

WORKING PAPER

**Recruitment of Pakistani Workers for Overseas
Employment:
Mechanisms, Exploitation and Vulnerabilities**

**G.M. Arif, PhD
Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE)
Islamabad**

**International Labour Office
Geneva**

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Foreword

In June 1998, the International Labour Conference adopted a Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up that obligates ILO member States to respect, promote and realize freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.¹ The ILO *Programme for the Promotion of the Declaration* is responsible for the reporting processes and technical cooperation activities associated with the Declaration; and it carries out awareness raising, advocacy and knowledge functions – of which this Working Paper is an example. Working Papers are intended to stimulate discussion of the issues covered by the Declaration. They express the views of the author, which are not necessarily those of the ILO.

As part of these broader efforts, a Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour was created in 2001.² It seeks to help member States address the problems of forced labour and human trafficking through promotional means and technical cooperation, including research and knowledge sharing on different forms of forced labour, their causes, and the appropriate remedies. Projects are implemented throughout the world.

This study in Pakistan was commissioned against the backdrop of growing concern globally about the particular vulnerability of both regular and irregular migrant workers to exploitation, trafficking and forced labour. It was undertaken to inform dialogue between Asian sender and Middle Eastern destination countries, at a Gulf Forum on Temporary Contractual Labour held in Abu Dhabi in early 2008, along with a sister study addressing similar questions in Bangladesh. While provisional findings were first presented at that time, we are now pleased to publish the full findings of the research, following the launch of the ILO's third global report on forced labour, entitled "*The cost of coercion*" on 12 May 2009.

The influx of foreign workers to Gulf countries over the last few decades has created a unique situation in the region, with the majority of the labour force comprising non-nationals. It is estimated that at least 10 million foreigners work in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries³, most of them unskilled and semi-skilled migrants. Most of these temporary contract workers, both women and men, come from South and South-east Asian countries (notably Bangladesh, India, Indonesia Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka). They work in a variety of sectors – women largely in domestic work and in factories, and men in construction, manufacturing, security, transport and other sectors.

This study on "Recruitment of Pakistani workers for overseas employment: Mechanisms, exploitation and vulnerabilities" by Dr. G. M. Arif of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), was undertaken through fieldwork in November – December 2007. It involved interviews and focus group discussions with both returned and prospective migrant workers in selected sender Districts, private recruitment agents and other key informants. The project was overseen by a research oversight committee comprising representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis, Overseas Pakistanis Foundation,

¹The text of the Declaration is available at: <http://www.ilo.org/declaration>

² Further information is available at: <http://www.ilo.org/forcedlabour>. This and other SAP-FL Working Papers are available on this site.

³ United Arab Emirates, State of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar and State of Kuwait

Quaid-e-Azam University and the Planning Commission. The committee appreciated the work of the Consultant, and endorsed the report in July 2008.

The study sheds new light on different aspects of the recruitment process and employment of Pakistani male migrant workers leaving the country for employment in the Gulf States. It shows that the majority of the workers secure their jobs through private recruitment agents, known in Pakistan as Overseas Employment Promoters, while others are assisted by their friends and relatives, and others get their visa directly from the employer. Despite the many legal and regulatory protections in place, it appears that exploitation does occur, for example through charging of fees well in excess of the official rates, re-signing of contracts on arrival in the destination country and payment of lower wages than were promised. Evidence showed that unregistered sub-agents played a very significant role in the recruitment process, especially in the recruiting of semi-and unskilled workers in rural areas. Nonetheless, for many returnees, migration was a positive experience, allowing them to remit savings far in excess of what they would have earned at home. The study makes a number of recommendations to further enhance the benefits of overseas migration for the individual migrants and for the country as a whole, and to reduce the risk of migrants falling victim to the illegal practices which still unfortunately prevail. The ILO stands ready to work closely with our partners in Pakistan and other countries, both senders and receivers of migrant workers, to address these issues. We look forward to deepen further our existing strong cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Dr. G.M. Arif, and his research team at PIDE, for undertaking this research under a very tight delivery schedule to his meticulous standards, and to the ILO Office in Islamabad for their support throughout. I would like also to thank Caroline O'Reilly of the Special Action Programme to combat Forced Labour for supervising the research project, and for editing this Working Paper.



Roger Plant
Head, Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour
Programme for the Promotion of the Declaration on Fundamental
Principles and Rights at Work

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This study is based on a survey of return migrants, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with workers returned from the Middle East. I am thankful to Syed Abdul Majid, Research Economist, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), for supervising both the fieldwork and all discussions. Ms Saima Bashir, Staff Demographer, PIDE, helped in the questionnaire design, reviewing the literature and doing some analysis. My special thanks to her for this assistance. Without the help of Mr. Masood Ishfaq, Chief Computer Division, PIDE, it would not have been possible to process and analyze the micro-data in a short period of time. I am thankful for all his help and assistance during the project. My special thanks to Mr. Muhammad Sarwar for preparing several drafts of the report. The comments from Ms. Caroline O'Reilly, ILO Geneva, on the questionnaire and initial draft of the report helped in improving the quality of work. The proposal and findings of this study were presented to the technical committee of the project comprising officials from the Ministry of Labour and Manpower, academicians and experts. Their guidance and comments helped in both designing the study and improving its quality.

G. M. Arif
Dean of Research
Pakistan Institute of Development Economics
Islamabad

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Acronyms

BEOE	Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment
FSA	Foreign Service Agreement
ILO	International Labour Organization
LHLRA	Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NADRA	National Database Registration Authority
NICOP	National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
OEC	Overseas Employment Corporation
OEP	Overseas Employment Promoter
OPF	Overseas Pakistanis Foundation
SRM	Survey of return migrants, 2007
UAE	United Arab Emirates

Approximate exchange rate at the time of the research: US\$1 = Pakistan Rupees 62.55.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past three decades, Pakistan has been a major labour-sending country to the Middle East with an estimated 1.9 million Pakistanis working in the region by 2004. While there have been significant annual fluctuations over the period, Pakistan has in recent years seen an annual migratory out-flow of more than 150'000 workers to different countries in the Middle East, but primarily to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

There are a number of important dimensions of labour migration from Pakistan to the Gulf region. First, there has been little, if any change in the skill composition of Pakistani workers leaving for the Middle East in the 30 year period. Second, recent data shows that more than 60% of migrating Pakistanis originate from only 20 of the country's 110 districts. Third, the majority of migrants obtain their foreign employment contract either through private Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) or obtain a direct visa. Fourth, labour migration from Pakistan to the Middle East is almost exclusively male, and finally, although migration to Malaysia and Korea has recently started on a limited scale, Pakistan still depends heavily on the Middle Eastern market to absorb its migrant workers.

The two years prior to this study witnessed a remarkable increase in the inflow of remittances, reaching a peak of US\$4.6 billion in 2005-06 and US\$4.45 billion in 2006-07. Remittances from the USA increased considerably after the 9/11 event in New York.

The Government of Pakistan has developed various institutions and rules to govern and regulate the labour recruitment process. The official cost of recruitment remains very low. Yet this study reveals that some problems still prevail at various stages of the process.

Drawing on several data sources, including a review of existing literature, migration data from secondary sources, and primary surveys of return migrants, prospective migrants and overseas employment promoters, this report presents findings on labour recruitment and migration from Pakistan to the Middle East. Focus group discussions with return migrants provided additional first-hand information. While selecting the sample of return migrants, attention was paid to ensure a diversity of profiles, so as to understand and contrast the experiences of regular and irregular migrants, and of workers placed by OEPs and those using other channels.

The major findings are as follows:

Return migrants had in general worked abroad on more than one contract, and their last stay overseas had been on average 4.7 years. More than half of the returnees had worked in skilled jobs such as drivers, masons and carpenters. As it was mainly young male Pakistanis who had migrated for employment, their educational level was higher than the national average. About three-quarters were working prior to going abroad, earning a monthly income of about Rs. 6'000.

The main sources of information on job prospects in the Middle East were friends, relatives and recruiting agents. Legally Pakistanis can go abroad through three channels: a public agency, private recruiting agent or following direct contract with foreign employers. The study found that about half of the migrants had been recruited by OEPs, while one-fifth had used friends and relatives. Another one-fifth of the respondents had received their visas

directly from their foreign employers. About 14% of the respondents had been illegal migrants, including those who stayed on after the *Haj/Umra* pilgrimage, or who had gone abroad without documentation.

Migrants who were recruited through an OEP generally registered themselves with only one agency. Evidence showed that sub-agents played a very significant role in the migration process; OEPs used these intermediaries particularly when recruiting semi-skilled or unskilled workers from rural areas.

Signing of a contract before departure was not universal, and only direct visa holders kept a copy of the contract. Only one-third of the migrants were aware of the Foreign Service Agreement (FSA)⁴ and an even smaller proportion of the group had appeared before the Protector of Emigrants. Attendance at a briefing session at the office of the Protector of Emigrants was low irrespective of the channel used to emigrate.

Recruiters in Pakistan did not respect the maximum fee of Rs. 4'500 for service charges which is fixed by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), and the use of sub-agents had raised costs considerably. Rural unskilled migrants were particularly vulnerable to high costs for the provision of all types of intermediary services. The average total cost for overseas employment was around Rs. 80,000. The cost reported by migrants who went abroad through OEPs was lower than for those who used other channels. New evidence emerged showing that friends, relatives and sub-agents were also exploiting prospective migrants.

Most migrants paid all the fees due in advance. More than half of the returnees who went abroad through friends and relatives financed their migration from their own or from household savings, as against 39% of those who went abroad through OEPs. Thirty eight per cent of migrants relying on friends and relatives had to borrow or mortgage property to meet the costs. By contrast, borrowing was nominal among those who went abroad through OEPs, who primarily financed their migration by selling family jewellery (43%). The most common source of loans was friends and relatives.

There were numerous illegal activities prevalent in the recruiting process in Pakistan: border-crossing without legal documents of illiterate and unskilled workers primarily from rural areas with the involvement of local agents. Undocumented/illegal migrants mostly ended up in Dubai and Muscat, and were subject to the most dangerous forms of overland and sea-route migration.

Relatively new in the migration process to the Middle East was the practice of re-signing contracts on arrival in the destination country. In the new contract, the salary specified was usually 8 to 10% lower than stated in the original contract shown in Pakistan. Unskilled workers also had their salaries for the first three months withheld, to ensure that none would return home prematurely. Irregularity in payment of wages, unfair wage deductions and the non-payment of overtime were other unsatisfactory working conditions cited by

⁴ A Foreign Service Agreement (FSA) shows the demand from an overseas employer to recruit Pakistani workers through OEPs. According to the procedure, an OEP has to show the FSA to the Protector of Emigrants with all other documents to get the permission for recruitment of workers. The Protector of Emigrants ensures that the copy of power of attorney/demand letter is annexed to the FSA.

returnees. There also appeared to be a degree of violation of contract terms with respect to a job's location.

In spite of the above difficulties, migrants were able to remit on average Rs. 209'650 during their average 4.7 years abroad. Respondents who had migrated through OEPs were more likely to be provided free accommodation and medical care than those who used other channels, which increased their scope for savings. At the end of their contracts, returnees who had used the OEP channel or had obtained a direct visa, were better settled and earned higher incomes in Pakistan than other categories of workers. Average monthly income after return in excess of Rs.10'000 was cited, and the rate of landlessness among returnees also slightly declined.

Although the Government of Pakistan has taken several steps to make the recruitment system and migration process transparent, there is strong evidence that regulatory measures have not been able to curb all exploitative practices, including organized forms of illegal migration. A set of recommendations is provided on priority areas for further policy and institutional support.

1 Introduction

There are three main characteristics of contemporary international contract labour migration: first, it is voluntary and usually motivated by economic factors, making it distinct from earlier systems of forced labour migration. Second, it is characterised by various recruitment mechanisms. Third, because migrants' work is fixed-term and of a non-permanent nature, the expectation of repatriation is an intrinsic part of contract labour systems (Zlotnik, 1987; Stahl, 1988; Martin, 1991).

In this context, the present study examined the recruitment process in Pakistan for sending workers to the Middle East. Data for 2004 shows an estimated 1.9 million Pakistanis were registered workers in various Middle Eastern countries: Saudi Arabia accounted for the largest proportion, followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. Official remittances had reached \$4.5 billion in the period 2006 to 2007.

Until the mid-1970s, the emigration of Pakistanis was largely unregulated and facilitated through personal networks of friends and relatives already living abroad. Since then, as labour migration to the Middle East increased in scale, organised recruitment processes began to emerge. Today, as in other Asian countries, Pakistani workers are recruited by private employment agencies and recruiting agents, deployed through a government agency, or contracted through direct hiring and issuance of a visa.

The common observation is that private recruitment agencies are often poorly monitored and, in many countries, few regulations exist to control and monitor the level of recruitment fees charged to workers. This leads to situations where migrant workers can be heavily indebted before they leave their countries. Many do not see their employment contracts prior to departure, and are promised certain conditions that are not subsequently met. Even if they initially see a contract, this may be substituted by another one once they arrive at their destination, whose terms do not match the original or which is written in a language which they do not understand (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Deception during the recruitment process sets workers up for abuse later.

The findings of this study show that Pakistani workers in the Middle East were usually treated with respect, were paid on time, were able to leave when they wished, and returned home having secured several times the income they would have earned had they stayed in Pakistan. In spite of these generally positive outcomes, instances of workers who had suffered as a result of severe working conditions abroad and/or exploitation during the recruitment process were encountered, in violation of both national laws and international labour standards, namely the ILO's Forced Labour Convention No. 29 (1930). High recruitment costs were cited as a particular issue requiring better regulation, but other forms of exploitation were also found.

Pakistan has developed various institutions and established rules to regulate the recruitment process. The Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis has appointed Community Welfare Attachés in selected countries to oversee the employment conditions and welfare of Pakistani workers abroad. A Complaint Cell for overseas Pakistanis was established in the Ministry for the resolution of grievances through the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF); and the Foundation administers a range of services for the benefit of migrant workers, including pre-departure briefings, a Foreign Exchange Remittance Card Scheme, vocational training, a welfare fund and a pension scheme. Bilateral labour agreements have been concluded with a number of receiving countries, and Pakistan is a

member country of the “Colombo Process”, a regional forum for labour-sending countries in Asia to discuss and share experiences and best practices on overseas employment and contractual labour, with a view to optimizing its development benefits.

Improving the transparency of the recruitment process, in order to prevent and eliminate exploitation, requires in-depth knowledge of the current situation in both labour-sending and labour-receiving countries. The effectiveness of existing measures to protect the rights of migrant and contract workers, and to curb exploitative practices, needs also to be examined. In the considerable body of literature on labour migration from Pakistan to the Middle East⁵, recruitment mechanisms have not been examined in detail. The few studies that look at the process of recruitment include Shah and Menon (1999) who explored the role of friends and relatives in labour migration from South Asia (including Pakistan) to Kuwait; and Eelens and Speckmann (1990) who undertook a comprehensive examination of recruitment systems in Sri Lanka. New research on trafficking is also underway at the Sustainable Development Institute, Islamabad.

The overall objective of this study is to examine the recruitment process in Pakistan - a major labour-sending country to the Middle East. By contrasting the experiences of regular and irregular migrants, and of workers placed by private recruitment agencies to those placed through other channels, the study set out to better understand what the current status is, and what areas for improvement could be recommended as a way forward. The study’s specific objectives are:

- to review the mechanisms for recruitment of Pakistani migrant workers for employment in the Gulf States;
- to review the legislative provisions, as well as government policy and regulations governing agencies recruiting for overseas employment;
- to examine the means through which migrant workers identify overseas employment opportunities, how jobs are advertised, the selection process, fees charged, and the terms and conditions of contracts provided;
- to outline a socio-economic profile of the migrant workforce and identify which groups are most vulnerable to exploitative practices;
- to identify ‘irregular’ and ‘illegal’ practices in labour migration; and
- to propose recommendations to improve recruitment mechanisms in Pakistan.

The report is organized as follows. Section 2 gives a description of data sources used for this study. Section 3 presents data and analysis of the profile of Pakistanis abroad, the annual placement of workers in the Middle East and the flow of foreign remittances. Institutions and regulations to control and monitor emigration for overseas employment are the focus of section 4. A profile of return migrants is outlined in section 5, and an in-depth review of recruitment mechanisms is presented in section 6. Costs associated with migrating for work are covered in section 7, and illegal activities in the recruitment process are discussed in section 8. Section 9 deals with working conditions and protection measures

⁵ See for example, Gilani et al. (1981); Khan (1991); Addleton (1989) Arif (1995); Amjad (1989); Kemal and Arif (2002).

for workers in destination countries, section 10 deals with the exploitation and vulnerability of migrants; and section 11 addresses the outcomes of migration. The final section 12 presents some policy recommendations arising from the study findings.

2. Data Sources

This study is based on several sources of information. A review of literature and migration data from secondary sources was first undertaken. Primary data were gathered from surveys with return migrants, prospective migrants and recruiting agents (OEPs) in five districts: Karachi, Swabi, Sialkot, Rawalpindi and D.G. Khan (Table 1), as well as through focus group discussions with return migrants in three of these districts

The survey sample of returnees and prospective migrants proposed in the TOR for this study was 50 and 30 respectively. This sample size was considered too small given the scale and spread of the migrant population and the diversity of worker profiles (in terms of types of recruitment, countries of destination, nature of jobs and skill levels). The sample of returnees and prospective migrants was thus increased to 138 and 40 respectively.

The first survey was named the Survey of Return Migrants (SRM), 2007. While still too small a sample size to be representative, every effort was made to capture the diversity of worker profiles and recruitment mechanisms. Returnees who had migrated illegally i.e. without documents or having prolonged their stay after the *Haj/Umra* pilgrimage without securing a visa extension, were deliberately included in the sample.

Data on annual placements collected by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) show that about 95% of Pakistani workers go to the Middle East, and of these, more than 80% go to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Two-thirds of overseas workers are drawn from only 20 districts of the country, and the majority of workers are in the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled occupational categories.⁶

To draw the sample, the high-migration districts were distributed across six of the seven regional Protector of Emigrants (POE) offices as shown in Table 1. Survey districts were selected from across the POE regions with the exception of Malakand, due to security problems there. In the Quetta region, there is no high-migration district. From the remaining five regions - Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Lahore, Multan and Karachi – one high-migration district was selected from each.

The five selected districts were: Karachi (Sindh); Sialkot, Rawalpindi and D. G. Khan (Punjab); and Swabi (NWFP). In each selected district, 25 to 30 returnees (totaling 138 in all) and 8 prospective migrants (totaling 40 in all) were interviewed. A number of factors were taken into consideration in the selection process: the channel used to secure overseas employment, rural or urban residence, country of destination and the job/skill level abroad. The focus was on migrants who had returned either from the UAE or Saudi Arabia between 2002 and 2007 (Appendix Table 5).

Three focus group discussions were arranged in three districts: Swabi, Rawalpindi and D.G. Khan, where 6-7 returnees with different channels of recruitment, age and skill levels were invited to discuss migration issues, problems and solutions.

⁶ For BEOE skill classification, see Appendix Table 1.

Table 1: High-migration and sample districts with samples of return and prospective migrants, by region

Regional office of POEs	High-migration districts	Sample districts	Sample of SRM, 2007	Sample of prospective migrants
Karachi	Karachi	Karachi	30	8
Rawalpindi	Rawalpindi, ,Chakwal, Poonch, Attock, Jehlum	Rawalpindi	28	8
Lahore	Lahore,Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sialkot, Sheikhpura, Faisalabad	Sialkot	25	8
Multan	Multan, DG Khan	DG Khan	25	8
Peshawar	Peshawar, Swabi, Kohat, Mardan	Swabi	30	8
Malakand	Swat, Dir	-	-	-
Quetta	No district in top 20 districts	-	-	-
Total	20	5	138	40

The prospective migrants interviewed had already completed their process of recruitment and were preparing to go overseas in the near future. As it was fairly challenging to find members of this group, information collected during the Survey of Return Migrants helped to identify and contact the required number of forty prospective migrants (Table 1).

Finally, 39 recruiting agents or OEPs were interviewed in the five regions of Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Multan. The BEOE's region-wide list of licensed OEPs was used to select the sample (Table 2).

Table 2: Sample of Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs)

Region	Number of OEPs in 2007	% distribution of OEPs	Number of sampled OEPs
Rawalpindi	430	38.3	15
Lahore (Sialkot)	236	21.0	5
Karachi	181	16.1	7
Malakand	119	10.6	-
Peshawar	87	7.8	8
Multan (Dera G. Khan)	68	6.1	4
Quetta	1	0.1	-
Total	1'122	100	39

3 Labour Migration: Stock, Annual Flows and Remittances

3.1 *Stock and annual flows of Pakistani workers abroad*

Approximately 4 million Pakistanis live and work abroad; about half (48%) of them in the Middle East, 28% in Europe and 21% in North America. In each region, a geographic concentration of migrants can be discerned: the majority of overseas Pakistanis in the Middle East are in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE); in Europe, the main destination country is the United Kingdom and in North America, emigration occurs both to the United States of America and to Canada. Pakistani emigrants to Europe and North America sometimes migrate through family connections, or may have applied for landed migrant status through formal channels. In either case, these emigrants are generally among the economically well off (Haris, 2003). A further group is students who travel to developed countries to pursue higher studies and stay on after completing them.

Migration to the Middle East bears certain characteristics. Official estimates of Pakistanis living in the region were at about 1.9 million in 2004 (Table 3), and besides the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, there was also substantial migration to Iran, Iraq, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman. Data on annual placements reveal seven important dimensions.

First, the job market in the Middle East is highly volatile. During the last three decades the annual placement of Pakistanis in the Middle East fluctuated substantially, peaking first in 1977 and then again in 1981. However, in many years, placements were well below 100'000 workers annually, particularly between 1984 and 1989. After the 1990 Gulf War, placements reached a record high of 195'000 workers. In 2003, they again exceeded 200'000 workers (Table 2), before declining between 2004 and 2006, and then reaching a new record of 287,000 worker placements in 2007.

Second, Saudi Arabia has historically provided the largest number of employment opportunities to Pakistanis but there has been a gradual shift towards the UAE in recent years, which since 2005 has received higher numbers of workers each year (Table 4). Kuwait is another common destination for migrant workers to the Middle East.

Third, the skill composition of Pakistani workers going to the Middle East has hardly changed over three decades. Unskilled workers are the dominant category, followed by skilled, semi-skilled and professional workers. The proportion of unskilled workers leaving the country has risen from 35% in 2000 to 50% by 2007 (Figure 1); these workers are less educated and more vulnerable to exploitative recruitment practices. The proportion of skilled workers leaving the country has declined from more than 50% in early 2000 to 40% by 2007. Skilled workers commonly take up jobs such as drivers, masons, and carpenters (Appendix 1).

Fourth, migrants to the Middle East are not drawn evenly from across the country. Pakistan is administratively demarcated into four provinces and more than 110 districts. Recent data show that more than 60% of Pakistanis in the Middle East emigrated from only 20 districts, particularly in the North Punjab, the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), from Karachi in Sindh and a few districts in Southern Punjab (Appendix Table 2). In areas where agricultural incomes are low, households resort to migration as one way of improving their

economic conditions. Migrants to the Gulf region include a significant number of uneducated people from rural areas who would otherwise work in low-paid jobs in the informal sector of Pakistan.

Table 3: Overseas Pakistanis living/working/studying in different regions of the world (2004)

Region/Country	Number of overseas Pakistanis in 2004 (millions)	% Share
All Countries	3.973	100.0
Middle East	1.893	47.7
Saudi Arabia	1.100	27.7
United Arab Emirate	0.500	12.6
Kuwait	0.100	2.5
Other countries in Middle East	0.193	4.9
Europe	1.095	27.6
United Kingdom	0.800	20.1
France	0.050	1.3
Germany	0.053	1.3
Other countries of Europe	0.192	4.8
America	0.851	21.4
United States of America	0.600	15.1
Canada	0.250	6.3
Others	0.001	-
Asia and Far East (Excluding Middle East)	0.073	1.8
Hong Kong	0.020	0.5
Japan	0.013	0.3
Malaysia	0.010	0.2
Others	0.030	0.8
All other countries of the world	0.061	1.5

Source: Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), 2004.

Table 4: Annual placement of Pakistanis for employment abroad registered by BEOE (1971-2007)

Country	1971-2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
M/East	2'586'487	123'469	144'551	209'359	167'932	128'152	173'031	279'244	3'532'981
S/Arabia	1'648'279	97'262	104'783	126'397	70'896	35'177	45'594	84'587	2'128'388
UAE	626'705	18'421	34'113	61'329	65'786	73'642	100'207	139'405	980'203
Oman	21'231	3'802	95	6'911	8'982	8'019	12'614	32'474	252'554
Qatar	50'481	1'633	480	367	2'383	2'175	2'247	5'006	59'766
Bahrain	65'987	1'173	1'022	809	855	1'612	1'630	2'615	73'088
Kuwait	106'307	440	3'204	12'087	18'498	7'185	10'545	14'544	158'266
Libya	63701	713	781	1'374	375	261	67	450	67'272
Yemen	3'796	25	73	85	157	81	127	163	4'344
Malaysia	1'993	64	59	114	65	7'690	4'757	1'190	14'742
Korea	3'634	271	564	2'144	2'474	1'970	1'082	434	12'139
UK*	1'059	800	703	858	1'419	1'611	1'741	1'111	8'191
USA*	802	788	310	140	130	238	202	297	2'610
Italy	405	824	48	128	581	551	431	2'765	2'968
Spain	159	362	189	202	254	290	183	176	1'839
Others	96'578	1'351	798	1'094	969	1'633	1'764	1'816	104'187
Total	2'882'017	127'929	147'422	214'039	173'824	142'135	183'191	287'033	3'870'557

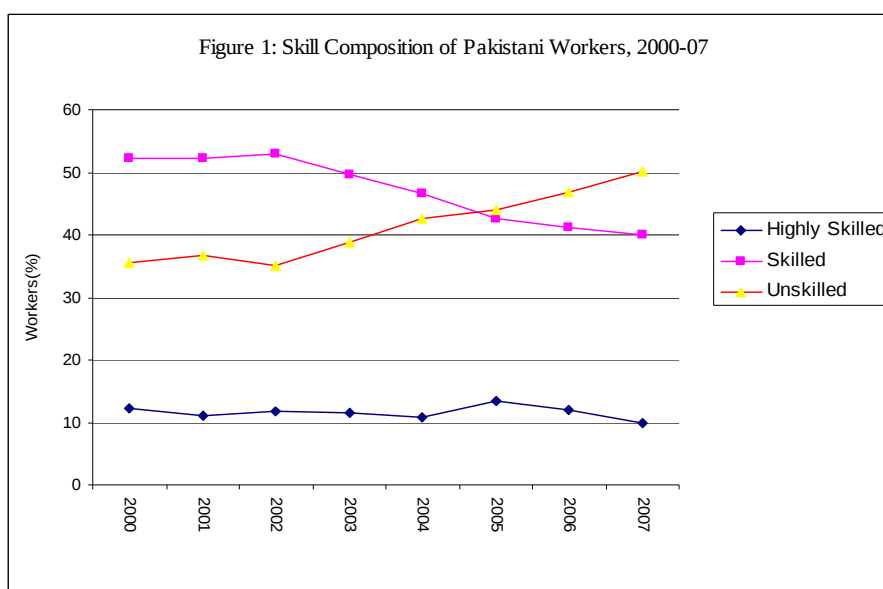
Source: Data obtained from the BEOE

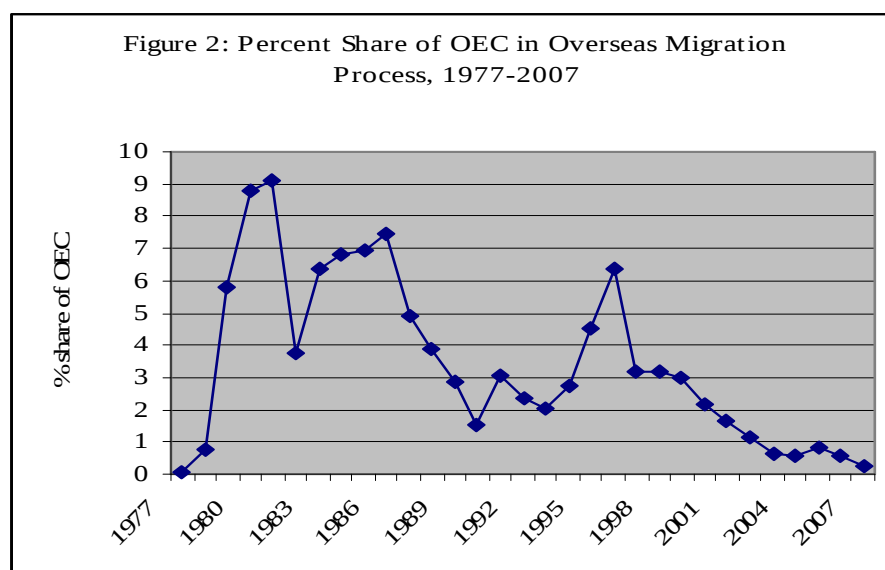
* Note that Table 3 shows data on the total stock of Pakistani immigrants in the UK and USA. Data presented in Table 4 show annual placements for employment abroad as registered with the BEOE; this type of migration is not common from Pakistan to either the USA or Europe (including the UK). Migrants who go abroad for studies or to join their spouse are not registered with the BEOE.

Fifth, a majority of migrants are recruited by private agencies or obtain a direct visa. Migration through the Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) - the country's official recruitment agency - is very limited and has, in fact, gradually declined over the years (Figure 2). In the early 1980s, for instance, about 9% of the country's emigrants went through the OEC, compared to less than 1% in recent years.

Sixth, labour migration from Pakistan to the Middle East is predominantly male. In 2006, for instance, the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) processed only 73 cases of women out of a total of 183'191 cases.

Finally, following the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) in 2003 and 2006 respectively with Korea and Malaysia, migration to these countries has increased, with just under 8'000 workers going to Malaysia in 2005 (Table 4). Nonetheless, Pakistan still depends heavily on the Middle East market for labour migrants.





3.2 Foreign remittances

Foreign remittances are the most significant incentive for labour migration, not only for individual migrants and their families but for the Governments of labour-exporting countries as well. Official remittances received through formal banking channels are reported regularly in Pakistan's Economic Surveys, and have become a very important source of foreign exchange, increasing from US\$578 million in 1977 to a peak of US\$2'885 million in 1983. By 2000, remittances had declined to around US\$1'000 million but have again increased significantly since then, reaching US\$ 4'450 million in 2006-07 (Table 5).

One explanation for the recent increase in official remittances is that current global dynamics have made it difficult for money to be transferred through informal sources, as was done on a large scale in the past. It has been estimated that an amount almost equal to the official remittances had previously found its way into Pakistan through informal channels (*hundi*)⁷. Given steps taken globally after September 11th 2001, remittances through the *hundi* system have largely been curtailed, and instead this money now flows through formal channels.

There are additional factors that may explain the substantial increase in remittances through formal channels. With the Middle East being the major source of employment for Pakistani workers, the share of remittances from the region, particularly Saudi Arabia, has never been less than 60% until the late 1990s. In recent years, however, there has been a sharp decline in the share of remittances from the Middle East, particularly from Saudi Arabia, accompanied by a significant increase in remittances from the USA (Table 5).

Between 2001-02 and 2004-05, close to one-third of Pakistan's total remittances were transferred from the USA. It may well be that after September 11th 2001, many Pakistanis

⁷ "*Hundi*" refers to a system for remitting money to Pakistan from overseas through non-banking sources, primarily money changers.

with savings in the USA transferred these to Pakistan through official channels. The treatment or perception of Pakistani migrants in the USA after the 9/11 attack may have influenced remittance behaviour although there are no data available either to confirm or refute this hypothesis.

The sustainability of current remittance levels, at more than US\$ 4 billion annually, will hinge on labour migration trends, and the pattern that remittances from the USA will take. A recent positive development is the sharp increase in the placement of Pakistani workers in the Middle East market (Table 4). In addition, as indicated earlier, the MoU that Pakistan has signed with Malaysia and with Korea will see the country continuing to place workers abroad on a notable scale. However, the global financial crisis at the time of publication of this paper is likely to have a strong adverse impact on the outflows of workers and inflows of remittances.

An additional important macro-economic dimension is the role of remittances in Pakistan's balance of payments. In 1983, the country's remittances exceeded the value of total merchandise exports whereas in the 1990s they amounted to less than 20% of export value. After 2001, the ratio increased significantly once more. Regarding the relationship between remittances and GDP, whereas in 1982-83 remittances were 9% of GDP, this ratio decreased to 3.3% in the late 1990s. Currently, remittances stand at around 5% of GDP (Table 5).

Migration to the Middle East has thus provided unprecedented economic and social gains for Pakistan, in the form of remittances, investment and employment opportunities. There is still scope for improvement in the conditions of employment of temporary workers in the region, however, which would enhance further the benefits of overseas migration.

Table 5: Flow of foreign remittances to Pakistan

Years	Total (US\$ million)	Middle East (%)	Saudi Arabia (%)	UAE (%)	USA (%)	Remittances as % of exports	Remittances as % of GDP
1998-99	1'060	60.3	30.0	11.8	7.7	13.6	*3.3
1999-00	984	69.2	31.5	15.0	8.1	11.5	1.5
2000-01	1'087	63.7	28.0	17.5	12.4	11.8	1.7
2001-02	2'389	44.8	15.7	19.6	32.6	26.2	0.6
2002-03	4'237	44.7	13.7	19.8	29.2	38.0	6.0
2003-04	3'872	41.7	14.6	15.4	31.6	31.4	5.1
2004-05	4'169	44.4	15.0	17.1	31.0	29.0	5.1
2005-06	4'600	44.8	16.3	15.6	27.0	27.9	5.3
2006-07	4'450	47.5	18.6	15.1	26.4	32.0	4.8

* average for the 1990s

Source: BEOE, Pakistan Economic Survey

4 Recruitment Mechanisms in Pakistan: A Review of Regulations and Procedures⁸

4.1 Institutional arrangements

The Government of Pakistan has taken numerous steps to control and regulate the country's labour recruitment process. Prior to Independence in 1947, the Emigration Act of 1922 already provided for the establishment and functioning of three organizations: the National Manpower Council, the Directorate of Seamen's Welfare, and the Protectorate of Emigrants. The Act was supplemented by the 1959 Rules of Emigration. In the 1970s, when labour migration to the Middle East began on a large scale, the three organizations were amalgamated into a Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE). The Emigration Act of 1922 and the Emigration Rules of 1959 were replaced by the Emigration Ordinance, 1979.

The BEOE aims to boost labour migration, and regulate and control the country's recruitment process. It has seven regional offices, known as the Protector of Emigrants and located in Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Quetta, Malakand and Multan. All districts of the country are under the jurisdiction of one of these offices, authorized to regulate the migration process (Appendix Table 3).

As reported earlier, the offices of Community Welfare Attachés have been established in major destination countries including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya and the UK. These offices identify employment opportunities for Pakistani workers and look after the interests and welfare of migrants. The Government has also signed MoUs with Jordan, Qatar, Malaysia and South Korea, while MoUs with Bahrain and Brunei were under consideration at the time of writing this report.⁹

4.2 Labour recruitment channels and procedures

Pakistanis can legally secure overseas employment through a number of routes. In the public sector, there is only one agency, the Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC), which recruits Pakistani workers for overseas employers but its role has been limited thus far; only 3% of emigrants who left during 1971-2007 went through the OEC. Presently, the figure is less than 1% (Figure 2). Typically, in response to formal 'demands' received from overseas employers, the OEC will advertise jobs and receive applications, which it sends on to the employer(s) who make their selection. Even if the OEC organizes the interviews, the final decision on who is employed is taken by the employer(s).

⁸ This section benefited from a recent report of the BEOE, and the Manual of Foreigners Laws (Hanif, 2007). The websites of the BEOE, Overseas Pakistanis Foundations (OPF) and Overseas Employment Corporations (OEC) were also useful sources. A recent report by Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (LHRLA) on the pre-departure programme for prospective migrants has also provided valuable information. Discussions with officials of the Ministry of Labour and Manpower, BEOE and the Policy Cell of the Ministry of Labour were additional useful sources.

⁹ MoUs were signed in 1978 and 1987 respectively with Jordan and Qatar, while MoUs with other countries were signed during the last 3-4 years (BEOE, 2007).

The predominant route through which labour is recruited for overseas employment is through the private sector in Pakistan, including all private recruiting agencies known as Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs). By law, OEPs are required to obtain a license from the Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis to recruit for overseas employment. The Ministry typically grants a three-year license on the recommendation of the BEOE, which can be renewed on expiry. In 2007, there were 1'122 licensed OEPs in the country, the largest concentration (nearly 40%) being in the Rawalpindi region (Table 2).

OEPs typically receive a formal “demand letter” from a foreign employer, specifying the number/category of job opportunities available and the terms and conditions of employment. Based on this, an OEP applies to the concerned Protector of Emigrants for permission to process the request. Although they are normally required to advertise the job opportunities, specifying as much detail as possible - the number of vacancies, the job category, wages and other terms and conditions – it is possible also for an OEP to recruit workers from its data bank or from a waitlist of workers. OEPs are neither required to advertise posts if workers have been nominated by the foreign employer.

OEPs are obliged to arrange for recruited workers to take a medical test with authorized medical officers in Pakistan. Once the test results and all recruitment documents have been collected, OEPs apply for the visa stamp. If any forged documents are detected, the concerned OEP is blacklisted.

Individuals or groups of people may also secure an offer of employment and/or a visa directly, through their own efforts or with the assistance of their relatives and friends abroad. Their Foreign Service Agreements (FSAs), contracts or letters of appointment must be signed by the employer and attested by the Embassy of Pakistan abroad. Where there is no Pakistan Mission, the respective Foreign Ministry of the country of employment provides the attestation.

Prospective employees – no matter what channel was used to secure employment – must take out insurance with the State Life Insurance Company. The OEP prepares a FSA on behalf of the employer and approaches the Protector of Emigrants for registration¹⁰ and a written certificate confirming that a candidate is qualified and has been selected in accordance with a foreign employer’s requirements.

The law stipulates that workers selected for employment must be well-informed about the details of their employment prior to leaving the country. OEPs are responsible for going through the detailed contents of contracts with prospective migrants, in their own language, and the Protector of Emigrants should check that workers have done this. Before registering

¹⁰ Documents required for registration include the individual’s passport, National Identity Card; four copies of the FSA (see footnote 1) duly filled in (two copies of the FSA should bear the required stamp of Rs.5 value, or as fixed by provincial Government); bank certificates of service charges; membership confirmation of the OPF; a Certificate of Insurance from the State Life Insurance Corporation (original and duplicate); a copy of the No Objection Certificate (NOC); a deputation letter if the individual is a Government employee, ex-serviceman, ex-Government employee or nurse; an original *chalan* for deposit of the registration fee, a copy of the valid National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP) or an original receipt of registration with the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) for issuance of a NICOP, and an undertaking certifying that visas are genuine and have been stamped through a licensed OEP. Direct visa holders can also register with the Protector of Emigrants by submitting the required documents.

the FSA, the Protector of Emigrants is also required to aid and advise migrants as needed.

The Government has established orientation and briefing centres in three Protector of Emigrants offices: Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar. Their officers brief prospective emigrants on a variety of issues including the benefits of registration, working conditions and labour laws in the destination country, the terms and conditions of the FSA, the proper utilization of savings and remittances, common words/phrases of the language of the host country, preventive measures against HIV/AIDS, and cautions about the use of drugs.

4.3 The official cost of recruitment

By law, an emigrant who has secured employment overseas through a licensed OEP is required to deposit a sum of Rs. 4'450/- as a service charge (Table 6). Three days after the emigrant's departure, the concerned OEP submits a certificate to the office of the Protector of Emigrants requesting the release of the service charge. In addition to this, an emigrant using an OEP can expect to pay for a range of other costs as shown in Table 6, totalling Rs. 7'150. Emigrants who have secured employment directly should have a lower cost of some Rs. 5'100. However, the official charges cited below are seldom applied in practice; workers mostly end up paying much higher fees (see section 7).

Table 6: Official charges (in Rs.) for overseas migration by recruitment channel

	OEP	Direct employment
Service charges	4'450	0
Welfare OPF	1'050	1'050
Insurance	650	650
Registration fee	100	2'500
NICOP	900	900
Total	7'150	5'100

Source: BEOE

This brief overview shows that the Government of Pakistan has not neglected its regulatory role as more and more Pakistanis leave the country to work abroad. Numerous steps have been taken. A specific Bureau (BEOE) and seven regional offices of Protector of Emigrants are in place as the principal regulatory bodies. Rules exist to regulate and control the recruitment process. Migrant workers can use both public and private channels to secure employment abroad but, irrespective of the channel used, they are required to register with the Protector of Emigrants office, and to attend a pre-departure orientation and briefing session. Emigrants are covered by an insurance scheme and also become members of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF)¹¹. The official costs of recruitment have been kept very low. However, some questions remain as to whether these procedures are followed in practice by the stakeholders concerned, whether official fees and charges are respected, and whether Government is effectively able to control illegal and undocumented migration.

¹¹ The Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) is an organization of the Ministry of Labour with a capital base accumulated from a levy on Pakistani workers abroad (see Table 6). The OPF maintains a formal presence in Pakistani embassies and consular offices in countries where there are a large number of Pakistani immigrants. Many of the Government schemes and concessions for overseas and returned Pakistanis – such as the allotment of state land for residential development, or the establishment of special schools in Pakistan and abroad – are handled by the OPF (Gazdar, 2003).

5. Profile of Return Migrants

To capture as full a profile of return migrants as possible, three broad categories of information were gathered through the SRM, 2007. First, respondents were asked about the number of times they had emigrated for employment, the duration of each stay and the nature of the job they had during their last stay abroad. Second, the personal characteristics of migrants prior to their departure were documented. Third, data on household assets at the time of migration were collected. The profile of returnees, as presented in this section, covers all three dimensions.

5.1 *History of migration*

On average, return migrants had worked abroad on more than one contract (average of 1.6 migration episodes per migrant). There was a marked difference between migrants from Punjab (average of two episodes) and Sindh/NWFP (1.2 episodes average). Ninety eight per cent of the sample had returned from Saudi Arabia or the UAE (Table 7).

During their last stay, migrants had been abroad for 4.7 years on average; and migrants from rural areas had stayed away longer than those from urban areas. The average duration of previous stays abroad was longer still, at 5.3 years, and with less variation across regions of origin (Table 7). From the focus group discussions, it was learnt that employers preferred experienced workers to stay longer, and helped these workers to renew their contracts. Satisfaction with a worker's productivity would also result in their contract being renewed.

Because the families left behind depend so much on the earnings of the migrant workers, returnees reported that a contract of only two to three years duration was usually insufficient to cover the high costs of migration *and* accumulate savings, particularly when wages were low. Savings were crucial for resettlement, providing the means by which a migrant could start or expand a family business on his return.

During their last stay abroad, more than half of the returnees had taken up skilled jobs such as drivers, masons and carpenters. This is consistent with national data (Figure 1). Regional differentials exist in the skill composition of workers: about one-third of urban migrants were in the professional category while very few rural migrants were in this category; the latter group took up mostly unskilled and skilled work. It was noted earlier that the skills composition of Pakistani workers in the Middle East has remained unchanged during the last three decades despite the rising demand for professional and skilled workers in the region. Rather, the share of unskilled workers in total annual placements of Pakistanis abroad has increased.

The average age of return migrants before going abroad was 29 years. There was no major difference across the regions of origin (Table 8). Interestingly, the average age of prospective migrants is also 29 years (Box 1). Half of the migrants in the SRM sample were the head of household before migrating but this varied by region and province. While 60% of urban migrants were household heads, the proportion was 46% for rural migrants. In Sindh and NWFP, the proportion was considerably lower than in Punjab. More than half of

the returnees were married at the time of their departure, and therefore left their wives and children behind.¹²

Table 7: Migration history of RMs

	All migrants	Rural	Urban	Punjab	Sindh/ NWFP
Average number of migration episodes	1.6	1.7	1.4	2.0	1.2
Country of destination (most recent stay)					
Saudi Arabia	54.4	52.3	58.0	64.1	41.7
UAE	44.2	47.7	38.0	35.0	55.0
Other countries	1.4	-	4.0	-	3.3
All countries	100	100	100	100	100
Duration of stay abroad (in years)					
Recent phase	4.7	6.1	4.4	3.2	8.6
All other phases	5.3	5.6	4.5	5.5	5.4
Job taken abroad during the most recent phase					
Professional	13.9	3.4	32.7	7.7	22.0
Skilled	51.1	54.5	44.9	62.8	35.6
Unskilled	35.0	42.0	22.4	29.5	42.4
All	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Survey of Return Migrants (SRM), 2007.

5.2 Socio-demographic characteristics and household assets¹³

Compared to national data, migrants in the sample had a higher level of educational attainment: more than 60% of the urban-based migrants had 10 or more years of education, and one-third of those who were rural-based had attained a similar level of education. National level data show that approximately one-third of the adult population has attained at least 10 or more years of education, and only 10% among the rural population (Arif and Chaudry, 2007). Prospective migrants were equally well-educated (Box 1), which is consistent with the established theory that relatively more educated individuals are first to take up the opportunity to migrate.

About three-quarters of migrants were employed before going abroad and this percentage was as high as 84% among urban migrants. This data is complemented by the reasons given for emigration: one-fifth (21%) of the returnees said that unemployment was a major push factor for finding a job abroad (Appendix Table 6). Emigration serves both to provide job opportunities for unemployed Pakistanis, while liberating jobs in the domestic labour market left open by others who migrate but were already employed in Pakistan.

Before going abroad, the monthly income of migrants averaged about Rs. 6'000, a figure much higher among urban migrants (Table 8). The average monthly household income was higher in rural areas which could be attributed to the higher number of earners in rural households (2.5) compared to urban households (1.7). The average household monthly

¹² A considerable body of literature exists in Pakistan which shows the impact of male emigration on family members left behind (Arnold and Shah, 1986).

¹³ This refers to the most recent phase of migration.

expenditure prior to migration was about Rs. 9'000, with expenditure among urban households higher than those that were rural-based.

There was also a lower rate of landless rural households (37%) than the national average of above 50% (Khan, 2006). This points to the fact that relatively better-off families can afford to send a family member abroad. More than 40% of the households in the sample owned livestock before leaving the country while a majority owned a *pukka* (cement) house.

It appears from a review of issues with the sample group, that returnees were not very poor at the time of migrating: an assessment of their income and expenditure shows that both were well above the official poverty line, which was the equivalent of Rs.878 per month per adult in 2004-05. When the SRM survey was carried out in 2007, the inflation-adjusted poverty line was more than Rs.1'000 per month and the average family size in Pakistan was about 7 members for both rural and urban households. As such, a reported pre-migration household income of around Rs.13'000 is well above the poverty line (Table 8). Nonetheless, many poor families still manage to send members abroad, by securing resources in different ways. And indeed, around one-third of the sample households cited poverty as a reason for overseas migration (Appendix Table 6).

Box 1: Profile of prospective migrants

The average age of prospective migrants in the sample (of 40 persons) was 29 years, and most (60%) had 10 or more years of schooling. About three-quarters of them were intending to leave soon to take up employment in the Middle East, while one-quarter had processed applications for employment in Korea and Malaysia. One-third of the interviewees were not currently employed in Pakistan, so were most likely preparing for overseas employment; and approximately 60% had already secured a job abroad, and it had taken them 6-12 months to do so.

Only 40% of the prospective migrants owned agricultural land and livestock but a majority did own a *pukka* house with a tap water facility. Other common household assets included jewellery and a small amount of savings. Prospective migrants were similar to returnees in their reasons for migrating, citing poverty (31%), unemployment (21%) and needing to earn money for business activity (37%).

Common sources of information for overseas employment included friends/relatives (34%), agents/sub-agents (27%), newspapers (23%) and internet/email (9%). Friends and relatives were the preferred source of information, followed by the newspaper; and were also the preferred channel of assistance to leave the country, along with registered recruiting agents. Half of the prospective migrants had taken loans to finance overseas migration while one-quarter had used their own savings.

Table 8: Characteristics of migrants at the time of migration (most recent episode only)

Characteristics	All migrants	Rural	Urban	Punjab	Sindh/NWFP
Relationship to head of household					
Self	50.7	45.5	60.0	61.5	36.7
Son	37.7	43.2	28.0	30.8	46.7
Other	11.6	11.4	12.0	7.7	16.7
Mean age (in years)	29.4	28.5	30.9	30.3	28.2
Marital Status					
% married	52.2	50.0	56.0	59.0	43.3
Average number of earners					
Male	2.2	2.5	1.7	1.7	2.9
Female	1.0	1.1	0.8	0.1	2.2
All	3.2	3.6	2.5	1.8	5.1
Level of educational attainment					
Illiterate	23.9	28.4	16.0	29.5	16.7
Primary and middle school: (Grades 1-9)	32.6	37.5	24.0	32.1	33.3
Matric	21.7	23.9	18.4	20.5	23.3
Inter/BA/BSc (first degree)	13.8	10.2	20.0	14.1	13.3
MA/Higher degree	8.0	-	22.0	3.8	13.3
% employed/working	73.9	68.2	84.0	84.6	60.0
Income and expenditure					
Mean monthly personal income (Rs.)	5'826	4'838	7'445	5'815	5'844
Mean monthly household income (Rs.)	12'746	13'264	11'835	10'439	15'745
Mean monthly household expenditure (Rs.)	8'976	7'978	10'731	7'343	11'098
Household assets					
% landless households	52.2	37.5	78.0	55.1	48.3
% households who own livestock	43.5	61.4	12.0	48.7	36.7
Mean number of animals/household	3.2	3.2	2.5	3.3	3.0
Mean value of livestock (Rs.)/household	59'966	63'736	26'670	79'919	26'410
Ownership of dwelling units					
None	11.6	2.3	28.0	5.1	20.0
Katcha (mud) house	14.5	19.3	6.0	24.4	1.7
Pukka (cement) house	73.9	78.4	66.0	70.5	78.3
All	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SRM, 2007.

6. *Understanding Recruitment Mechanisms*

The Survey of Return Migrants (2007) also collected data on information sources for overseas employment, channels of recruitment, the role of sub-agents in the migration process, terms and conditions of employment abroad and procedures followed while going abroad. OEPs were also interviewed about their role in the migration process, and focus group discussions with return migrants in Swabi, Rawalpindi and D. G. Khan provided first-hand information on various recruitment issues. This section draws on these combined information sources to present in more detail how recruitment mechanisms work in Pakistan.

6.1 *Sources of information about overseas employment*

Access to full and correct information about overseas employment opportunities is a first and crucial step for migrants, as this helps guide their subsequent decisions. The most common source of information across the board (for more than half of the respondents on average, and up to nearly two-thirds among the illiterate respondents) was friends and relatives (Table 9). In section 4, it was pointed out that after receiving a formal demand from an overseas employer, the OEP is required by law to advertise the foreign employer's requirements, and this is usually done in daily newspapers. From the focus group discussions in Swabi district, the research team learnt that overseas jobs were also advertised through wall posters, or announced over a loudspeaker in towns and adjacent villages. This was done to invite prospective migrants to attend a test and an interview. Advertisements appear to be used more often in urban areas and by professional job-seekers. After friends and relatives, OEPs and sub-agents were a major source of information on overseas jobs. A significant proportion of illiterate, less-educated and unskilled migrants had got their information from local sub-agents.

Thus, the two networks most actively used in Pakistan to find out about job prospects in the Middle East are friends/relatives and recruiting agents – both licensed and unlicensed. Family, friends and community members with migration experience provide initial contacts and information. When a person emigrates, every individual that they know represents social capital in the form of one more contact in the destination country (Shah and Menon, 1990). Similarly, recruiting agents invest in their network of local agents, as they are the ones best able to spread information widely on work opportunities abroad.

6.2 *Recruitment channels*

As indicated earlier, Pakistanis can legally go abroad through three different channels: the public agency, a private recruiting agent or through a direct contract with a foreign employer. To these can be added two other channels – migration assisted by friends/relatives and undocumented or illegal migration.

The role of friends/relatives at different stages of the migration process has been well-documented (Shah and Menon, 1999). Most often themselves migrants, these people

arrange employment and visas for others, often through the *kafeel* system.¹⁴ It is nevertheless often difficult in practice to distinguish between the use of friends and relatives as intermediaries and obtaining visas directly from the foreign employer; both systems can be regarded as forms of direct visa/employment.

Table 9: Sources of information on jobs abroad by characteristics of migrants (%)

Characteristics	Advertisement	OEPs	Friends/ relatives	Personal efforts	Sub-agents	All
All Migrants	9.4	21.7	54.3	3.6	10.9	100
Rural	2.3	25.0	60.2	3.4	9.1	100
Urban	22.0	16.0	44.0	4.0	14.0	100
Punjab	6.4	20.5	64.1	2.6	6.4	100
Sindh/NWFP	13.3	23.3	41.7	5.0	16.7	100
Educational level						
Illiterate	0	18.2	63.6	0	18.2	100
Matric + below	10.7	24.0	49.3	4.0	12.0	100
Inter/BA/BSc/ Higher	16.7	20.0	56.7	6.7	0	100
Country of employment						
Saudi Arabia	13.3	21.3	57.3	2.7	5.3	100
UAE	4.9	21.3	50.8	4.9	18.0	100
Others	0	4.0	50.0	0	0	100
Job category abroad						
Professional	26.3	31.6	36.8	5.3	0	100
Skilled	10.0	21.4	61.4	4.3	2.9	100
Unskilled	2.1	18.8	50.0	2.1	27.1	100

Source: SRM, 2007.

Table 10 shows the predominant role of OEPs in the recruitment process, across most categories of migrant. Their role was less dominant for the illiterate migrants, among whom the use of direct visa and irregular channels was also widespread. In the RM sample, about half (45%) had gone abroad through private recruiting agents (OEPs), while one-fifth had relied on the assistance of friends and relatives. Another one-fifth had received a direct visa from the foreign employer, most often also with the assistance of friends and relatives abroad (Appendix Table 7). Fourteen per cent of the returnees had migrated illegally, either leaving the country without proper documentation or staying on after the end of the *Haj/Umra* pilgrimage. Only 1% of the respondents had used the public recruiting agency, OEC; for the present analysis, this category was therefore merged with the OEPs.

The group of illegal migrants (19 in all, or 14%) was purposively included in the sample to gain insight into these activities; this proportion is not representative of the migrant population as a whole. About half had gone abroad without documents and crossed borders illegally, and half had stayed on after the *Haj/Umra* pilgrimage. Only one respondent had

¹⁴ Labour laws in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, require every foreign worker to be under contract with, and guaranteed by, a sponsor (*kafeel*). The *kafeel* secures employment visas from Government for the foreign workers they wish to hire. There are documented instances of sponsors selling visas to intermediaries who are in turn linked to recruiters in labour-sending countries (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

gone to Dubai for a visit, staying on without obtaining an extension on his visa.

Despite the non-random nature of the sample in this study, its findings are in line with earlier studies on the topic. For example, a study of South Asian workers in Kuwait by Shah and Menon (1999) showed that about 34% of all respondents had moved through friends or relatives, 50% through recruitment agents, 15% had arranged their visa directly through their employer, and only 1% had used a government agency. In the case of Pakistani migrants, the study found that more than half had arranged their Kuwaiti visa through a friend or relative. The important “pull” influence of relatives already abroad was documented in an earlier study by Khan (1991), in which 42% of migrants had a relative abroad when they moved, and for about one-third, the friends and relatives had actually arranged their move. By way of contrast, for Sri Lanka, licensed agents covered no less than 62% of all labour contracts in the Middle East; this figure rose to 72% when the category of female domestic workers was excluded. For this latter group, relatives abroad or personal contact with a potential employer in the Middle East played the most significant role in the process of securing a job (Eelens and Speckmann, 1990).

Table 10: Characteristics of return migrants by channel of recruitment (%)

Characteristics of return migrants	Overseas employment promoters (OEPs)*	Friends/ relatives	Direct visa	Irregular migration without documents	All
All migrants	44.9	21.0	20.3	13.8	100
Rural	48.9	21.6	18.2	11.4	100
Urban	38.0	20.0	24.0	18.0	100
Punjab	44.9	1.4	25.6	14.1	100
Sind/NWFP	45.0	28.3	13.3	13.3	100
Educational level of migrants					
Illiterate	30.3	9.1	30.3	30.3	100
Matric and below	53.3	21.3	16.0	9.3	100
Inter/BA and higher	40.0	33.3	20.0	6.7	100
Working status before migration					
Working	41.2	18.6	24.5	15.7	100
Not working	55.6	27.8	8.3	8.3	100
Household income before migration (Rs.)					
≤4'000	61.0	11.9	16.9	10.2	100
4'001-15'000	30.6	27.8	22.2	19.4	100
> 15'000	25.0	37.5	37.5	0	100
Skill category of job abroad					
Professional	42.1	26.3	21.1	10.5	100
Skilled	44.3	24.3	24.3	7.2	100
Unskilled	47.9	12.8	14.6	25.0	100
Country of employment					
Saudi Arabia	46.7	14.7	28.0	10.7	100
UAE	42.6	29.5	11.5	16.4	100
Others	44.9	21.0	20.3	13.7	100

*Sub-agents work with OEPs and are therefore considered part of this category.

Source: SRM, 2007.

About half of the rural respondents had chosen to move through OEPs compared to 38% of urban migrants (Table 10). More urban migrants than rural had obtained their visa directly

from an overseas employer; while about one-fifth of migrants had relied on the assistance of friends and relatives (similar for both rural and urban respondents).

The correlation between educational attainment and recruitment channels shows three clear relationships (Table 10). First, illegal migration is more common among illiterate and unskilled workers. Second, more than a quarter of the skilled/qualified respondents (27%) had obtained their visa directly. And third, migrants with 10-14 years of schooling had relied more than other groups on friends and relatives to secure overseas employment. Respondents who had been working before they left the country were more likely to have secured an employment offer directly, while those who were unemployed were more likely to use friends and relatives to secure work. Migrants coming from a household with a higher income level were more likely to obtain a direct visa. Obtaining a direct visa seems to have been easier in Saudi Arabia while the role of friends and relatives was more effective in the UAE. There are thus important socio-demographic distinctions between migrants using different channels to secure overseas employment.

6.3 Recruitment through OEPs - exploring the network

The role of OEPs in worker recruitment and deployment in the Middle East is crucial. Findings of this small-scale study are in line with data of the BEOE on annual placements by source of recruitment. These data show that from 2004 to 2007, between 41 and 53 per cent of migrant workers went abroad through OEPs (Appendix Table 4).

Migrants used the services of OEPs located in their districts of origin, but besides a preference for geographical proximity, the OEP's reputation was also taken into account by the migrant when making their choice of agency (Table 11¹⁵). Migrants on the whole tended to register themselves with only one OEP. During group discussions, migrants identified some OEPs as very friendly, honest and fair in their dealings and similar sentiments were shared about certain offices of the Protector of Emigrants e.g. in Rawalpindi. However, one key finding was that the migrants often had no idea whether the OEPs they used were licensed or not by the Pakistani authorities.

Local recruiters or sub-agents also play a very significant role in the migration process. They are the link that introduces prospective migrants to an OEP, in return for a fee. As the use of these intermediaries is not officially permitted, it is extremely difficult to make any reliable estimate of the number operating in Pakistan. Recruiters often make use of these intermediaries especially when recruiting from rural areas, and particularly for semi-skilled or unskilled workers. During fieldwork carried out in NWFP and Punjab and focus group discussions, returnees and prospective migrants identified sub-agents who worked in their areas; in many instances, friends and relatives had also taken up the role of introducing prospective migrants to OEPs (Table 12).

¹⁵ Table 11 reflects the location of the OEPs who recruited the migrants interviewed in the RM survey.

Table 11: Recruitment through OEPs (%)

	All migrants	Rural	Urban
Location of the agency			
Rawalpindi/Islamabad	30.0	33.4	22.2
Karachi	18.3	4.8	50.0
Sialkot	11.7	16.7	0
Swabi	8.3	11.9	0
Lahore	15.0	16.7	11.1
Others	16.7	16.5	16.7
% registered with only one agency	91.7	90.5	94.4
Reasons for selection of this agency			
Fee level	16.7	19.0	11.1
Seemed to be better	30.0	19.0	55.6
Due to friendship	35.0	35.7	33.3
Other	18.3	26.2	0

Source: SRM, 2007.

Returnees saw several advantages of using sub-agents: they were familiar with the individual's personal backgrounds and also had knowledge of the agency's requirements. If problems arose later, the sub-agent could easily be approached to help resolve these or to return any advance payments made.

Even though a common field observation was that OEPs function exclusively through sub-agents, only 7 of the 39 OEPs interviewed would actually admit to working with a sub-agent; these latter often worked for several OEPs at the same time (Box 2). The seven OEPs did not pay any fee or salary to the intermediaries; rather, according to OEPs, sub-agents are paid by the migrants themselves.

Table 12: Means through which prospective migrants were introduced to OEPs (%)

	All	Rural	Urban
Advertisements	11.7	7.1	22.2
Relatives/friends	56.7	61.9	44.4
Local sub-agents	26.7	26.2	27.8
Others	5.0	4.8	5.6
All	100	100	100

Source: SRM, 2007

Box 2: Profile of Overseas Employment Promoters

In this study, 39 Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) located in Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Sialkot, Karachi and D G Khan Districts were interviewed, using a structured questionnaire with several open-ended questions. Results show that OEPs obtained their license from the BEOE for an initial fee of Rs.100'000. They paid on average about Rs.12'000 to renew their licenses. Besides this fee, OEP annual expenditure was usually around Rs.54'000. The majority of OEPs only worked on recruitment for overseas employment although about one-sixth were also involved in the travel business. During the year prior to the interview, OEPs were each able to send on average more than 150 workers abroad. More than 80% had contacts with

foreign employers and companies, while two-thirds had their own representatives in the Middle East. The SRM did not explore whether OEPs had their own employees based in the Gulf or worked through their network with local agents abroad.

OEPs followed rules and regulations governing the recruitment process in Pakistan. Their work began once a demand from abroad had been received, after which they obtained approval from the Protector of Emigrants. Sixty five per cent of the OEPs reported that they advertised jobs in the newspapers. Only a few OEPs (15%) claimed to have worked through a sub-agent but in reality, the practice is common, particularly in the rural areas. One sub-agent can work for several OEPs.

Most OEPs selected the required number of workers through interviews, and made arrangements for the required pre-departure briefings. More than 70% of the OEPs interviewed said that they took prospective emigrants to the office of the Protector of Emigrants. OEPs provided a copy of the contract to the migrant worker. Only one-quarter of the OEPs interviewed had maintained contact with migrants once they had left the country. In general, the OEPs had a good awareness of labour laws in the destination countries, which they said they covered in the briefs given to migrants. Details about emoluments and other benefits were also shared.

OEPs were of the opinion that most Pakistanis in the Middle East worked in accordance with the conditions set out in their contracts, and received salaries as stipulated. Approximately 40% were nonetheless aware of employers violating human rights, threatening workers with a loss of their jobs or delaying salary payments. Only one-third of the OEPs reported that the Pakistani embassies abroad helped migrant workers. In general, they were satisfied with their own performance, as no complaints against them had been lodged with the Protector of Emigrants. Fifty per cent of the OEPs spoke of an increase in the demand for Pakistani workers while 44% maintained that demand had decreased.

Three frequently cited recommendations from OEPs were: to make the recruitment procedure simpler and easier to follow; to establish training centres and programmes that meet the current needs of the job market; and to create more jobs for workers in Pakistan.

6.4 Signature of contracts before migration

Only half of those applicants who had gone abroad through an OEP confirmed that they had signed contracts prior to leaving the country (Table 13). The corresponding figure was only 28% for those who went abroad through friends and relatives, and 46% for those who obtained a visa directly. More than 60% of those migrants who went abroad through friends and relatives had a verbal contract. The corresponding figure was 21% for those who used the 'direct visa' channel.

For 76% of the contracts drawn up through OEPs, the language used was English, and for migrants who relied on friends and relatives the percentage in English was even higher (however, this group more frequently had a verbal contract). Arabic was used rather more in the case of migrants who had made direct contact with the employer. Even after signing a contract in Pakistan, the migrant was sometimes obliged to sign a new agreement on arrival

in the destination country.

More than 70% of the returnees who had signed contracts before departing understood its terms and conditions. Seventy five per cent of migrants who went abroad through a direct visa kept a copy of the contract. Migrants who had used OEP services did not often keep a copy, despite the fact that the OEPs interviewed in this survey claimed to provide a copy of the contract to migrants (Box 1).

One important aspect is that around a quarter of the migrants had gone abroad on an individual so-called *azad* visa, while most of the remainder had a work visa (Table 13). An *azad* visa allows the migrant to work for any employer or company while abroad. However, there was no consensus among focus group participants on whether this type of visa had more advantages or disadvantages. Some argued that being able to work for any employer carried certain benefits, while others were against a visa that gave no guarantee of employment once abroad and no access to some facilities available to other types of migrants. A considerable proportion of returnees (around one half) confirmed that they had received a briefing on the terms and conditions of their contract before departure. Free accommodation and medical facilities were commonly cited as benefits included in their contracts (Table 13).

Table 13: Terms and conditions of contracts for overseas employment by channel of recruitment

Terms and conditions	Channel of recruitment		
	Friends/relatives	OEPs	Direct visa
% with verbal contract	61.1	6.0	21.4
% who signed contract before migration	27.6	50.0	46.4
English	85.7	75.9	72.7
Arabic	14.3	10.3	27.3
Urdu	-	10.3	-
Others	-	3.5	-
% who understood the terms of the contract	71.4	73.3	71.4
% who kept a copy of the contract	-	16.0	75.0
Type of visa			
Individual	27.6	23.7	21.4
Visit	-	-	7.1
Work	62.1	74.6	64.3
Others	10.3	1.7	7.1
% briefed by others about terms and conditions	48.3	41.7	57.1
% briefed by others about duties	69.0	72.9	-
% with free accommodation in the contract	58.6	70.7	53.6
% with free medical care included in the contract	48.3	81.3	39.3

Source: SRM, 2007.

6.5 Are official recruitment procedures followed?

Irrespective of the channels used for overseas employment, migrants must register with the BEOE and attend a pre-departure orientation session at the Protector of Emigrants. Prior to registration, certain requirements should be fulfilled: a medical test, the visa stamped and the worker's contract signed. Table 14 shows, however, that only a small proportion of the migrants interviewed (7-35%) were aware of the Foreign Service Agreement (FSA), and the same was true for many other aspects of pre-departure procedures. For example, attendance at briefing sessions by the Protector of Emigrants was very low, irrespective of the channel used for emigration.

This may indicate ineffective monitoring and operations on the part of some of the Protector of Emigrants' offices. Alternatively, it may be explained by a lack of understanding among the prospective emigrants of the procedures they had followed, for example, being unaware of the purpose or nature of briefing sessions they attended. When paying unscheduled visits to the Rawalpindi Regional Office of the Protector of Emigrants, the research team witnessed a briefing session for a group of prospective migrants. The Director of this office was personally interviewing and advising the group about migration procedures. Nonetheless, further steps are needed to increase the attendance and perceived value of briefing sessions.

Table 14 shows that undertaking medical tests before going abroad was a frequently met requirement, but that other conditions such as providing a skills certificate (with the notable exception of direct visa holders), police verification and acquiring a foreign service agreement (FSA), often went unfulfilled. With the exception of the FSAs, the other conditions are not mandatory for all categories of migrants. This pattern may well indicate that the recruiters handle all the paperwork requirements themselves through their own networks, without necessarily involving the migrants in the process. During fieldwork, the research team was informed that some agent's sole function is to manage the documentation requirements for prospective migrants.

Table 14: Aspects of the recruitment process by channel used

	Friends/relative			OEPs			Direct visa		
	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban	All	Rural	Urban
Submitted a skills certificate (%)	27.6	21.1	40.0	28.3	28.6	27.8	96.4	93.8	100
Underwent a medical check-up (%)	75.9	73.7	80.0	76.7	71.4	88.9	25.0	6.3	50.0
Obtained police clearance before migration (%)	31.0	10.5	70.0	15.0	9.5	27.8	64.3	43.8	91.7
Received a foreign service agreement (%)	34.5	21.1	60.0	15.0	9.5	27.8	7.1	0	16.7
Appeared before Protector of Emigrants (%)	10.3	15.8	0	23.3	26.2	16.7	7.4	0	18.2
Attended a briefing by the protector (%)	10.3	15.8	0	16.7	14.3	22.2	15.4	0	40.0

Source: SRM, 2007.

7. Cost of Overseas Employment and its Financing

Securing a job in the Middle East comes at a high cost, mainly to cover the recruiter's fee and/or the visa. These high costs have a direct influence on the income and well-being of the migrant's household and may also be the key factor preventing more of the poor from migrating.

7.1 Recruitment costs

It is important first to point out that return migrants, in interviews and focus group discussions, though generally able to provide a figure for the *total* cost they had paid to secure overseas employment, found it very difficult to give a detailed breakdown of what this figure comprised. That is because the recruiter normally only provides them with the total cost figure; therefore this is the more reliable figure in the discussion that follows.

The average total cost of overseas migration computed in the SRM, 2007 was around Rs. 80'000, or approximately twelve times the official cost level. The common perception is that recruitment through professional agents (OEPs) is the most expensive channel, while job opportunities secured through relatives and friends are the least costly. The findings of this study contradict this perception, however. The average total cost reported by migrants who used OEPs was Rs. 66'108 while a much higher average of Rs.95'869 was reported by those who secured their visa directly, and Rs. 86'517 by those who were assisted by friends and relatives (Table 15). The maximum total cost reported was also highest among these two groups (Appendix Table 8). Competition between OEPs and monitoring by the BEOE probably worked to reduce the costs they charged to migrants. No such competition exists in the direct contact and friends/relatives "markets".

The reported costs of the medical examination, insurance, identity card and passport were nominal and did not vary across the different channels used. The major portion of the total cost related to the recruiter's fee and/or the visa, although as mentioned already, it was difficult for migrants to give an accurate breakdown of respective charges for each of these two items.

The OEPs were also asked about the costs of migration, and these data are recorded in column 3 of Table 15. It can be seen that the OEP reported total cost is higher than that given by the returnees. OEPs reported an average cost of Rs.100'156, which is approximately Rs.35'600 or 53% higher than the cost indicated by returnees in the SRM. However, it should be remembered that the migrants had generally returned between 2002 and 2007 having worked abroad for around four years, so most would have left Pakistan between 1998 and 2002. Thus, the cost of migrating overseas had apparently risen by more than 50% over this period of 5-9 years. Field observations and group discussions with returnees revealed that the cost of migration in December 2007 was between Rs.150'000 and Rs.300'000, depending on the visa type, destination country, nature of the job and recruitment channel used. What seems clear is that there is no correspondence between the official and the actual cost paid by migrants.

OEPs indicated that, of the total cost paid by the migrant worker, about one-third represented their own fee and approximately half was for the visa cost. Although OEPs

were not asked about the sub-agent fee as a separate category, it appears that this is included in the overall OEP fee. The remaining amount is used for medical tests, insurance, travel or other direct costs. It can therefore be concluded that visas account for the highest proportion of migration costs. Visa costs are not officially fixed, but rather reflect the market i.e. the amount that an OEP pays to an overseas agent to acquire a visa, which undoubtedly acts to push the price up when demand is high.

Table 15: The cost of migration (in Rupees) by recruitment channel

Cost item	Friends/relatives	OEPs		Direct visa
		Reported by returnees	Reported by OEPs	
Total cost	86'517	66'108	100'156	95'869
Fee/visa	67'395	51'582	76'678	75'939
Cost of interview/test	125	717	390	9
Cost of medical test	2'295	1'777	2'065	4'129
Cost of insurance	525	850	757	725
NICOP (identity card for overseas Pakistani)	0	2'189	1'230	952
Passport	1'100	1'765	2'355	1'930
Other costs	15'077	7'228	16'681	12'185

Source: SRM, 2007.

There are several reasons for soaring migration costs from Pakistan in recent times. First, there is a great demand for jobs in the Middle East, as migration is considered to be the most important strategy to overcome economic deprivation. As Eelens and Speckmann (1990) observed in the case of Sri Lanka, where the local supply of cheap labour is much higher than the demand for it abroad, recruitment for overseas employment has become a buyers' market in which foreign employers or recruiting agents set the price. Consequently, agents select those candidates who are able and willing to pay the highest fees. Second, a Pakistani agent has to pay a high fee for the visa, and merely passes this on to the prospective migrant. Pakistani agents are themselves victims of a buyers' market, in which the Arab middlemen have an unfair advantage. It would appear that employers and agents in the Gulf countries are in fact not complicit with their Pakistani counterparts, but actually exploiting them as well. A third element that inflates costs is the involvement of sub-agents. Their fee in NWFP, for example, was an estimated Rs.35'000. In many cases, friends and relatives already abroad may act as middlemen, and charge a high fee for their assistance in obtaining a visa.

With such high costs, it is very difficult for the poorest strata in Pakistan to participate in the migration process, even though ironically, migration might offer them the best chance to work their way out of poverty.

7.2 *Financing foreign employment*

Finding the financial means to secure a job abroad is perhaps the most pressing of the challenges faced by prospective migrants. The majority of migrants in the sample had to pay the entire cost in advance; only a small proportion paid in instalments. Depending on the type of visa and country of employment, focus group participants indicated they had paid approximately Rs. 50,000 in advance (Table 16). Passports were handed over to

agents/sub-agents to start the process of securing employment abroad; any remaining balance was paid when all arrangements were completed.

Migrants found the money needed in various ways (Table 16). More than half of the returnees who had secured a job/visa through family or friends financed their migration from personal or household savings, as opposed to 39% of those who went abroad through OEPs. Only 28% of migrants using family networks to migrate had taken loans or mortgaged property.¹⁶ Among those who went abroad through OEPs, 43% had raised funds from the sale of jewellery, most likely belonging to their wives or other women family members. Obtaining a loan to finance overseas employment was higher among the group of prospective migrants.

Table 16: Mode of payment of migration cost by channel of recruitment

Mode of payment	Friends/Relatives	OEPs	Direct
% who paid the whole cost upfront	84.0	88.2	92.9
% who paid the cost in instalments	16.0	11.8	7.1
Number of instalments	5	2	3
Source of finance*			
Own savings	31.1	21.4	-
Household savings	22.0	17.1	-
Loan/mortgage	28.1	1.4	-
Sale of property	3.1	4.3	-
Sale of jewellery	0	42.9	-
Other	15.6	12.8	-

Source: SRM, 2007.

* Migrants may have combined different sources to raise the required amount. The data presented here show only the major source of funding. A closer look at the dataset, however, reveals that one-fifth of the respondents had combined different sources of funding.

¹⁶ Some migrants may have borrowed from the very same friends and relatives who had arranged their overseas employment, which could hypothetically result in a form of debt bondage. However, as this was not raised as an issue during field visits, it is not believed to be a significant problem in reality.

8. Illegal Activities in Recruitment

The demand for foreign employment in Pakistan has unfortunately led to numerous illegal activities. Among the returnees interviewed, ten had gone abroad without documents. They were purposively selected from all five districts covered in the study.

It is impossible to determine the magnitude of undocumented emigration from Pakistan, or the role of what seems to be an organized network sending undocumented workers from different parts of the country, mainly to Dubai and Muscat. An indication of its magnitude, however, is given by the fact that, in 2003-04, more than 60'000 Pakistani migrants were deported from various countries due to their illegal status.

The common practice is that local agents, mainly those who themselves have had experience of illegal migration in the past, organize prospective migrants into small or large groups, which then embark on risky journeys across different borders by land or by sea. Karachi is usually the first meeting point for such a group. In Swabi and D. G. Khan, the research team met returnees who several years earlier had travelled on a bus to Karachi, from where they were transported to Gawader. After a long sea journey of 24 hours, and several days of walking through difficult terrain, they reached their final destination. Most of these undocumented migrants were later arrested by the authorities in Dubai and deported on emergency passports. Upon return, two of them were sent to jail in Karachi.

This kind of migration is generally considered as voluntary because the migrants know about the hardship and risks involved with crossing borders illegally. But why does it happen? First, it can be explained by the high cost of legal migration. Charges for illegal border crossing are about Rs.25'000 at present, while the legal route normally costs much more. With no job and little scope to earn a sustainable livelihood, many poor families, particularly in the rural areas, take the risk of sending a family member abroad illegally in the hope that if they succeed, the family will improve its well-being. One returnee commented that dying at sea in an attempt to reach overseas, was better than starving at home.

Second, deportees can never re-enter a country from where they have previously been deported. Thus they have no choice but to take the illegal route on a second attempt. Some illegal migrants, after their first experience, also earned an income by acting as a local agent and taking others via known but dangerous routes.

Third, poverty, illiteracy and lack of marketable skills are additional factors behind this type of migration.

Overstaying after the *Hajj/Umra* pilgrimage or some other visit is the other most common way in which migrants illegally stay in destination countries. It is difficult, however, to establish links between this kind of illegal activity and the recruitment systems operating in Pakistan. It is more probable that overstaying occurs with the help of friends and relatives who already work in the destination country. The most straightforward link that can be drawn is that people are driven to use these illegal means because the legal channels are too difficult or too costly to afford.

9. Working Conditions and Protection of Workers Abroad

The working conditions to which migrants are subjected abroad will largely determine the overall outcome of the migration experience, including whether it allows the worker to accumulate savings, the most important goal. Using data from the SRM 2007, this section presents an overview of the working conditions of Pakistanis in the destination countries, and the protection measures extended to them.

9.1 *Re-signing of contracts once abroad*

A relatively new phenomenon in Middle East migration is the re-signing of contracts upon arrival. From focus group discussions, migrants shared this experience as happening in two ways. First, a new contract could be prepared for signature soon after arrival in the destination country. This new contract would have clear terms and conditions which are explained to the migrant worker. Alternatively, a new contract could be signed at the time the first salary is paid; the contract and several other documents are prepared for signature, but migrants are mostly unaware of what they are signing, and the salary stipulated is usually 8% to 10% lower than in the original contract signed in Pakistan.

Medical tests on arrival and a re-assessment of skills levels were also becoming common, with the results of either assessment sometimes used to justify a reduction of wages.

The practices of contract substitution and a repetition of the medical examination once abroad cannot be considered fair. For one, the new contracts are usually prepared in Arabic or English, languages that many unskilled Pakistani workers do not understand. The re-signing of contracts is not exclusive to Pakistani migrant workers, however; it is applied to workers from all labour-sending countries (Human Rights Watch, 2008). Unable to understand the language, and not conversant with the legal formalities in a foreign country, migrants require Government intervention and support to eliminate these practices.

9.2 *Fulfilment of contract provisions*

Respondents in the SRM were asked about their occupation abroad and whether the job they performed was the same as that specified in the original contract. More than half of the returnees had worked in the Middle East as labourers (29%), drivers (13%), masons (7%) and technicians (6%) (Appendix Table 9). Twelve per cent indicated that their job abroad differed from the one specified in their contract. It seems likely that the job at destination is downgraded to a lower skill category in order to justify a lower salary. This issue requires further investigation by the authorities.

Regarding the location of the job, more than 90% of the respondents who went abroad through friends and relatives or through OEPs had the same job location as was mentioned in their contracts, and 86% of direct visa holders indicated the same. A certain degree of violation of contract is thus taking place in this respect as well.

About 61% of respondents confirmed that they were provided free accommodation, and 54% confirmed free medical care. When disaggregated by type of recruitment, those

respondents who went abroad through OEPs were more likely to have free accommodation and medical care provided, compared to those who used other channels (74% for the former, compared to 57% for those who left through friends/relatives and 62% among direct visa holders). A comparison of data presented in Table 13 on the terms and conditions of contracts and Table 17 on the fulfilment of these conditions, shows that workers were largely provided with what was set out in their contract. However, focus group discussions revealed often strong dissatisfaction with the quality of the facilities provided.

More than 50% of the respondents had taken out health insurance while abroad and there was no significant difference across the types of recruitment. A small proportion had also taken out insurance in case of accident and/or death. Migrants were generally not happy about the way in which, when a fellow countryman died abroad, the body was repatriated to Pakistan; because of the cost involved, they reported that delays in sending corpses home for burial were very common.

Table 17: Employment abroad: fulfilment of contract by channel of recruitment

Fulfilment of contract	Channel of recruitment		
	Friends/relatives	OEPs	Direct visa
% who had same job location abroad	96.4	91.7	85.7
% provided free accommodation	57.1	73.8	61.5
% provided free medical care	55.2	62.3	50.0
Insurance*			
Health	54.5	50.0	59.1
Accident	18.2	16.7	9.1
Death	9.1	12.5	4.5
Other	18.2	20.8	27.3
All	100	100	100

Source: SRM, 2007.

* It is possible that some overseas workers had taken out several or even all types of insurance. However, it was not possible to record multiple responses in the questionnaire.

Apart from the direct visa holders, who reported a higher actual salary than was specified in their contract, returnees who had used all other channels reported receiving a lower monthly salary than had been stipulated before departure; it was up to 7% lower than in the contract signed in Pakistan (Table 18). This problem was the major concern expressed by return migrants. Unskilled workers in particular complained that they were paid about 100 Riyal (or Dirham) less than expected; given that wages in the Middle East were already low, any reduction represents a significant loss to the worker, particularly when accumulated over the duration of the stay overseas.

Table 18: Monthly salary in contract against actual salary paid, by channel of recruitment (Rs.)

Channel of recruitment	Salary in the contract (Rs)	Actual salary (Rs)	Actual as % of contract
Through friend	21'688	21'537	99.4
Through OEP	17'040	16'068	94.3
Direct visa	27'568	29'286	106.2
Illegal	16'222	15'100	93.1
All	20'393	20'058	98.4

Source: SRM, 2007.

9.3 Working conditions

About 9% of the returnees reported that their working hours per day exceeded the standard eight hours. This trend seemed to apply more frequently to the unskilled, who worked the longest hours. Some *azad* visa holders working in the service sector (e.g. in restaurants) experienced particularly exploitative conditions, working from morning to mid-night without any break.

The majority of respondents had weekly (81%) and annual (73%) holidays. Interestingly, 100% of the direct visa holders and illegal migrants benefited from weekly holidays, whereas around 70% of those who got their job through friends/relatives and OEPs enjoyed them (Table 19); however, this may reflect a reporting bias rather than an actual difference. According to the focus group discussion participants, most workers took advantage of their weekly holidays, although “independent” workers could instead choose to work the whole week if they so wished.

Seventy three per cent of all respondents reported that their wages were paid regularly, but this rate was somewhat lower among those who went abroad through OEPs (67%) compared to those who used other channels (79%). The payment of overtime was not universal, though: among those returnees who reported working more than 8 hours/day, less than 50% confirmed they were usually paid the overtime that was due.

Table 19: Working conditions abroad by channel of recruitment

Conditions	Channel of recruitment				
	All	Friends/relatives	OEP	Direct	Illegal
% working more than 8 hours daily	8.8	9.3	7.8	11.1	7.1
% who had weekly holidays	80.8	70.4	72.1	100.0	100.0
% who had annual holidays	73.3	64.3	63.9	100.0	78.6
% paid wages regularly	73.3	78.6	67.2	78.6	78.6
% usually paid for overtime	48.1	42.9	56.7	37.0	42.9
% who reported deductions from their wages	35.9	25.0	44.3	28.6	35.7
% who considered the deductions unfair	86.0	50.0	87.5	100.0	100.0

Source: SRM, 2007.

More than one-third of the respondents reported deductions from their wages which they almost all considered to be unfair. This was most common among those who had secured employment through OEPs. Deductions reportedly mainly covered payments to the *kafeel* (sponsor), followed by deductions for absence from work due to illness; paid sick leave was not granted. The irregularity in payment of wages, wage deductions and the non-payment of overtime and sickness indicate unsatisfactory working conditions of some workers in the Middle East. Of particular concern is the situation of workers who secured jobs through OEPs, and who should normally benefit from adequate protection while abroad.

While approximately three-quarters of the migrants in the sample had not changed either their job or employer, this did not mean that workers were satisfied with their working conditions (Table 20). In reality, it is extremely difficult to change jobs or employer in the Gulf migration system, yet exceptions do exist. Some returnees were able eventually to change to a higher paid job, even as they stayed with the same employer. Among the small

number who managed to change, about half of the OEP respondents and direct visa holders reported a low salary as the reason. About 60% of those who went abroad through friends/relatives reported no work or no payment as their main reason. Finding a better opportunity was the other main factor cited.

Table 20: Job or employer change by channel of recruitment

Job change	Friends/ Relatives	OEPs	Direct visa	Illegal
% who did not change their job	79.3	76.7	71.4	75.0
% who changed their job	10.3	20.0	21.4	25.0
% who changed their employer	0	1.7	3.6	0
% who changed job and employer	10.3	1.7	3.6	0
Reason for job change				
Low salary	20.0	57.1	50.0	0
No work/payment	60.0	28.6	0	66.7
Bad behavior of the <i>kafeel</i>	0	7.1	0	0
Experience was not relevant	0	0	12.5	33.3
Better opportunity elsewhere	20.0	0	12.5	0
% who sought an agent's help with the change	0	11.5	0	0

Source: SRM, 2007.

9.4 Employers' and supervisors' conduct

The behaviour of employers, supervisors, and fellow Pakistani and non-Pakistani workers was in general considered by the survey respondents to be good. Less satisfactory behaviour among employers and supervisors at the work place was reported more often among those migrants who had gone abroad through OEPs (Table 21). Migrants who obtained their visa directly enjoyed the greatest degree of satisfaction with both their employers and supervisors. When asked about the behaviour of fellow workers including non-Pakistanis, almost all respondents reported that it was good or very good, with only a very small proportion saying the contrary.

The reported incidence of abuse by foreign employers was also somewhat higher, although still reasonably low at 15%, among migrants who had secured employment through OEPs. Unsurprisingly, incidences of ending up in jail were most common among undocumented or illegal migrants, at 43% (Table 22), as a result of their illegal status and incomplete documents.

In terms of unreasonable restrictions on the movement of Pakistani workers while abroad, there do not appear to be any serious infringements (Table 23). The main exception is among illegal migrants who most probably impose restrictions on themselves given their status. Nonetheless, of some concern is the fact that around one quarter of migrants placed through OEPs and 40% of direct visa holders report that they have no freedom of movement beyond the city in which they reside; this merits further investigation.

Table 21: Perceptions of migrant workers of the behaviour of employers, supervisors and fellow workers

	Friends/relatives	OEP	Direct	Illegal
Behaviour of employer				
Very good	34.6	21.7	60.7	38.5
Good	50.0	46.7	35.7	61.5
Very bad	0	6.7	0	0
Bad	15.4	25.0	3.6	0
Behaviour of supervisor				
Very good	25.0	25.0	57.7	33.3
Good	60.0	40.4	42.3	66.7
Very bad	0	3.8	0	0
Bad	15.0	30.8	0	0
Behaviour of fellow Pakistani workers				
Very good	33.3	27.9	57.1	35.7
Good	63.0	68.9	42.9	64.3
Very bad	0	1.6	0	0
Bad	3.7	1.6	0	0
Behaviour of non-Pakistani workers				
Very good	34.8	29.4	53.6	30.8
Good	65.2	62.7	42.9	69.2
Very bad	0	0	3.6	0
Bad	0	7.8	0	0

Source: SRM, 2007.

Table 22: Reports of abuse by channel of recruitment

	Friends/relatives	OEP	Direct	Illegal
% abused by employer	3.6	15.0	3.6	7.1
% were punished physically	0	3.3	0	7.1
% jailed	3.4	2.0	7.1	42.9
Reasons for jail				
Incomplete documents	0	16.7	100	40.0
Illegal status	0	16.7	0	60.0
Overstayed	100	66.7	0	0

Source: SRM, 2007.

Table 23: Types of 'unreasonable' restriction by channel of recruitment

Restrictions	Relatives/Friends	OEPs	Direct visa	Illegal
None	67.9	62.3	57.1	21.4
No freedom of movement outside the city	14.3	26.2	39.3	42.9
No contact with others	0	3.3	3.6	0
Restricted from leaving the work place	10.7	6.6	0	7.1
Others	7.1	1.6	0	28.6
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: SRM, 2007.

10 Exploitation and Vulnerability of Migrant Workers

The discussion in previous sections has clearly demonstrated the existence of some exploitative practices in the migration process, and the vulnerability of migrant workers to such practices. The literature on migration commonly identifies as vulnerable those groups who end up bearing the highest costs, and who fall victim to illegal activities, breach of contract, deception and fraudulent practices. These issues are addressed in this section.

10.1 *Cost of migration*

Exploitation starts with the imposition of very high costs for overseas employment. None of the recruiters, including OEPs, respects the maximum fee of Rs. 4'500 for service charges fixed by the BEOE. The use of sub-agents to attract prospective migrants has increased costs considerably. Some categories of migrant appear especially vulnerable to exploitation. For example, rural migrants are the victims of high costs for all types of intermediary services (Table 24). As compared to only Rs. 40'000 paid by urban migrants using friends/relatives to facilitate migration, the rural migrants using the same channel paid more than Rs. 100'000 on average. The difference was much greater among the direct visa holders, where rural migrants paid more than seven times the rate paid by their urban counterparts. There could be several reasons for this systematic difference. Rural migrants are in general less educated and therefore easier to exploit. Another reason could be the heavy reliance of rural migrants on sub-agents and middlemen, given their lack of direct access to the licensed urban-based OEPs, which consequently pushes up their costs.

Table 24 also shows that unskilled labourers, and illiterate people, systematically pay by far the highest cost, irrespective of the recruitment channel used. This is the group that tends to use the services of illegal agents. We noted already (section 3) the increasing proportion of unskilled workers being placed in the Middle East labour market. While more data would be needed to substantiate this conclusion, the evidence points to the fact that, rather than making efforts to upgrade the skill levels of prospective migrants so that they can take up better paid jobs in destination countries, vulnerable (unskilled/illiterate) workers are instead being charged high costs to be sent into unskilled jobs for low wages.

The extensive involvement of relatives/friends in securing overseas employment is not without its problems. There is little doubt that in many cases, such intermediaries serve well the interests of their friends and family members who want to secure jobs abroad. However, it is equally clear that in other instances, friends and relatives can deceive and exploit prospective migrants, particularly by over-charging them. The prospective migrants generally settle the visa and other costs with friends/relatives in advance, during visits by the latter to Pakistan on which they hand-carry the employer's demand letter and even visa with them.

Table 24: Average total cost of migration by migrant characteristics and channel of recruitment

Characteristics	Relatives/friends		OEPs		Direct visa	
	Cost (Rs.)	N	Cost (Rs.)	N	Cost (Rs.)	N
Place of residence						
Rural	105'191	15	78'121	28	153'177	15
Urban	39'833	6	42'082	14	19'458	12
Skill level of job abroad						
Professional workers	13'000	3	37'692	6	64'525	4
Skilled workers	93'133	14	60'427	27	88'614	17
Unskilled workers	118'500	4	102'094	9	131'400	7
Educational level						
Illiterate	136'333	3	74'438	4	165'400	9
Primary (1-9 years)	99'333	3	73'572	20	63'633	7
Matric	89'096	9	70'763	8	82'929	5
Inter/B.A	51'333	6	50'042	6	63'300	4
Higher	-	-	35'250	4	29'000	3

Source: SRM, 2007.

10.2 Deception in the recruitment process

In the SRM, return migrants were asked whether they had encountered deception at any stage of the recruitment process. About 16% (or one in six) of the rural-based migrants who received help to get their job from friends/relatives reported deception at some point, while no urban migrant reported this. The rate of deception by friends/relatives was much higher in Punjab province than in Sindh/NWFP. Rather surprisingly, more professional migrants reported deception by OEPs than the skilled and unskilled categories of migrants. Such deception was more common among those who went to the UAE than in Saudi Arabia. When coupled with information from focus group discussions, it would thus appear that, on top of the rather well-known exploitation associated with recruiting agents (e.g. high fees and breach of contract), there is new evidence emerging on exploitation by networks of friends/relatives abroad, who have probably taken on the role of sub-agents.

Table 25: Proportion of migrants who reported deception during the recruitment process

	% deceived	
	Friends/relatives	OEPs
All migrants	10.8	5.1
Rural	15.8	8.9
Urban	0	0
Punjab	16.7	3.0
Sindh/NWFP	6.3	7.4
Country of employment		
Saudi Arabia	9.1	6.1
UEA	11.8	13.6
Job abroad		
Professional	0	16.7
Skilled	11.8	7.1
Unskilled	14.3	9.1

Source: SRM, 2007.

10.3 Other forms of exploitation

It was frequently reported by return migrants that agents and sub-agents had collected their passports and identity cards along with an advance payment, at the time a promise of overseas employment was made. This practice prevents applicants from approaching other agents. If the agent is subsequently unable to place the applicant, the advance paid is returned not at one time, but in instalments. This seems to be one of the main reasons behind the high dependency of migrants on a single recruiting agency (see section 6).

Another area of exploitation is through ambiguous job contracts. Although recruiters are obliged by law to ensure prospective migrants are given clear information, including on their employment terms and conditions, in reality migrants are often not kept well informed which may lead to their exploitation abroad. Almost half of the Pakistani labour force in the Middle East comprises unskilled workers who have only a limited understanding of the terms and conditions of their work contracts, and who focus only on the fact of getting a job abroad.

Despite the fact that the Government of Pakistan has taken several steps to make the recruitment and migration process transparent, questions remain as to whether emigration procedures are correctly followed by all stakeholders, including migrants themselves. Once abroad, migrants are sometimes presented with a new contract to sign, often in Arabic or English, languages they do not understand. It is also common for workers (mainly the unskilled) not to be paid their full salary during the first three months of overseas employment. Workers believe that this withholding of payment is due to the fact that, if a migrant returns home within these first three months due to the non-fulfilment of their contract conditions, the OEP is obliged by law to refund all the fees paid. Early return of migrants also damages an OEP's reputation overseas. Thus, the withholding of salary serves to prevent such premature return.

The *kafeel* system prevalent throughout the Gulf region also creates problems for the sponsored migrants, who are free to work with an employer of their choice only as long as a regular fixed amount is paid to the *kafeel*. When their contract expires, even if renewal is not difficult in theory to secure, migrants still have to pay for it; some migrants interviewed had returned because they could not afford this.

In sum, the exploitative practices reported by respondents included contract substitution, fresh medical tests required abroad, skills verification procedures, withholding of salary for the initial months of employment and specific problems associated with the *kafeel* system.

Finally, illegal migration represents the most severe form of exploitation. In rural Pakistan particularly, local agents organize undocumented and dangerous forms of migration, mainly to Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and Muscat (Oman). Improving the transparency and reducing the costs of legal migration would go a long way towards curbing such illegal practices.

11 Recruitment Mechanisms and the Outcomes of Migration

11.1 Remittances and household assets

The literature on labour migration from Pakistan to the Middle East has not adequately assessed the impact of different recruitment channels on the outcomes of migration, particularly in terms of the reintegration of migrants on their return from overseas. Remittances play a critical role in successful reintegration.

Migrants interviewed in the SRM, 2007 remitted an average of Rs. 209'650 during the 4.7 years they worked abroad on average (Table 26). Migrants who left on a direct visa were able to remit on average Rs. 250'000, while those who migrated through friends or relatives, remitted lower amounts of Rs. 159'000. Illegal migrants were able to remit more than those who went abroad through friends/relatives. Following their return, the majority of migrants managed to find work in Pakistan. The average duration of unemployment after return varied between 44 days (for direct visa holders) and 69 days (for those who went abroad illegally). Of the latter group, most ended up being deported and then took a longer time to resettle and find work in Pakistan (see Table 28).

Table 26: Exploring the relationship between recruitment channel and selected migration outcomes

Migration outcomes	Friends/ relatives	OEPs	Direct	Illegal	All
Total remittances (Rs.)	158'968	225'033	250'022	169'062	209'652
Duration of unemployment after return (days)	50	55	44	69	53
Personal monthly income (Rs.)	11'434	16'077	31'050	9'400	17'140
% owned agriculture land	41.4	58.3	40.7	46.7	49.6
Irrigated land (<i>kanals</i>)	32.6	38.7	56.9	17.6	39.3
Non-irrigated land (<i>kanals</i>)	21.0	112.0	560		132.5
% owned livestock	31.0	46.6	34.6	64.3	42.5
Number of livestock	3.5	3.4	3.9	4.8	3.6
Value of livestock (Rs.)	49'714	86'250	78'666	106'666	79'333
% who owned house	82.8	91.7	89.3	100.0	90.2
% who repaired house	39.3	37.9	30.8	21.4	34.9
Number of mobile phones	2.5	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.1

Source: SRM, 2007.

Current levels of personal monthly income for returnees averaged more than Rs. 17'000, across all recruitment channels. However, illegal migrants earned only about Rs. 9'000 per month. Migrants who left through OEPs or obtained a direct visa were better off in terms of income than the other categories.

Landlessness among returnees had slightly declined. A modest increase was also noted in the number of animals and dwelling units owned. More than one-third of the migrants in the sample were able to repair their houses; a majority of households had access to safe drinking water; and on average, migrant households owned two mobile phones as well.

The data from this survey do not allow any firm conclusions to be drawn about the impact of recruitment channels on the outcome of migration. It does appear however that the cost of migration matters more than the channel used for going to the Middle East *per se*.

Migrants who used friends/relatives for employment abroad are particularly disadvantaged by high costs, that undermine their ability to remit savings home.

11.2 Satisfaction with achievements and intention to go abroad again

Interestingly, 80% of returnees who had migrated illegally were happy with their achievements and 60% wanted to go abroad again for work. The main reason for this high level of satisfaction was that, with their very low costs of migration (only Rs. 25'000), these migrants were able to remit amounts equal to the regular migrants who had spent large amounts to go abroad. A high percentage of direct visa holders were also happy with their achievements and only 37% of them wished to return overseas. Migration has probably enabled many from this group to resettle in Pakistan, with no need for further migration to make additional savings. More than one-third of those who went abroad with the help of friends/relatives were not happy, however, and the same applied to around 40% of those who had used OEPs (Table 27).

Urban-based returnees were in general more satisfied than their rural peers (Table 27). Of those who returned from the UAE, 77% were satisfied with their achievements compared to 62% of returnees from Saudi Arabia. Despite the fact that more migrants returning from the UAE had been deceived than those returning from Saudi Arabia (Table 25), more than three-quarters of returnees from the UAE were still happy with what they had achieved and many intended to return abroad for work.

Table 27: Satisfaction with achievements and intention to go abroad again

Characteristics	% satisfied	% who intend to go abroad again
Channel of recruitment		
Friends/relatives	64.3	51.7
OEPs	59.3	45.6
Direct	85.7	37.0
Illegal	80.0	60.0
Country of employment		
Saudi Arabia	61.6	43.7
UAE	76.8	51.8
Others	100.0	0
Place of residence		
Rural area	63.1	47.6
Urban area	78.3	45.5

Source: SRM, 2007.

Finally, return migrants were asked what they would do differently if they had the chance to go abroad again (Table 28). Migrants who used the legal or regular channels indicated that they wanted to secure better working conditions, whereas illegal migrants wanted to use legal migration channels in the future. This suggests that, even though the latter group had managed to make some savings from their work overseas, the risks and costs associated with illegal migration outweighed the benefits. About one-quarter of migrants using OEPs wanted to undertake more technical training before leaving again, most likely in the light of their own assessment of labour market demand abroad.

Table 28: What migrants would do differently in future migration for overseas employment

Action	Friends/ Relatives	OEPs	Direct visa	Illegal
Undergo technical training	9.1	19.2	6.3	0
Use a more trust-worthy channel	13.6	3.8	0	0
Seek better working conditions	40.9	38.5	31.3	0
Leave through a legal channel	0	1.9	18.8	76.9
Others	9.0	11.5	31.3	15.4
Not interested in future migration	27.3	25.0	12.5	7.7

Source: SRM, 2007.

12 Policy Recommendations

The four recommendations listed below were made by return migrants during focus group discussions:

- Working abroad has become less profitable, due to the high and increasing costs of migration. Once abroad, migrants end up accepting poor working conditions, just to recover what they had paid out and repay their debts. Fee-charging to workers needs therefore to be much more strictly regulated and controlled.
- Recruitment should be permitted only through legal channels, registered recruiting agents.
- Contracts were not transparently administered and migrants were in general less informed about terms and conditions of employment than the law stipulated they should be. Reforms are needed in Pakistan as well as abroad. Eliminating sub-agents and foreign recruiters from the labour recruitment process will help reduce the cost of migration.
- Pakistani Embassies in the Middle East could learn from the Embassies of the Philippines (in particular) but also Embassies of India, who are more active in the protection of migrant workers' rights abroad.

Several additional recommendations also emerge from the analysis presented in this paper:

- Despite many on-going programmes to increase the skill level of Pakistani domestic and migrant workers, the proportion of unskilled Pakistani workers in the Middle East continues to increase and is of great concern. These workers are more often the victims of illegal practices, high costs and low wages while abroad. There is a need to enhance the skills level of the labour force so as to avoid exploitation and to reap the full potential benefits of migration.
- Emigration is concentrated in the more prosperous areas of Pakistan e.g. *Barani* Punjab. Migration in turn helps drive this prosperity. Information and facilities for overseas employment should be introduced into the poor regions of the country e.g. southern Punjab and rural Sindh, to help lift poor families out of poverty.
- Contract signing before departure is not common in Pakistan. Recruitment systems should be made more transparent, easy to follow and understandable in terms of working conditions abroad. The re-signing of contracts abroad should be stopped. Exploitation linked with the *kafeel* system should also be checked.
- Rules and procedures set by BEOE e.g. appearance before the Protector of Emigrants and attendance at pre-departure briefings, must be more strictly enforced and followed.
- Illegal migration leads to exploitation of workers and gives the country a bad reputation; it must be controlled. Although this study has not brought to light specific instances of human trafficking, largely due to the small size of the sample, this issue requires further study.
- Working conditions abroad are often not satisfactory. Arrangements should be put in place to ensure that the agreed terms and conditions for overseas employment are

respected. Labour sending and labour receiving economies must agree on a system of core values, standards and outcomes to be attained through international labour migration.

Appendix Tables

Appendix Table 1: Skill classification of Pakistani workers

Broad skill categories	Skill/Occupation
Highly Qualified	Doctor, Engineer, Teacher, Accountant, Manager
Highly Skilled	Nurse (M&F), Foreman/Supervisor, Technician, Operator, Surveyor, Carpenter, Computer Programmer/Analyst, Designer, Pharmacist, Rigger, Draftsman, Photographer, Artist
Skilled	Welder, Secretary/Stenographer, Storekeeper, Clerk/Typist, Mason, Carpenter, Electrician, Plumber, Steel fixer, Painter Mechanic, Cable jointer, Driver, Tailor, Fitter, Denter, Goldsmith, Blacksmith, Salesman.
Semi Skilled	Cook, Waiter/Bearer
Unskilled	Agriculturalist, Labourer, Farmer

Source: BEOE.

Appendix Table 2: Migrants by District of origin

S.No	NAME OF THE DISTRICT	1981-2000		S.No	NAME OF THE DISTRICT	2001-06	
		Number	%			Number	%
1	Karachi	187'631	8.25	1	Rawalpindi	72'252	7.31
2	Rawalpindi	140'404	6.17	2	Gujrat	54'522	5.52
3	Lahore	137'445	6.04	3	Dir	51'490	5.21
4	Gujrat	124'598	5.48	4	Karachi	50'929	5.15
5	Sialkot	117'139	5.15	5	Sialkot	50'561	5.11
6	Dir	96'027	4.22	6	Swat	40'518	4.10
7	Gujranwala	83'351	3.67	7	Lahore	37'438	3.79
8	Swat	73'806	3.25	8	Gujranwala	30'294	3.06
9	Faisalabad	73'766	3.24	9	Faisalabad	25'061	2.54
10	Peshawar	67'853	2.98	10	Dera Ghazi Khan	21'715	2.20
11	Mardan	57'687	2.54	11	Swabi	20'463	2.07
12	Kohat	55'214	2.43	12	Peshawar	19'452	1.97
13	Jhelum	50'551	2.22	13	Mardan	18'517	1.87
14	Multan	45'303	1.99	14	Chakwal	17'128	1.73
15	Dera Ghazi Khan	41'570	1.83	15	Kohat	16'614	1.68
16	Abbottabad	41'326	1.82	16	Sheikhupura	15'550	1.57
17	Attock	39'760	1.75	17	Jhelum	15'348	1.55
18	Mirpur	38'799	1.71	18	Attock	15'098	1.53
19	Kotli	38'597	1.70	19	Poonch	14'879	1.51
20	Bannu	37'135	1.63	20	Multan	14'174	1.43
21	North Waziristan Agency	34'997	1.54	21	Toba Tek Sing	13'405	1.36
22	Sargodha	33'629	1.48	22	Abbottabad	12'871	1.30
23	Poonch	33'388	1.47	23	Rahim Yar Khan	12'804	1.30
24	Muzaffarabad	33'013	1.45	24	Narowal	12'788	1.29
25	Sahiwal	26'792	1.18	25	Mansehra	12'539	1.27
26	Mansehra	25'776	1.13	26	Bannu	12'138	1.23
27	Sheikhupura	25'398	1.12	27	Sargodha	12'007	1.21

28	Kurram Agency	23'859	1.05	28	Kotli	11'891	1.20
29	Rahim Yar Khan	22'136	0.97	29	Muzaffarabad	10'881	1.10
30	Khyber Agency	21'427	0.94	30	Malakand Agency	10'762	1.09
31	Chakwal	21'224	0.93	31	Mirpur	10'379	1.05
32	Dera Ismail Khan	20'678	0.91	32	Charsada	9'874	1.00
33	Bahawalpur	20'114	0.88	33	Nowshera	9'602	0.97
34	Malakand Agency	19'887	0.87	34	Bonair	9'404	0.95
35	Toba Tek Sing	19'243	0.85	35	North Waziristan Agency	9'399	0.95
36	South Waziristan Agency	16'268	0.72	36	Hairpur Hazara	9'388	0.95
37	Vehari	15'486	0.68	37	Muzaffargarh	8'927	0.90
38	Mianwali	15'231	0.67	38	Bagh	8'793	0.89
39	Jhang	14'977	0.66	39	Mandi Baahuddin	8'489	0.86
40	Muzaffargarh	14'557	0.64	40	Sahiwal	8'309	0.84
41	Orakzai Agency	13'887	0.61	41	Kurram Agency	8'110	0.82
42	Hyderabad	13'618	0.60	42	Bahawalpur	8'064	0.82
43	Swabi	13'456	0.59	43	Vehari	7'990	0.81
44	Bahawalnagar	13'013	0.57	44	South Waziristan Agency	7'199	0.73
45	Kasur	12'113	0.53	45	Khyber Agency	6'978	0.71
46	Mehmand Agency	10'907	0.48	46	Kanewal	6'843	0.69
47	Okara	10'231	0.45	47	Kasur	6'034	0.61
48	Quetta	10'215	0.45	48	Jhang	5'951	0.60
49	Kanewal	9'857	0.43	49	Mianwali	5'832	0.59
50	Islamabad	9'661	0.42	50	Karak	5'550	0.56
51	Bajour Agency	9'113	0.40	51	Islamabad	5'279	0.53
52	Hairpur Hazara	8'847	0.39	52	Okara	5'207	0.53
53	Bagh	8'510	0.37	53	Khushab	5'143	0.52
54	Charsada	8'457	0.37	54	Bahawalnagar	5'003	0.51
55	Larkana	8'385	0.37	55	Dera Ismail Khan	4'962	0.50
56	Nowshera	7'414	0.33	56	Rajnpur	4'613	0.47
57	Sukkur	7'331	0.32	57	Bajour Agency	4'378	0.44
58	Rajnpur	7'174	0.32	58	Lodharan	4'036	0.41
59	Karak	6'986	0.31	59	Dadu	4'023	0.41
60	Dadu	6'482	0.29	60	Orakzai Agency	4'005	0.41
61	Narowal	5'850	0.26	61	Mehmand Agency	3'255	0.33
62	Khushab	5'482	0.24	62	Layya	3'210	0.32
63	Nawabshah	4'437	0.20	63	Hyderabad	3'158	0.32
64	Bonair	3'899	0.17	64	Larkana	2'707	0.27
65	Chitral	3'877	0.17	65	Pakpattan	2'660	0.27
66	Kohistan	3'872	0.17	66	Sukkur	2'621	0.27
67	Layya	3'162	0.14	67	Quetta	2'211	0.22
68	Lodharan	3'102	0.14	68	Chitral	1'960	0.20
69	Jacobabad	2'834	0.12	69	Nawabshah	1'954	0.20
70	Sanghar	2'366	0.10	70	Zhob	1'926	0.19
71	Zhob	2'338	0.10	71	Kachhi	1'860	0.19
72	Tharparkar	2'297	0.10	72	Bhakar	1'821	0.18
73	Khuzdar	2'246	0.10	73	Panjgur	1'636	0.17
74	Bhakar	2'020	0.09	74	Khuzdar	1'633	0.17

75	Kalat	1'812	0.08	75	Kohistan	1'603	0.16
76	Khairpur	1'782	0.08	76	Lakki Marwat	1'587	0.16
77	Shikarpur	1'736	0.08	77	Tank	1'519	0.15
78	Badin	1'724	0.08	78	Hafizabad	1'496	0.15
79	Pakpattan	1'620	0.07	79	Turbat	1'416	0.14
80	Pishin	1'502	0.07	80	Sanghar	1'290	0.13
81	Panjgur	1'427	0.06	81	Bhimber	1'204	0.12
82	Chaghi	1'389	0.06	82	Kharan	1'000	0.10
83	Turbat	1'344	0.06	83	Jacobabad	934	0.09
84	Kharan	1'241	0.05	84	Sudnuti	899	0.09
85	Kachhi	1'087	0.05	85	Thatta	854	0.09
86	Thatta	1'066	0.05	86	Khairpur	820	0.08
87	Lasbela	1'032	0.05	87	Gilgit	771	0.08
88	Gilgit	880	0.04	88	Noushero Feroze	705	0.07
89	Mirpur Khas	665	0.03	89	Shangla	675	0.07
90	Noushero Feroze	435	0.02	90	Chaghi	654	0.07
91	Nasirabad	417	0.02	91	Mirpur Khas	599	0.06
92	Tank	394	0.02	92	Shikarpur	512	0.05
93	Gowdar	386	0.02	93	Lasbela	492	0.05
94	Lakki Marwat	371	0.02	94	Gowdar	430	0.04
95	Loralai	365	0.02	95	Badin	427	0.04
96	Sibi	322	0.01	96	Makran	405	0.04
97	Baltistan	272	0.01	97	Kalat	398	0.04
98	Makran	269	0.01	98	Pishin	372	0.04
99	Tribal Area Adjoining D.I. Khna	139	0.01	99	Nasirabad	308	0.03
100	Kohlu Agency	135	0.01	100	Jhalmagsi	294	0.03
101	Tribal Area Adjoining Peshawar	131	0.01	101	Batgram	293	0.03
102	Diamir	130	0.01	102	Loralai	270	0.03
103	Ghanchi	118	0.01	103	Baltistan	237	0.02
104	Jhalmagsi	91	0.00	104	Qila Abdullah	223	0.02
105	Tribal Area Adjoining Bannu	64	0.00	105	Qila Saifullah	213	0.02
106	Ghizar	57	0.00	106	Ghanchi	209	0.02
107	Tribal Area Adjoining Kohat	50	0.00	107	Tharparkar	185	0.02
108	Mandi Baahuddin	0	0.00	108	Tribal Area Adjoining Kohat	153	0.02
109	Hafizabad	0	0.00	109	Ghizar	149	0.02
110	Batgram	0	0.00	110	Kohlu Agency	134	0.01
111	Shangla	0	0.00	111	Diamir	122	0.01
112	Qila Saifullah	0	0.00	112	Sibi	94	0.01
113	Qila Abdullah	0	0.00	113	Tribal Area Adjoining Peshawar	90	0.01
114	Bhimber	0	0.00	114	Tribal Area Adjoining D.I. Khna	17	0.00
115	Sudnuti	0	0.00	115	Tribal Area Adjoining Bannu	12	0.00
	Total	2'273'924			Total	988'540	100

Source: Data obtained from the BEOE.

Appendix Table 3: Regional Offices of Protector of Emigrants with areas (districts) of jurisdiction

S. No.	Name of Protector Office	Areas (Districts) of jurisdiction
1.	Protector of Emigrants, Lahore	District Lahore, Kasur, Okara, Sheikhupura, Faisalabad, Jhang, T.T. Singh, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Narowal, Hafizabad, Sargodha, Mianwali, Jhang, Khushab, Bhakar and Pak Pattan
2.	Protector of Emigrants, Rawalpindi	Districts Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal, Gujrat, Mandi Bhaudhin, Islamabad and Territory of State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir
3.	Protector of Emigrants, Multan	Districts Multan, D. G. Khan, Bahawalpur, Bhawalnagar, Layyah, Lodheran, Muzafargarh, Sahiwal, Rahimyar Khan, Vehari and Rajanpur and Khanewal.
4.	Protector of Emigrants, Karachi	Province of Sindh including Districts Lasbela, Khuzdar, Gawadar, Pasni, Jiwani and Oramara of Baluchistan.
5.	Protector of Emigrants, Peshawar	Province of NWFP and FATA excluding Districts Dir, Swat and Malakand Agency, Kohistan Buner, Chitral Bajore Agency and Shangla.
6.	Protector of Emigrants, Malakand	Districts of Dir, Swat and Malakand Agency, Kohistan Buner Chitral, Bajore Agency and Shangla.
7.	Protector of Emigrants, Quetta	Province of Baluchistan excluding Districts Lasbela, Khuzdar, Gawadar, Pasni, Jiwani and Ormara.

Source: BEOE

Appendix Table 4: No. of Pakistanis who proceeded abroad for employment registered by BEOE, and % who used OEPs (1977-2007)

Year	Total no. of workers who went abroad	% of workers processed by OEPs
1977	140'445	55.3
1978	129'533	60.7
1979	118'259	68.2
1980	118'397	77.3
1981	153'081	78.2
1982	137'535	72.1
1983	120'031	64.7
1984	93'540	68.4
1985	82'333	63.0
1986	58'002	52.4
1987	66'186	52.6
1988	81'545	58.7
1989	95'863	58.4
1990	113'781	66.0
1991	142'818	74.6
1992	191'506	70.7
1993	154'529	67.4
1994	110'936	68.8
1995	117'048	67.7
1996	119'629	71.7
1997	149'029	62.6
1998	100'706	57.1
1999	78'093	48.6
2000	107'733	72.8
2001	127'929	79.3
2002	147'422	76.0
2003	214'039	68.3
2004	173'824	52.8
2005	142'135	44.4
2006	183'191	41.2
2007	287'033	41.7

Source: BEOE

Appendix Table 5: Distribution of migrants by year of return from overseas employment (%)

Regions/districts	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
All migrants	4.7	14.1	9.4	12.5	16.4	42.9	100
Rural	6.2	13.6	8.6	12.3	16.0	43.2	100
Urban	2.1	14.9	10.6	12.8	17.0	42.5	100
Punjab	2.8	15.7	7.1	10.0	18.6	45.7	100
Sindh/NWFP	6.9	12.1	12.1	15.5	13.8	39.6	100

Source: SRM, 2007

Appendix Table 6: Reasons for overseas migration

	All	Rural	Urban	Punjab	Sindh/NWFP
Reason for migration					
Unemployment in Pakistan	20.8	24.5	15.4	21.2	20.3
Poverty	31.4	31.9	30.8	23.5	40.5
Earn money for business	25.8	22.3	30.8	30.6	20.3
Earn money for house	1.9	0	4.6	0	4.1
Earn money for marriage	3.8	3.2	4.6	0	8.1
Others	16.4	18.1	13.8	24.7	6.8

Source: SRM, 2007

Appendix Table 7: Means of obtaining a direct visa

	All migrants	Rural	Urban
Advertisement	25.0	0	58.3
Relatives/friends	71.4	93.8	41.7
Others	3.6	6.3	0

Source: SRM, 2007.

Appendix Table 8: Maximum and minimum total cost of migration, by channel of recruitment

Type of recruitment	Maximum cost paid (Rs.)	Minimum cost paid (Rs.)
OEPs	155'200	5'250
Friends/relatives	227'000	8'000
Direct visa	253'600	4'500

Source: SRM, 2007.

Appendix Table 9: Distribution of returnees by occupation abroad

Occupation abroad	%
Engineer	3.3
Doctor	3.3
Nurse	0.8
Manager	0.8
Welder	2.5
Agriculturalist	0.8
Clerk/typist	0.8
Mason	7.4
Carpenter	2.5
Electrician	1.6
Cook	1.6
Plumber	0.8
Painter	3.3
Labourer	28.7
Technician	5.7
Mechanic	1.6
Driver	13.1
Operator	3.3
Tailor	0.8
Fitter	0.8
Denter (auto)	1.6
Computer programmer/analyst	1.6
Salesman	1.6
Waiter	0.8
Security Guard	2.5
Business	1.6
Barber	0.8
Home Decorator	0.8
Gardener	1.6
Travel/Agent	1.6
Washman	1.6
Total	100

Source: SRM 2007.

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