e.g. in the Philippines, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, is effectively transferred. (l) More active engagement and understanding is needed of the influence of diaspora networks on sending and receiving countries, for example political influence and engagement with FDI. (m) Regular and irregular migration should be understood and managed in an integrated fashion. (n) Donor agencies to review their policies and contribution to work on migration in Asia.

International

o) Regional and international fora to be identified to manage/instigate dialogue between countries about migration and its implications for both sending and receiving countries. (p) Bilateral migration agreements between sending and receiving countries should be promoted and implemented to ensure

- vote and exercise their rights as citizens is important;
- the role of civil society is recognised as essential in advocating with Governments and representing voices of migrants.
- there are links between international and internal migration as well as overlap in some policy interventions such as remittance transfer.

C. CONFERENCE PROPOSALS

4. The Conference recognises that there are generic issues and inter-relationships between internal and international migration. Different policies and policy instruments may be applicable to each. Responsibility for action rests with Governments, civil society,

¹ For example the July 2003 ILO Tripartite Regional Meeting on Labour Migration, and the 2nd Migration Ministerial Consultation for Countries of Origin in Asia, to be held in Manila in April 2004.

migrants interests in receiving countries are respected. (q) More effective regulation of recruitment agencies needed to ensure unscrupulous practices are not permitted and that migrants are treated equitably. (r) Financial reforms to be introduced to improve the enabling environment and encourage partnerships to lower transaction/transmission costs and to enhance their productive utilisation. (s) Increased awareness necessary in receiving countries of the positive development implications of international migration if properly regulated. (t) Strengthened institutions which support and monitor the welfare of migrants when they are overseas eg attaches of foreign missions, government agencies of NGOs.

Internal

u) Improved understanding of the diversity and complexity of internal migration and the contribution of internal migrants to local and national economic development. (v) Focal points for internal migration issues formally identified and operational in relevant country governments. (w) Within countries, effective inter-state/province co-ordination and agreements implemented. (y) Magnitude of rural to rural migration reflected more explicitly in policy making and in its contribution to local economic development and poverty reduction. (z) Existing survey data relevant to migration disaggregated and fully analysed with a view to identifying specific areas for in depth specialised surveys². (aa) Greater attention to the nature of urbanisation and the political and social implications of rural to urban migration. (bb) Relevant social protection mechanisms identified e.g., access to credit for poor migrants.

NEXT STEPS

5. The results of the work will now be fed back by participants to their respective organisations. Government representatives will share the case studies with their administrations and encourage debate about the various proposals.
6. The development agencies present will also consider the implications of the work for their corporate policy (e.g., in relation to sustainable livelihoods), country assistance strategies and possible regional initiatives. They will share the results with other agencies.
7. The think tanks, research institutes, media and other CSOs will seek to systematically disseminate the results of the work and to encourage public debate about the issues. They will advocate for policy change using evidence-based analysis and encourage information sharing within a regional network.
8. A Steering Committee will be appointed to organise the publication and dissemination of the research results in the region and distribution to others. They will also consider the need for further follow up action including a donor meeting on migration and development and mechanisms for maintaining an informal migration network of interested Asian countries and organisations.
9. The following activities were identified as those that the Conference felt should be taken forward over the coming six months. Responsibilities for action were not allocated, but agreement on these activities was reached:
 - Review the current operation of recruitment agencies across countries with a view to identifying the best practices, how these are implemented, and identifying those practices that clearly act to the detriment of migrants.
 - Review the prospective role of migrant welfare funds as a potential 'good practice' for the protection of migrants and the relative role of governments recruitment agencies and migrant associations in such funds.
 - Evaluate the legal restrictions on migration, both internal and international, particularly the unintended consequences of restrictive practices on women.
 - Assess the effectiveness of pre-migration preparation and training for prospective migrants
 - Survey of internal remittances and their impact on local and national economic development

² 1977-83 UN project 'comparative study of migration, urbanisation and development' provides a model which could be learnt from

- Country specific action plans developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders
- Conceptual framework linking migration and poverty developed, building on existing frameworks
- Stakeholder workshops and increased policy dialogue at country level to build on conference outcomes and to engage media and other civil society in a balanced debate
- Conference literature translated as required.
- Deeper analysis of the costs to migrants of migrating and identification of ways to reduce those costs e.g., economic and social costs.
- Consider the development of training activities for labour attaches, CSOs and others advising migrants.

Excerpts from the speech of

Dr. David Carter, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom at the Inaugural Session

Migration in Asia: Why migration is a particular development issue in Asia

Asia has the largest number of international migrants. Nearly two million Asian men and women a year leave their countries for work abroad. Between 6 and 7 million Asian contract workers are employed outside their own country and a growing proportion of these are women as demand for female labour increases. In the mid 1990s it was estimated that remittances to one poor county in Sichuan province in China were five times higher than the total revenue of the County Government. The vast majority of those who migrate move within their own country. In India for example in 1991 over 230 million people, including married women, were recorded as migrants. In China there are estimated to be over 120 million internal migrants.

In terms of direct benefits for poor households internal migration is extremely important. If regional disparities grow migration will increase. Despite this we know relatively little about internal migration. We need to know more about how Governments and civil society can help people to move safely, we need to know more about how internal migration relates to international migration.

UK Perspective

Migration is not a one-way process. It also involves new ideas traveling back to countries of origin. Migrants have a potential role to play in development in their countries of origin as well as their countries of destination.

A recent UK Government report presented to the treasury estimated that migrants made a net annual fiscal contribution to the UK economy of £2.5 billion in the 1999/2000 financial year.

Over 25% of the health professionals in the National Health Service were not born in Britain and nearly 8% of all public sector workers were born outside the British Isles.

Why this Meeting is Taking Place

We are only just beginning to realise what a potentially positive force for development the movement of people can be. Our task in this conference is to explore this potential and consider how far it is possible to work with this powerful force to support development and reduce poverty.

It is increasingly recognised that the causes, consequences and volumes of migration are influenced by government policies. Some of these are direct policies relating to exit and entry, but others are indirect policies relating to exchange rates or education. There has been relatively little analysis of the effects of policy interventions on migration.

The challenge we face at this Conference is to identify and understand the key policies that can influence migration and make it a positive force for development in Asia. And to find ways those policies can be influenced to maximise the impact of migration on our collective poverty reduction efforts.

***Excerpts from Address of Welcome of
Mr. Paul Ackroyd, Head of DFID, Bangladesh***

This meeting is organised on the assumption that migration represents a development opportunity that has enormous potential for poverty reduction. We cannot afford to ignore migration if we are concerned about growth and poverty reduction.

A key question that this conference has to address concerns the roles that states, international agencies, the private sector and civil society have to play in creating a safe facilitating environment that enables migrants to contribute to growth and development. Related to this is the role of donors.

DFID does not have the answers to these questions. But our purpose is poverty reduction and our business is development so that we are interested in trying to find answers and to learn lessons from countries such as Sri Lanka that have successfully promoted migration.

Our interest in migration stems from the growing realisation of its importance for development and reducing poverty in Asia. DFID is the UK Government Department responsible for international development. It has an £800 million annual programme in Asia focusing on poverty reduction and the achievement of the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. DFID is committed to making globalisation work for poor people. Migrant men and women represent the human face of globalisation.

Migration is a very new area of work for DFID, and already it has involved us in learning how to work in different ways that take us away from our normal sectors and departments. Migration impinges on many domains and can be analysed from many disciplinary perspectives. In preparing for this conference we have been guided and influenced by our partner in Dhaka the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit. Working with Prof. Tasneem Siddiqui and her dynamic organisation has made us very aware of the important role that the civil society and the private sector have to play in relation to migration.

Increasingly we recognise that the role of government is to facilitate and provide regulatory frameworks that allow pro-poor growth and development. As a donor agency our role is to provide space and support for those who are engaged in working to develop a regulatory framework that facilitates safe migration that will maximise the benefits of migration for poor people and their governments.

Although migration can offer rewards to migrants, their families and governments, men and women who migrate face problems and risks; sending money back to their families at home; finding work; accessing health services, and protecting their rights when away. These risks vary from place to place. How can states best prepare prospective migrants to compete for decent jobs and hold their own in a global market?

An essential first step in evolving pro-poor migration policies is to review existing experiences in Asia. This conference provides a chance to do this. The aim of the Dhaka conference is to identify key changes in policies, institutions and practices needed to increase choice for poor men and women to benefit from voluntary economic migration, and promote equitable and sustainable economic growth.

Over the last year, DFID has been undertaking a programme of work on migration and migration policies in Asia together with governments, research institutes and civil society to identify 'good practice' in international and internal migration policy. The results of all this hard work will be presented at this conference.

Because the aim of the conference is to share and disseminate examples of good practice in Asia, we want to maximise the opportunities at this event for participation and invite you all to contribute your experience and ideas.

***Excerpts from the Statement of
Mr. Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, at the Concluding Session***

Bangladesh is a developing country working hard to attain growth and development of its economy for a sustained rise in the living standards of its people. Under such contexts it is essential that our skilled personnel and unskilled workers continue to migrate into countries abroad temporarily, driven by pure economic motives. I believe that in an age of economic globalisation when the factors of production move across the boundaries in much greater extent than any other point of history, the justification for free movement of our people across national frontiers could not be over-emphasised.

The most striking fact before the international community, however, is that however autonomous the process of globalisation might be, justice to all stakeholders across boundaries could not be ensured without pragmatic policy formulation and appropriate framework of policy implementation. The concept of pro-poor policy choice is therefore, grounded on the notion of making globalisation just and fair to all segments of the society. The WTO succeeded the GATT in 1995 with the high hopes of integrating the poorer economies like ours into the global economy where the goal of sustainable development would be attained. Yet the LDCs have been sidelined in terms of trade performance with LDC share of global exports going down from 0.7% in the early 1990s to 0.4% in the late 1990s. So without necessary domestic, regional and international interventions at the policy-making and implementing process, international cooperation framework may further marginalise the already marginalised.

Bangladesh has a definite stake in the process of global migration as every year the non-resident workers and professionals of Bangladesh contribute to the foreign currency reserves. The share of remittances of our expatriate workers (in the Middle East, Southeast and Far East Asia and elsewhere) in our GDP has been showing a sustained upward trend for the last few decades. This success calls for policy initiatives in both domestic and international contexts. At home, we have to develop institutions that would be capable of producing professionals of global standard, and, in the international context, we need to successfully negotiate with other nations for entry into their service sector. Proper implementation of mode IV of the General Agreement on Trade in Services might go a long way in this context.

Though the goods and commodity markets have been liberalised worldwide labour markets across developed countries are still very much closed. Our migrant workers and professionals are exposed to multifarious harassment both at home and host countries though they meaningfully contribute to the development of both the countries. The problems they face are multi-dimensional and could hardly be addressed with just domestic policy initiatives. What is urgently needed are joint initiatives by both host and sending countries for making migration effective, transparent and mutually beneficial for all countries and migrants.

We are continuing to press for greater and unhindered flow of our workers into developed country labour markets. The Dhaka meeting of the LDC Trade Ministers called for freer movement of workers worldwide at the initiative of the Bangladesh delegation.

In conclusion, I thank the organisers of this Conference – DFID, UK, and RMMRU, Dhaka University for hosting this conference on such an issue of pressing concern to Bangladesh. The deliberations here have helped sharpen our understanding of this sensitive issue. The conclusions and the policy recommendations we have arrived here will help us in updating our manpower

exports policy, which I stress, is a continuous process of policy formulation in response to changing circumstances and external environment.

***Excerpts from the Speech of
Professor S M A Faiz, Vice Chancellor, University of Dhaka at the Concluding Session***

Between 1976 and 2002 more than 3 million Bangladeshi have migrated for overseas employment. Their remittances, over the last three decades have become the mainstay of the national economy. The importance of migrants' remittances has become more pronounced in the wake of recent developments in the political and economic arenas of the world. Under such conditions, I may add, this conference is certainly a timely endeavour on the part of the DFID.

I understand that an important objective of the conference is to assess how to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks of migration for migrants, particularly for poor migrants. The conference organisers have also laid out another important goal, that of understanding not just how migrants themselves may benefit, but how the whole process of migration may promote development and reduce poverty among the general population. I further understand that five country experiences will be thoroughly analysed and commonalities and specificities of their experiences will be identified, shared and scrutinised.

In Bangladesh, work has begun in earnest about changing the existing laws and institutions to cater to the new realities of the international labour market. There is also the growing realisation that new policies should conform to the international human rights standards. The policy planners have unequivocally stressed that education and human resource development are essential to overcome the poverty trap. In fact, migration can itself be made an effective tool for development of the individual, household and broader community and the State.

Summaries of Papers

Migration and migration policy in Asia: a synthesis of selected cases

Ronald Skeldon

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Population migration has a critical role in contributing to poverty reduction. The movement of migrants impinges upon the poorest people, either directly or indirectly. For many developed and developing-country governments, migration has become a key policy issue. Migration has proved to be difficult to control directly, but judicious policy intervention can help maximise benefits and minimise the harmful effects. Policy intervention may be most effective when it accommodates, rather than attempts to divert, existing migrant flows and when it is informed by migrants themselves rather than imposed from above.

The principal difficulty in dealing with government policies and regulations on migration is that virtually any policy can have some impact, direct or indirect, on human movement. The case studies demonstrate the complexity and heterogeneity of migration and of the policy response to it.

Policy can perhaps be most effective is in measures to reduce the exploitation of migrants.

With international migrants, a two-pronged approach needs to be adopted. First, are issues of migrant recruitment and the reparation of migrants for deployment overseas. The second, and more difficult, dimension relates to how citizens are to be protected when overseas.

Given the complexity of migration flows and of migrant types in and from the five countries, no single policy option can be applied even within a single country, let alone across the region. Two generalisations are possible, however. Firstly, migration needs to be incorporated into poverty programmes; by its very incorporation a more integrated policy approach to poverty reduction becomes possible. Secondly, policies need to become less directive and more responsive. All five studies show that, regardless of their economic status, migrants are people with initiative. It is incumbent upon governments to allow such people to create their own livelihoods.

Specific policy recommendations emerging from the country studies suggest we should:

- Improve our knowledge base on migration;
- Assess the role of recruitment agencies in migration, with a view to attaining a more transparent and less potentially abusive system of linking migrants with prospective employment;
- Evaluate migrant welfare funds as a potential ‘good practice’ for the protection of migrants;
- Scrutinise legal restrictions on migration, both internal and international, as a possible incentive to illegal migration;
- Explore the strengthening of institutions that support and monitor the welfare of migrants overseas;
- Assess the effectiveness of preparation or training for prospective migrants;
- Promote cross-learning from the region on good practice at policy and practical levels, e.g., provision of identification cards to internal migrants on construction sites and advising relatives if an accident occurs.
- Work more actively to engage and understand influence of diaspora networks on sending and receiving countries, e.g., political influence, engagement with Foreign Direct Investment, etc.

An overview of migration in India, its impacts and key issues

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and

S.K. Sasikumar

V. V. Giri National Labour Institute, Uttar Pradesh, India

This paper deals with internal and international migration, both of which are large-scale with impacts on economic growth and poverty reduction in many regions of the country.

In some parts of India, three out of four households include a migrant. However despite the large scale of migration in absolute numbers of people involved and India’s long history of population and labour mobility, labour migration has rarely been reliably studied. Economic and social impacts on migrants and their families are variable. Migration often involves longer working hours, poor living and working conditions, social isolation and poor access to basic amenities.

At destination, migrant labour affects markets, lowering the cost of labour. Migration also affects the labour market at the place of origin. Migrant earnings affect income, expenditure patterns and investment and changes relations at household and community levels. While there seems to be some positive impact on incomes and investment, the major function of migration is to act as a ‘safety valve’ in poor areas. The impact on asset and income inequality is more mixed.

Internal mobility is critical to the livelihoods of many people, especially tribal people, socially deprived groups and people from resource-poor areas. However, because of lack of data, migration is largely invisible and ignored by policy makers. There is a large gap between the insights from macro data and those from field studies.

Migrants are disadvantaged as labourers and labour laws dealing with them are weakly implemented. Poor migrants have very little bargaining power. Most migrant labourers are also employed in the unorganised sector, where the lack of regulation compounds their vulnerability.

They are largely ignored by government and NGO programmes. Laws and regulations concerning working conditions of migrants are largely ineffective: legislation fails because regulatory authorities are over-stretched, the state sees migrants as a low priority and because migrant workers are vulnerable with little support from civil society. But there are instances in which both governmental and non-governmental organisations have intervened to reduce the costs of migration and to increase its benefits to migrants.

International migration, though involving a small proportion of the workforce, has important local impacts. Since independence, two distinct streams of migration have left India: people with professional expertise or technical qualifications emigrating to industrialised countries, and semi-skilled and skilled workers emigrating to the Middle East.

Migration to industrialised countries grew steadily between 1950 and 2000. Nearly 1.25 million Indians emigrated to the US, Canada, UK and Australia during this period. Average annual flows to these destinations increased nearly five-fold between the 1950s and the 1990s. Migration to the Middle East increased rapidly between the late 1970s and early 1980s. In the mid-to late 1980s, however, the number of Indian workers migrating to the Middle East fell sharply. Labour migration increased substantially again during the 1990s. Today, some 3 million Indian migrants live in Gulf countries.

Remittances are the main benefit of external migration, providing scarce foreign exchange and scope for higher levels of savings and investments. Remittances over the past 30 years have financed much of India's balance of trade deficit and have thus reduced the current account deficit. Remittances have had a considerable impact on regional economies. The most striking case is that of Kerala, where remittances made up 21% of state income in the 1990s. International migration has also had considerable impacts on demographic structures, expenditure patterns, social structures and poverty levels. Impacts include reducing population growth; enhancing the dependency burden within households; increasing consumption expenditures and reducing poverty levels. External migration flows are regulated by the government. The main instrument of regulation is the Emigration Act 1983 which deals with the departure of Indian workers for overseas contractual employment and seeks to safeguard their interests. However efforts to direct manpower export have been minimal.

The paper recommends several changes in government policy. A key focus of policy intervention should be to improve synergy between migration and development. Internal migration is a consequence of unequal regional development. In the case of international migration, the impact on pro-poor growth should be maximised through appropriate institutional and policy measures.

Four major categories of interventions can be envisaged, which will differ for internal and external migration. These categories relate to:

- addressing underdevelopment and improving the synergy between migration and development;
- improving labour market outcomes;
- ensuring basic entitlements to migrant workers; and
- improving the social and political environment for migration.

China migration country study

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and

Frank N. Pieke

Institute for Chinese Studies, University of Oxford, UK

Early rural reforms led to an initial increase in rural incomes; when these began to level off, farmers started looking for alternative sources of income. In the late 1990s, China's cities had attracted close to 100 million rural migrants, most of whom were short-term labourers rather than long-term settlers. Rural-urban migration continues to be an intrinsic part of China's rapid transition to a market economy.

Two aspects of the reforms are particularly important in explaining the rapid growth of rural-urban migration. First, de-collectivisation of agriculture freed rural households to allocate the household labour force both locally and much farther afield. Second, the transition to a market economy created a high regional disparity in economic development.

However, migrant labour has also made an indispensable and positive contribution to the rapid growth of the coastal areas. Not only have migrant labourers built much of China's new urban infrastructure, but migrant labour has also been a key factor in making the labour-intensive industries in the coastal areas internationally competitive.

Migration has also reduced some of the tensions produced by unequal economic development. Furthermore, migrants who are still residents of, and have land in, their area of origin are more likely to transfer resources (remittances, investments, human capital and information) back to their home base, so raising the standard of living and contributing to local economic development. Returned migrants in particular are vital sources of investment, entrepreneurship and experience.

The vital contribution made by migrants to China's economic 'miracle' was little recognised in the 1990s. In recent years, China's top leadership has referred several times to rural labour migrants as major contributors to the development of China. Several policy initiatives have been undertaken, all with the objective of freeing up the labour market across China, guaranteeing a more equitable treatment of migrant workers in the cities, and envisioning a transition to a pattern of more permanent urban settlement of large numbers of rural migrants.

There is a risk that policy reforms may not go far enough to bridge the gap as far as rural-urban migration is concerned. Many current programmes for poverty reduction continue to deal with the urban and rural poor under separate programmes. Furthermore, both programmes are mainly concerned with the income level of the poor, and cater much less for other forms of deprivation or disadvantage; and rural migrants are not necessarily considered to be poor. Second, there is the risk that rural migrant labourers may become a more permanent underclass, especially as more settle permanently in the cities. There currently appears to be less interest in the impact of migration on the possible development of rural communities than on urban development. Consequently, the main thrust of migration policy both at the national level and in many sending areas continues to be to relieve the countryside of its 'surplus' population rather than to encourage rural economic growth in the context of a broader sensitivity to the institutional links between rural development, rural poverty and rural labour migration, especially with regard to their implications for the empowerment of rural people and for gender equality.

The experiences in some areas of origin and destination could be built upon to assist in designing an integrated development strategy that includes the creation of a viable and prosperous countryside as one of its key objectives. Migration can play an important role in achieving this objective. The strong links between migrants and their home communities created by the household registration and land tenure systems, along with the active involvement of governments of sending areas in the affairs of migrant communities, have many positive sides to them that should be reserved. Migrants could continue to have a stake in the development of their area of origin, even if they settle elsewhere more permanently, by allowing them to retain certain rural residency and land rights on top of similar rights they may enjoy in the area of destination.

A review of migration issues in Pakistan

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According to 1998 census records, some 10 million people, or 8% of the population of Pakistan, consisted of internal or international migrants. Savings remitted by Pakistani migrants abroad constitute the largest single source of foreign exchange earnings for the country.

There are several types of flows of migration from Pakistan to countries in the EU, North America and east Asia. First, there are people using formal channels. Secondly, there are those who go to developed countries as students and remain after finishing their studies. Third are migrants – mostly young men – who enter developed countries illegally and finally, those who enter legally and then remain in violation of their visa conditions. The first two categories are usually not poor. The third form of migration is the most difficult to estimate or document, and is also the channel that might be open to relatively less well-off people.

Migration to the Gulf region took off in the early 1970s. By the early 1980s, some 2 million Pakistanis had migrated there. Initially, demand was for construction workers; later it switched to workers with skills in sectors such as transport, trade, social infrastructure and security services. Unlike migrants to developed countries, those in the Gulf included large numbers of uneducated people from rural areas; their remittances home directly impacted on poverty.

Migration between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been a long-standing feature of the history of the region. It became highly conspicuous, however, in the 1980s with civil war and foreign military intervention in Afghanistan. With over 2.5 million people from Afghanistan, Pakistan was host to the largest population of refugees anywhere in the world. The refugees have been among the poorest people in Pakistan.

There has been a steady flow of Muslim migration from other Asian countries – such as India, Bangladesh and Burma – to Pakistan since 1947. There are no reliable estimates – but guesses range from 1 to 3 million.

According to the population census of 1998, urban areas accounted for two-thirds of all in-migrants. According to the census, 43% of lifetime migrants gave ‘moving with household head’ as their reason for migration. The second most frequent reason (17%) was marriage, followed by employment (12%) and business (9%).

Patterns of migration in Pakistan – from labour abundant rural areas of North West Frontier Province and Punjab to urban centres of Punjab and Sindh – conform to a basic poverty-migration linkage. The regions of out-migration are parts of the country where incomes are low and uncertain. The link between poverty and migration rests on certain assumptions about how the labour market operates. First, there are more opportunities for male migrants than for females. Moreover, there are significant differences in demand for workers in the formal public sector, formal private sector and the informal sector, and each is manifest through distinct social networks. Third, the greatest demand is for cheap labour (casual daily wage labour in construction and) workers for occupations on the social margins (e.g. sex work, begging).

There are several types of rural-rural migration: displacement due to projects; migration from arid areas; migration of share-tenants; pastoralists; and seasonal migrants.

In most of the major cities planning has been reactive rather than anticipatory. Migrant communities have established themselves in squatter settlements without infrastructure support, and slowly legalised them. Over the years, settlements have been evicted for various reasons, including making way for upper-income housing, construction of infrastructure and to restore government and other public land. Current policy in this area is uncertain.

Migration issues are politically important. State policies, historically, have been influenced by ethnic and caste stereotypes and preferences. Groups that have felt discriminated against have, in turn, protested against what they perceive as unjust discrimination against their ethnicity or caste.

It is possible to rank different forms of migration in an order of priority based on the following criteria: the vulnerability of migrants; the number of people affected; impact on overall economic conditions; and feasibility of effective policy action.

Given the diversity in types of migration in Pakistan, it is not surprising that there is no single, coherent migration policy. However, it is possible to identify three important broad areas, which need to be better understood in formulating policy. These are how to:

- 1 Build on the supporting role of informal social networks, extended families, kinship groups and ethnic identity, in migration planning and policies;
- 2 Change laws and regulations to legalise practices, which are, strictly speaking, illegal but are widely viewed as socially legitimate;
- 3 Improve the access of poor migrants to housing, infrastructure and services in urban areas.

In general, there is a need for more in-depth and focused policy-oriented research on both internal and international migration.

Migration as a livelihood strategy of the poor: the Bangladesh case

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This paper examines the experiences of the government, private sector, and civil society in managing international emigration from Bangladesh. The paper outlines complex processes of labour migration. It identifies where policy interventions may act to make international migration an important livelihood strategy for poor people while ensuring that migrant workers receive maximum protection both at home and abroad. It describes the extent, nature and types of both short and long term international migration.

Historically, migration has been a common livelihood strategy of Bangladeshi people and since the 18th century, emigration from Bengal has had a direct correlation with colonialism. Today, most long-term or permanent emigration is to the UK or US. Over time, strict immigration policies in western countries have limited further emigration from Bangladesh. During the 1970s, the labour markets in the Middle East offered new scope for Bangladeshi migrant labour. Later, such migration also expanded to the newly industrialised countries of South East Asia.

Short-term contract migration to the Middle East and South East Asia has become the dominant form of migration from Bangladesh. Since 1976 to 2002 more than 3 million Bangladeshis have migrated overseas for employment. Over the past two years, migration has declined. Substantial increases in the cost of migration and stiff competition from new sending countries have recently led to a decline in economic migration.

According to official figures short term migrants from Bangladesh are predominantly male; females account for only 1%. The Bangladesh government has banned certain categories of female labour from independent emigration but many choose to do so through unofficial channels. The number of female migrants is therefore likely to be substantially higher than official estimates. Official women migrants work as professionals, skilled and unskilled. Bangladeshi males mostly work as semi and unskilled labourers, while some work as professionals and skilled workers.

The Bangladesh Bank data on remittance flows to Bangladesh show an annual growth of 10% for the past 25 years. However, the growth rate of remittances is much lower than the total flow of migrants. A significant portion of remittances also reaches Bangladesh through unofficial channels.

The most important among the unofficial channels, *Hundi*, accounts for another 40% of the total flow. A cost benefit analysis yields a benefit: cost ratio of 2.88 (migration costs:remittances sent).

The 1982 Immigration Ordinance, the main regulatory instrument of the Government of Bangladesh, does not reflect the dynamics of current world labour market, nor does it reflect the rights-based approach. The Government of Bangladesh has created a welfare fund for migrant workers through the contributions of outgoing migrants. However, to ensure transparency and to avoid misuse of funds, the fund guidelines need revision. Inter-ministerial coordination has begun to improve the management of the complex migration process amongst the many different agencies currently involved. Linking such efforts with the academia and civil society has yet to emerge.

Since the 1980s, private recruiting agencies have played a major role in massive expansion of shortterm labour migration from Bangladesh. However, the fraudulent practices committed by unscrupulous recruiting agents and their sub-agents have tarnished the image of the sector as a whole. Today individual workers and their social networks conduct 60% of recruitment and placement.

Civil society organisations have yet to involve themselves in labour migration issues in any major way. None of the large NGOs such as Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), Proshika or Grameen have programmes that address the needs of the migrant workers. Various migrant workers' associations have emerged, which are working hard to raise issues concerning migrants' rights.

Nor are donors involved in any significant way with economic migration except for the issue of vulnerability of migrant workers to HIV/AIDS.

Key recommendations:

- Government, migrant workers, civil society and the private sector collectively need to shape a comprehensive migration policy reflecting both long and short-term international migration.
- The fundamental principle of any new policy should be to protect human rights and dignity of labour both in Bangladesh as well as in receiving countries.
- The government should prioritise ratification of the 1990 UN Convention on Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
- The government should rescind restrictions on the migration of unskilled and semiskilled women workers up to a certain age.
- Migration costs must be reduced and recruiting agencies better regulated.
- Access to credit on low interest must be ensured if poor people are to be afforded the chance of engaging in economic migration as a livelihood strategy.
- Awareness campaigns using various media and pre-departure orientation training need to be institutionalised to ensure the protection of migrant workers.
- The government must develop a plan of action to enable potential emigrants from Bangladesh to compete in the labour market of the industrialised countries.

Internal migration and the development nexus: the case of Bangladesh

Rita Afsar

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Existing survey results show that all types of migration have recently increased significantly. Rural to urban migration is the most prevalent form of migration in Bangladesh. A recent study found that nearly two-thirds of emigration from among 62 randomly sampled villages was to urban areas. The figure for rural-rural migration was 10% and was 24% for overseas migration.

People mostly migrate in order to find better jobs. Rural life is changing fast. People are far less dependent on agriculture and related work. They increasingly depend on off-farm livelihoods, which often involve some form of migration. In many cases this entails moving to urban areas and,

indeed, migration accounts for about two-thirds of the urban growth seen in Bangladesh since independence. Most economic migrants to urban areas are young males, but this changed significantly with the recent increase in demand for female labour in the readymade garment factories of Dhaka and other metropolitan areas. Migrants generally face physical insecurity, poor housing, negative discrimination by officialdom and development programmes at their places of destination. They consequently have poorer health and greater vulnerability compared to the general urban population.

Remittances to rural areas generally boost consumption. They also help to expand business in agricultural products and construction materials. Remittances also helped to generate savings, the major source of capital in the absence of institutional credit on easy terms. Migration and remittances have invigorated the land tenancy market in rural areas. Research has challenged the conventional wisdom that migration transfers rural poverty to urban areas. There is ample evidence that urban immigrant households have improved their incomes since arrival. At the same time, household incomes in rural sending areas have benefited from remittances received from migrant members.

Government policy has on the whole failed to address the reality of a changing rural landscape, rapid urbanisation and the contribution to both by rural-urban economic migration. Some donor policies indirectly address migration issues through capacity development programmes in small and medium sized towns, but there is no focused effort on migration issues. With the exception of UNCHR, no donors are working to protect the interests of internal migrants.

The Coalition for the Urban Poor can be considered the most important pro-poor institution supporting migrants. This coalition of NGOs is actively working to uphold human rights, protect workers and alleviate urban poverty. Among other pro-poor organisations, the Municipal Development Fund has an important role to play in facilitating decentralisation by developing the technical, fiscal and administrative capabilities of municipalities and establishing a transparent and accountable system of fiscal transfer.

Recommendations include:

- Greater efforts on the part of government to ensure that its poverty reduction strategy (PRSP) addresses the needs of the migrants, particularly urban poor migrants who often suffer eviction, ill health and other problems associated with vulnerability;
- Efforts to institutionalise remittances such that they fulfil their wider development potential;
- Government policy to address the spatial and regional dimensions for development; flood-prone regions and those with favourable ecosystems must be given priority attention in order to expand labour productivity and provide greater scope for occupational mobility.

Since the PRSP is still being formulated, the following strategies are recommended for effective decentralisation:

- Expand telecommunications and other information technologies to stimulate employment creation and decentralise business.
- Develop infrastructure and communication, particularly efficient and safe transportation, and provide a good standard of social services such as hospitals, schools and colleges.
- Decentralise key decision-making authorities within the political, administrative and financial sectors, and liberalise business practices.
- Modify policies to ensure they reflect the needs of the female labour force in general and migrant women in particular.
- Bring all labour legislation under a new labour code to ensure that all factories provide written employment contracts stipulating working hours and wage rates, overtime hours and rates, holidays, dismissal and retrenchment procedures.
- The Ministry of Labour must monitor and enforce the implementation of the unified labour code.
- Provide *khas* land to NGOs and housing companies to ensure low-cost housing and hostel facilities for migrant factory workers.

- Provide skills training to workers to mitigate the negative impacts of the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement in particular and the competitive nature of the global market in general.

Migration in Vietnam: A review of information on current trends and patterns, and their policy implications

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In the past 10 years, Vietnam has been remarkably successful in ensuring high levels of economic growth and in reducing poverty. This goes hand in hand with important shifts in population distribution and mobility. Although Vietnam has a relatively low proportion of urban residents (23.7% of the total population of over 76 million), this increased rapidly in the 1990s.

The economic reforms or ‘Renovation’ (*Doi Moi*) introduced in 1986 affected migration in three main ways. In agriculture, decollectivisation and the introduction of the household contract system have released farmers from the land. In cities, the household registration system continues, but no longer limits the acquisition of essential goods and access to employment. In the emerging industrial sector, Vietnam’s incorporation into the global economy has resulted in flows of foreign direct investment attracting migrant workers where such industries concentrate. Closer economic ties with other nations in the region have also expanded numbers and destinations for overseas labour migrants.

Census data inform that between 1994 and 1999 nearly 4.5 million people, or 6.5% of the population over five years of age, changed their place of residence. This figure does not include short-term, unregistered movement and movement in the six months preceding the census date. Of the migrants recorded in the census, 1.6 million moved from rural to other rural areas. This movement was essentially from the poorest provinces and from the provinces with high population densities: 1.13 million people moved between urban centres, and 1.18 million people moved from rural settlements to urban centres, while over 400,000 moved in the opposite direction, from urban centres to rural areas.

Over half of all migrants were under the age of 25, and women account for a much larger proportion of migrants than in the 1980s, reflecting emerging employment opportunities for young, often unmarried women in foreign-capital industries. Migrants are the lowest proportion of the total population working in agriculture/forestry/fishery, although over 25% of all migrants are employed in this sector, reflecting the significance of rural-rural movement in Vietnam. At the other extreme, migrants are a large proportion of workers in industry and construction. This is especially the case for the mixed (state/private) and foreign sectors, where migrant workers are almost one-quarter of the labour force.

Migrants’ remittances are an important part of household incomes in home areas. However, migrants to the largest cities, where infrastructure and services are under considerable pressure, face restrictions on the issuance of permanent residence permits. This limits access to social services, formal sector employment and secure housing tenure, and can exacerbate the difficulties that low-income migrants face without actually stopping their arrivals.

International migration has also increased significantly recently. Vietnam’s labour export policy started in the 1980s and is marked by three waves. The first and second waves were directed

primarily to eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The third wave started in 1994, with east Asia becoming the main destination for contract workers, reflecting Vietnam's increasing integration in the regional economy. Taiwan and Malaysia are currently the major destinations followed by South Korea and Japan. Overall, the number of Vietnamese overseas contract workers increased from fewer than 4,000 in 1993 to more than 46,000 in 2002, while the proportion of women in overseas labour programmes declined to just over 18% because of government restrictions on contracts for domestic work and employment in the entertainment industry.

Since 1999, overseas employment has been liberalised, and in 2002 it was estimated that 159 private labour broker agencies were operating in Vietnam. Official and unrecorded remittances are estimated to be the equivalent of about 6% of the country's total export value and comparable to the amount provided under international loans.

The opening of borders between Vietnam and Cambodia, Laos and China is linked to the growing problem of human trafficking in the region. There is limited information on the number of people trafficked, especially women and children, and on the means by which they are trafficked. In some instances, what was intended as voluntary labour or marriage migration ends up as prostitution and other forms of sex exploitation.

The paper recommends that:

- Existing information on migration in Vietnam shows that migrants are a highly heterogeneous group, with different needs and priorities and reasons for moving. Policies related to migration should be grounded in a better understanding of the conditions, needs and priorities of the specific target groups. Legal support and social services should be provided to the most needy migrants at the areas of destination.
- Special attention should be given to the contribution of migrants to their home areas. National and provincial governments are best placed to identify the needs for support and on this basis formulate and implement appropriate initiatives, such as facilitating the sending of remittances, removing categorising regulations, providing information on local investment opportunities, and training and support to return migrants and/or their families.
- Policy interventions should take as a priority improving the well-being of migrants by ensuring their access to basic services and the protection of their rights. This is especially important for low-income migrants in urban centres, for single migrant women, for some overseas migrants and for female and child victims of trafficking.
- Migration has both benefits and costs. Increasing pressure on infrastructure and services in the largest cities cannot be ignored, but should be linked to the wider context of national development strategies. More balanced and equitable regional development through investment in infrastructure in small and intermediate urban centres and increasing non-farm employment opportunities can ease pressure on the large cities. This requires a careful assessment of local opportunities and constraints, effective access to national, regional and international markets and, most importantly, coordination with macroeconomic and sectoral policies at the national level.

International migration policies in Asia

Clare Waddington

More and more countries are becoming sources of migrant labour. The flow of international labour within Asia increased substantially during the 1980s and 1990s due to the rapid growth of economies and increased wage disparities among countries. This paper examines the experience of Asian and other countries in trying to manage labour emigration and provides examples of effective policies drawn from ILO and other sources. Such policies focus on managing the recruitment of citizens, protecting the rights of citizens working overseas and facilitating the flow of remittances.

Policies differ widely between countries. The paper suggests a state-regulated regime, coordinated by a specialised foreign employment office such as the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment, as the most efficient and migrant-friendly.

Measures used to regulate the recruitment of migrant workers include fees and taxes levied on migrants and mechanisms for selecting migrants. Although demand for labour in the receiving countries largely determines overall patterns of migration, foreign employment offices and policies in sending countries can play a role. This has been important in diversifying the range of countries to which Filipinos or Sri Lankans migrate, reducing the risk of depending on one or two destinations. Foreign employment services have to tread a fine line between ensuring that they have sufficient power to regulate the recruitment industry without creating incentives to irregular migration.

Migration is a costly process and migrants and their families at home are vulnerable to economic shocks and crises in receiving countries. Migrants may have to relinquish their rights and to lose all forms of social protection. Government efforts to protect workers can take the form of training, information dissemination and counselling before departure; reducing the costs of migration; and setting minimum labour standards and publicising model contracts. In many countries, NGOs have played a key role in promoting migrants' rights.

Bilateral agreements to ensure minimum labour standards in the receiving country mainly result from attempts by sending countries to protect their citizens abroad. The need for bilateral agreements demonstrates the weakness of international policies. International agreements are problematic, even for sending countries, because of the competitive nature of labour migration.

The UN Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families provides a legal structure and standards for the protection of migrant workers. The challenge is in monitoring and implementation. Regional and multilateral initiatives within the region are discussed and recommendations made for co-ordinated policies.

Policies that seek to facilitate migrant remittances and encourage migrants to save and invest in their country of origin have mixed results. Success is contingent on the cost of remitting funds and the state of the sending country's economy. Sending country governments can encourage and channel remittance investments by encouraging migrant associations and the diaspora to remain involved in the development of their country or place of origin; and by providing opportunities for small-scale investments.

The paper recommends that:

- National governments try to simplify procedures and regulations in order to facilitate migrants. The more simple the system the easier it is for the migrant to navigate it, and the less possibility for agents to appropriate large brokerage fees. One way to do this is by creating a foreign employment office that is proactive rather than reactive and flexible in its response and bureaucracy.
- Governments regulate the recruitment industry more effectively. However this must be done in a way that maintains competition among service providers or delivery.
- National governments improve the availability of information for planning and monitoring international migration by collecting data more systematically and using it to target policy interventions.
- Policy processes be made more inclusive and responsive by involving migrants themselves.
- Information about migration policies and protection be disseminated to migrants and their families through networks and the media.
- Trade unions and NGOs be involved in the process. They can work to improve the accountability of state and private recruiters; provide qualitative information about migrants and their problems, and assist information dissemination.
- Pro-poor foreign employment services be run more effectively by decentralising service delivery.

- Regional trading agreements can be a useful forum for developing more co-ordinated policies within the region.

Roundtable Discussion on Migration and Pro-Poor Policies: The Media's Role

DFID organised a round table meeting on the topic 'Migration and Pro-poor Policy in Asia' in the ballroom of Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel on 25 June 2003. A total number of 24 media personalities of Dhaka participated in the meeting. Key issue was the dissemination of information about migration through media, also make people aware of their rights and the importance of this sector. Members from various media were invited to share their thoughts on the issue. They were urged to increase the coverage on the prevailing situation of the migrant people. In relation to this, it was agreed that the internal as well as the international migration would be given the same focus.

The whole session was divided into two parts. In the first part the organisers, specialists on the panel gave short introduction on the issue and its purposes. Amongst them were Prof. Ronald Skeldon, University of Sussex, UK; Frank Laczko, Chief, Division of Research and Publications, External Relations Department, IOM, Geneva; Mr Jeremy Clarke, Chief Policy and Strategy (Asia Division) DFID; Ms Elizabeth Jones, Migration Team, Policy Division, DFID, UK; Prof. Tasneem Siddiqui, Chair, RMMRU, University of Dhaka; and Dr. Sushilla Zeitlyn, Senior Social Development Advisor, Asia Directorate, DFID, UK. Then the floor was declared open for discussion to the participants. After an hour of exchange of opinions, a short break of ten minutes was announced which was followed by another hour of discussion among the participants. The whole session was moderated by Prof. C R Abrar, Dept. of International Relations, Dhaka University.

Prof. Ronald Skeldon said that his major duty in the conference was to bring together the five themes from five countries chosen for research on the issue. The countries are – China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. He said, “ The definition of migration has changed over the last 15 years especially concerning international migration, but if we go back 20 years, we would notice that the migration was mainly internal which used to be the 'population redistribution'. To present the entire picture of the migration we should include the issue of internal migration in the policy agenda of the entire process.” He also said that migration does not bring only money and goods but also ideas of different cultures and countries. He hoped that through this discussion important recommendation would be drawn out to improve the condition of the migrants and explore ways to help those migrants who are not poor. He talked about the negative presentation of migration in the newspapers. He added that migration is a critical part of development. It can be considered as a constructive part also and its role to alleviate poverty is no lesser important than the aid by the donor agencies in the national development.

Frank Laczko said that the link between migration and development for many years has been seen from a very negative angle. Poverty leads the poor countries towards migration and the richer countries feel the pressure of migration, which compel them to limit the migration. He mentioned some perspectives of the migration. One perspective is the poorest of the poor countries also have the resources and take the opportunity of migration to mute another country. Another perspective is the brain drain. The concern of the migration was to send skill to the developing countries. Third concern is the positive contributions of the migrants in the development of the developing countries. He said that not the donor agencies rather the remittance of the migrants can contribute a lot in the economic development. Because of the soaring rate of the remittance, the significance of migration is being talked about in the developed as well as in the developing countries.

Mr. Jeremy Clarke said that DFID is a bi-lateral developing organisation that works to develop regional relationship to merge the issue of migration for poverty alleviation. He mentioned that a dialogue between the donor agencies, government and NGOs as well as the civil societies has to be

arranged for better understanding of the issue and create some positive approaches for poverty alleviation.

Ms. Elizabeth Jones in her speech revealed that this conference was launched to find ways on how migration can contribute in global poverty alleviation. She stressed that media can play an important role by highlighting both the positive and negative aspects of migration, creating awareness and encouraging people to utilise the migratory resources for better lives. She added that migration is a process through which economic concept, kinship, ideas and relationship among the countries can develop, but the currently international, national as well as migration policies hinder the free movement of the people. The main perspective is to make the concept of migration clear to the general people through media coverage, she added.

Prof. Tasneem Siddiqui presented the Bangladesh country paper in the conference. She mentioned certain trends of migration. First of all she mentioned about the flow of remittance. The rate of remittance flow has increased sharply from the period of 1998 to 2001-2002 data and it is near about three billion US dollars now. In the second trend she talked about the changing of source area of the remittance. Migrants are now shifting to the developed countries like USA and UK and the educated and skilled people earning more foreign currencies. Due to the various policies of the receiving countries migration is not that easy. Space has been created for regular migrations in the west but certain visa types require not only skilled but also educated. She pointed out the rate of remittance flow - 46% is coming through formal channel, 43% through private channel, 8% hand carried and 1% through visa trading and others. She mentioned that micro level financial reform is needed in the private channel system since the government is not getting any profit. Banks must be made customer friendly for the lesser educated people for them to understand the system better. She also said that a ministry should be established for the welfare of the migrant workers. About women migration, she noticed that media highlighted only the negative aspects. But there are success stories as well which should also be highlighted, she observed.

Journalists Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, Haroon Habib, Hasan Shahriar, Farid Hossain, Syed Fahim Munaim, Mozammel Hossain, Afsan Chowdhury, Nadeem Quadir, Nayeemul Islam Khan, Shyamal Datta and Salim Samad took part in the discussion.

Follow up Activities

***Another Horizon:* A Documentary for Policy Advocacy on Female Migration from Bangladesh**

Another Horizon portrays the reality of international female migration from Bangladesh. It deals with issues such as the motivations of women to migrate, their experiences in the host country, their successes and failures and their reintegration efforts. Apart from documenting the experiences of female migrants, experts, senior government functionaries and representatives of migrants' associations have also been interviewed.

The film covers the message that placing bans and/or restrictions on movement of people is not realistic. Rather pragmatic policy of recognising the reality and formulating effective measures can help ensure steady, healthy and safe labour movement. Directed by Sharif Uddin Palash, *Another Horizon* presents a perspective for building a better future for the female migrants and for all of us.

Another Horizon is an outcome of a joint collaboration between the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) and Media-mix Enterprise (ME), a media consultancy and production house. The British Council, Dhaka, supported the production of the documentary.

Premier Show of Another Horizon

The premier show of *Another Horizon* was held on 27 August 2003 at The British Council Auditorium. Shabnaaz Zahereen, Governance and Gender Programme Officer, the British Council, welcomed the guests. The ceremony was presided over by Heather Forbes, Assistant Director of the British Council. Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui spoke on objectives and expected outcome from the film. Sayed Nurullah Azad, the CEO of Media-mix Enterprise presented the overview of the film. As Chief Guest, Mr. Dalil Uddin Mandal, Secretary, Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, praised the effort and stated that the Ministry would like to continue its support to these kinds of activities. A photo exhibition on (internal) migration by Azizur Rahim and Momena Jalil of DRIK was inaugurated following the premier show.

Media/communication and migration experts from different organisations like from IOM, UNICEF, BCCP, Ministry of Planning, GoB, RMMRU, DRIK, Resource Bangladesh, PROSHIKA, NSDP, NDI, Nari Moitree, BRAC, and Bangladesh Short Film Forum attended the premier show.

Workshop on Migration and Media

A workshop on *Migration and Media* was organised by The British Council on 29 August 2003. It was participated by a group of students of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, student associates from RMMRU, University of Dhaka, and research and production executives of Media-mix Enterprise.

Professor Tasneem Siddiqui of RMMRU provided a brief overview of the migration realities in Bangladesh. Professor Golam Rahman, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of the University of Dhaka spoke on social communication and communication strategy. While emphasising on sound research for any quality social communication / media campaign, he explained that a documentary like *Another Horizon* could communicate well because it drew heavily from earlier research on female migration from Bangladesh. In the first session, a documentary from Nepal titled *We Homes Chaps* was screened. Morshedul Islam, a renowned film-maker spoke on the technical aspects of the film and the effects of camera, direction, lights, and editing. In the second session, Azizur Rahim from *Pathshala*, DRIK, spoke on photography and migration. In the third session, noted film-maker Tareque Masud shared his experience on film-making. He said the role of the director and the subject of a documentary is very important. The insight and imagination of the director often guides to a good film. He also emphasised the role of a good editor. In the last session, another documentary on internal migration titled *Dolls and Dust* was screened. Rozana Rashid, Research Associate of RMMRU and Sharif Uddin Palash, Creative Director of Media-mix Enterprise, shared their observations on the subject of the film and its technical side.

Bangladesh Forum for Migration and Development (BFMD) Formed

As a follow up activity of the Dhaka Conference, *Bangladesh Forum for Migration and Development* (BFMD) was formed with the initiative of Action Aid Bangladesh. The objectives of the forum include:

- Creation of an e-mail networking group, so that every organisation can share their experiences.
- Unite different migrant workers' associations and provide a common platform, build a bridge with the civil society and government, and set up a permanent working group and lobby with the government.

A meeting of the Forum was held at the office of International Organization for Migration (IOM) on 29 October 2003. Representatives of different international organisations, national NGOs, and migrant workers' associations including DFID, IOM, Action Aid Bangladesh, RMMRU, SHISUK, WARBE, CWCS, Population Council, and Bangladesh Women Migrants' Association attended the meeting.

ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIT April – June 2003

Conference: The DFID- RMMRU Conference on *Migration, Development and Pro-poor Policy Choices in Asia* was organised on 22-24 June 2003 at Dhaka. The conference was participated by about one hundred participants, eighty of whom were from overseas. Papers on internal and international migration on India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Vietnam were presented. Professor Ronald Skeldon gave the key-note speech at the inaugural session that was attended by Mr. Reaz Rahman, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. David Carter, UK High Commissioner to Dhaka, Professor S M A Faiz, Vice Chancellor of the University of Dhaka, Mr. Paul Ackroyd, Head of DFID, Dhaka. The concluding session was held on 24 June, where Mr. Shamsur M Chowdhury, *Bir Bikram*, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the Chief Guest, and Mr. Jeremy Clarke, Chief of Regional Policy and Strategy in Asia, DFID, offered the vote of thanks.

YRF Monthly Meeting: In the monthly meeting of April 2003, Maruf Ahmed, 4th Year Honours student of Public Administration, presented a paper on *The Recent Push-back at the Bangladesh Border*.

In the monthly meeting of May 2003, Sakila Matin Mridula of International Relations, and Faizur Rahman of Public Administration, presented a paper on *Banning of Two-stroke Three-wheelers: Impact on the Livelihood of the Drivers*.

Awards: Syeda Rozana Rashid, Research Associate of RMMRU, was awarded the Chevening Scholarship to pursue post-graduate degree on Forced Migration at the University of Oxford, UK, in 2003-2004.

Shahzada M Akram and Khondaker Rezwanaul Karim, Research Associates of RMMRU, were awarded Young Professional Fellowship for a research study on *Women Married to Migrant Workers: Their Security and Empowerment in Bangladesh Context*, by the Forum on Women and Security in International Relations (FOWSIA) funded by Bangladesh Freedom Foundation, for the period of July 2003 – March 2004.

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