

Temporary Contract Labour in the Gulf States: Perspectives from two countries of origin

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يتحمل مؤلفي أو واضعي المقالات أو الدراسات أو المساهمات الأخرى التي تحمل توقيعهم مسؤولية الآراء المعبر عنها وحدهم، ولا يمثل النشر مصادقة من جانب مكتب العمل الدولي على الآراء الواردة بها

TEMPORARY CONTRACT LABOUR IN THE GULF STATES: PERSPECTIVES FROM TWO SENDER COUNTRIES

1. INTRODUCTION

The recruitment and working conditions of temporary contract workers in the Gulf States, the majority of whom come from South Asia, is a subject attracting increased attention from the governments of both sender and destination countries, as well as from international agencies and public opinion. There is an evident concern to manage this contract labour in such a way as to meet the needs of both parties, with full respect for the human and labour rights of the workers concerned.

On the one hand the benefits to the contract workers themselves and their families, as well as to the sender countries more generally, are very considerable. These benefits range from improvement of the poverty situation of the migrant workers' households, to reduction of the unemployment rate by acting as a conduit for working age migrants, to contributing to the sender country's foreign exchange earnings. The migrant labour promotes economic growth in the sender countries directly through remittances, and indirectly through generating employment opportunities and facilitating more trade as an outcome of such remittances. Such remittances can also lay a better foundation for human capital development, as expenditure on education increases significantly among the families of returned migrants.

On the other hand, there are concerns that some of these migrants have been subject to severe and exploitative working conditions in destination countries, in part as a result of deceptive recruitment practices by agencies, or informal labour brokers, which are inadequately regulated and monitored, and which can make unfair profits through such labour exploitation. There is no suggestion that the majority of migrants are subjected to such abusive practices. The findings of our pilot research in Pakistan are that overseas workers including Pakistanis in the Middle East are usually treated with respect, are paid on time, are able to leave when they wish, and return to their home countries having secured several times the income they would have earned at home. However there are indications that some workers, irrespective of their country of origin, suffer from severe working conditions while abroad which are inconsistent with both national laws and international standards of workers' protection. In the worst cases, unless appropriate safeguards are applied, such practices could amount to forced labour in violation of the ILO's Conventions on the subject. Initial research has shown that the problems faced by some foreign workers can start in their home countries, and that these are linked to the recruitment process.

As is now common knowledge, there has been much critical examination of current practices for the recruitment and placement of contract workers, such as the sponsorship laws which tie foreign workers to the sponsors who employ them in the

destination country, giving employers the authority to provide identity cards for foreign workers, and exercising control over the right of foreign workers to leave the workplace. It has been observed in this regard that the governments of the major source countries for migrant or contract workers have their own obligations, for example to safeguard the interests of their migrant workers by limiting or eradicating pre-departure fees or other charges and commissions, in order to ensure that these do not place migrant workers in situations of severe indebtedness or debt bondage.

There are many indications that the governments of both sender and destination countries are now committed to managing their contract labour arrangements in such a way as to provide mutual benefit, and to avert the risk of exploitative practices at variance with international standards of human and labour rights. The fact that this special meeting on temporary contract labour is now being held, in the context of the Colombo Process with the participation of many Ministers and other high level officials from both sender and destination countries, is one clear sign of such commitment. Another sign is the recent adoption in many Gulf States of specific laws against human trafficking, together with agencies to implement laws and policies.

To support this process and to facilitate greater cooperation between the sender and destination countries, the ILO has commissioned research which focuses in particular on the way that recruitment and placement systems for contract workers operate in practice. These are complex issues, given that much of the recruitment in the sender countries operates on an informal basis, and that it can be difficult for governments to exercise full control over what happens at the local level.

It is our firm belief however that the future policy dialogue, to which both the sender and destination countries are now firmly committed, must be based to the extent possible on an understanding of existing practice, as well as the legal and regulatory framework.

Thus the present paper aims to summarise the existing knowledge base. It is based on the initial findings of work which is still in progress, in Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively. Consultants in these two countries were commissioned, in a brief period of time, to inter alia:

- Gather and review secondary sources of information on the recruitment mechanisms of their national migrant workers for employment in the Gulf states
- Review the legislative provisions, government policy and regulations governing the recruitment agencies for overseas employment; and also assess the procedures and practices in place for monitoring the recruitment agencies
- Through interviews with recruitment agencies, carry out an analysis of the recruitment processes
- Conduct interviews in select source areas of migrant workers, with both men and women returned migrants, to shed light on the actual experiences as regards the conditions promised by recruitment agencies. This should identify which groups are most vulnerable to exploitative practices, including possible trafficking into forced labour
- Identify any problem areas, and propose recommendations for action to improve the situation by the different stakeholders concerned.

This paper is structured as follows. A first section describes the methodology used by the research teams in Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively. A second section reviews the context of overseas temporary migration in these two countries, including the law and policy framework, and the main trends in contract labour provision. A third section summarises the findings of the field research that was conducted to provide specific inputs for this Abu Dhabi Forum, with a particular emphasis on the channels and mechanisms of recruitment for temporary contract workers and the reasons why particular channels were selected, the transaction costs involved, and the consequences of such migration including wage payment and working conditions. A concluding section identifies some issues that can now be addressed, through ILO cooperation with both sender and destination countries, to ensure that contract labour systems can henceforth operate with adequate safeguards for the human and labour rights of the workers concerned.

It must be emphasised that this represents pilot and experimental research with only modest samples in the two sender countries, and that it is also very much work in progress. It is nevertheless hoped that it can be a model for future data collection and analysis on a subject of major importance.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research teams led by experienced senior researchers were hired in Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively, to conduct studies on the processes, outcomes and vulnerabilities to exploitation of migrant and contract labour from these countries to the Gulf States. The studies should seek to understand and contrast the experiences of both regular and irregular migrants, of women and men, and of workers placed by public and private recruitment agencies and services. They were to focus in particular on examining the various recruitment mechanisms, processes and labour contractual arrangements experienced by migrant workers in different sectors, and their different outcomes in terms of working conditions and workers' rights in the country of destination. Through interviews with recruitment agencies the researchers should carry out an analysis of the recruitment processes, including: means of identification of overseas employment opportunities; job advertising; interview and selection process; fees charged; information provided to workers; terms and conditions of contracts provided and their duration; and pre-departure training. The research teams should also conduct interviews in selected source areas of male and female migrant workers, with returned migrants, people of different ages and working in different economic sectors. Interviews were to be held with a minimum of 50 returned migrants, and with a minimum of 30 prospective migrant workers about their experience of seeking to find employment in the Gulf states.

The research teams² in each country reviewed secondary sources of information, interviewed key informants and conducted rapid field research in selected source areas of overseas migrant workers, through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Both teams interviewed returned migrants, and recruiting agencies and sub-

² The research teams were led, in Bangladesh, by Dr Rita Afsar of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, and in Pakistan, by Dr G M Arif of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics. We wish to acknowledge with great gratitude the extraordinary efforts both researchers have made to produce preliminary results in time for presentation at the Abu Dhabi Forum.

agents. In Pakistan, efforts were made also to interview prospective migrants who had completed their recruitment process. Given the time and budgetary constraints of the research, neither study aims or claims to be representative in any statistical sense of conditions overall, but rather to capture some of the facets and diversity of the situations of overseas contract workers.

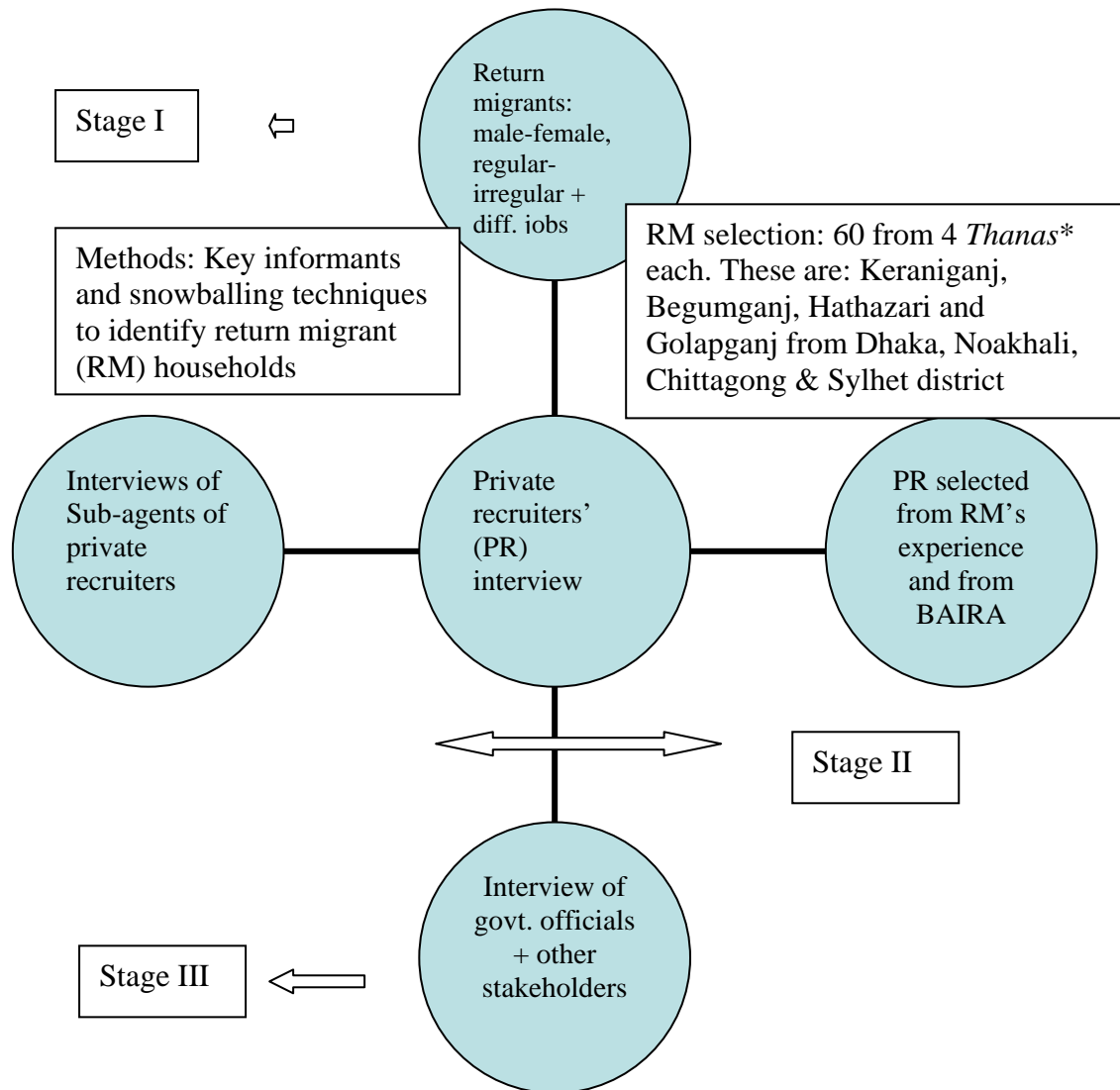
In Bangladesh, the research team opted for a qualitative methodology, seeking in-depth information from a purposively selected sample of respondents. The study adopts a comparative approach at three levels: between the experiences of men and women workers; between “regular” and “irregular” migrants; and between workers in different types of occupation. In total, 60 migrants were interviewed from four Thanas: 15 from each of Keraniganj (Dhaka district), Bandar (Narayanganj district), Balaganj (Sylhet district) and Laxmipur Sadar Thana (Laxmipur district). As the study is based largely on recounting personal experiences, in order to minimise the recall bias, the respondents selected were returnees who came back to Bangladesh within the past one year period.

In order to identify returnees, as well as to gather complementary information, the researchers consulted with key stakeholders in each district. The main categories of key informants are presented in the box below.

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| <p>Box : Key informants consulted at the local level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Thana Nirbahi Officers (TNO)▪ Chairman and members of the Union Parishad▪ Female ward members▪ Young returned migrants▪ Experienced returned migrants▪ Local elites like Matbars (local leaders) or leaders of Community-based Organisations▪ Local intermediaries |
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Based on the experiences of return migrants and with the help of the representatives of Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE), Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) and Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL), managers/staff of 10 recruiting agencies and five sub-agents (popularly known as Dalals) were also selected for interview. Finally, the team met with officials of the above-listed institutions for in-depth, individual interviews.

This methodology is presented in the diagram below.



In Pakistan, the research team chose to increase the sample size suggested in the ILO terms of reference, in the light of the spread of migrant population and diversity of workers in terms of types of recruitment, countries of destination, and nature of their jobs and skill levels. Data on the number of migrants between 2001 and 2006, by region, were collected from the Protectors of Emigrants (PE) offices. There are 20 high migration districts in Pakistan, out of which five districts were selected: Karachi (Sindh), Sialkot, Rawalpindi and D. G. Khan (Punjab) and Swabi (North West Frontier Province). In each district, 25 to 30 returnees (138 in total) and 8 prospective migrants (40 in total) were selected randomly, giving consideration to the channel through which these returnees secured overseas employment, their rural or urban residence, country of destination and the job and skill levels abroad. The focus of the sample was on those migrants who have returned from United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia between 2002 and 2007. (see Table 1: Pakistan, High-migration and sampled districts and sample of returnees and prospective migrants by region).

Different categories of migrants in terms of their recruitment experiences i.e. through Overseas Employment Promoters, direct visa, through friends and relatives, over-stayers after Haj and Umra visits to Saudi Arabia, or those who went abroad illegally

(without documents) were sought out. Three focus group discussions were arranged in three districts: Swabi, Rawalpindi and D.G. Khan, where 6-7 returnees with different sources of recruitment, age and skill levels were invited to discuss migration issues, problems and their solutions. Prospective migrants for this study are those who have completed their process of recruitment. Finally, thirty recruiting agents or overseas employment promoters (OEPs) were interviewed from five regions: Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, and Multan. The sample of OEPs according to their spread across the five regions is shown in Table YY. At present more than 1000 OEPs are registered with the BEOE.(see Table 2: Pakistan, Sample of the Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs)).

The results presented in this paper are a “first cut” of the research findings, based on a very preliminary analysis of parts of the full data set. Time has simply not allowed the researchers to do justice to the wealth of information that has been collected in the field work. Full reports, based on a full analysis, will be produced by the ILO in the near future.

3. THE CONTEXT IN BANGLADESH AND PAKISTAN

Trends in Temporary Work to the Middle East and Gulf States

Of an estimated 10 million foreign workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the majority come from South Asian and South-East Asian countries. They work in a variety of sectors requiring a different range of skills. Women are engaged largely in domestic and factory work. Men work in sectors including construction, manufacturing, transport and security.

Both countries under consideration are important providers of contract labour to the GCC countries. In Bangladesh, where the number of migrants to all destination countries has increased steadily over the past three decades to some 4.5 million today, in 2006 alone there was an increase of some 50 per cent from the previous year, with over 380,000 workers migrating abroad. In 2006, more than 80 per cent of this migration was to GCC countries.

In Pakistan the most recent data concerning the stock of labour migrants, annual flows and remittances is from 2004. In that year, of approximately 4 million Pakistanis abroad, just under half were in the Middle East, with a heavy concentration in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia.. Approximately 1.89 million Pakistani workers were registered in all Middle Eastern countries in 2004. The main destinations are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, though there has also been substantial migration to other countries including Bahrain, Iraq, Oman and Qatar. While Saudi Arabia has so far provided the most employment opportunities, the share of Pakistanis going to the UAE has gradually increased. (see Table 3: Distribution of Number of Overseas Pakistanis Living/Working Studying in Different Regions and Counties of the World on June 2004)

Labour migration from Pakistan to the Middle East is predominantly male. For example, the Bureau for Emigration and Overseas Employment has only processed the case of 73 women for overseas employment. The skills composition of Pakistanis in the Middle East has barely changed over the past three decades. The unskilled category

remains the predominant one, followed by skilled, semi-skilled and professional workers. In the skilled category, drivers, masons and carpenters are the main occupations. Moreover large numbers of migrants to the Gulf have been uneducated people from rural areas, accounting for approximately half the total. Migration to the Gulf and other Middle Eastern countries has therefore provided significant opportunities for poor people whose only alternative option in Pakistan would have been low-paid work in the informal sector.

Migration to the Middle East is distributed unevenly across Pakistan. Recent data indicates that more than 60 per cent of Pakistani migrants to the Middle East came from only 20 of more than 110 districts, with a heavy concentration in northern Punjab, North West Frontier Province, only the city of Karachi in Sindh province and only two districts of southern Punjab. Migration has thus played an important role in improving economic conditions in areas of low agricultural incomes. (see Table 4: Number of Workers Abroad for Employment Registered by Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment during the Period 1971-2006; and Table 5: Pakistan, Emigration of the past eight years by category)

Managing contract labour: the law and policy framework

Both countries have adopted measures to provide certain safeguards for their migrant workers, and against abusive recruitment practices. In 2006 Bangladesh adopted an Expatriate Labour Policy identifying principles for the protection of migrant workers abroad, and expressing a commitment to take legal action against illegal recruiters. In the same year the Bangladesh Agency for Manpower, Employment and Training and the main labour recruitment agency jointly agreed to enforce limits on recruitment fees. In its annual report on trafficking, the US Government has reported that the Government of Bangladesh has opened investigations against three Bangladeshi recruitment agencies which allegedly used deceptive recruitment practices and raided five similar agencies in 2006, closing them and removing their licenses³.

Pakistan has both developed institutions and set certain rules to regularise the recruitment process and safeguard against abuse. For example, the Pakistani Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis has established Community Welfare Attachés at selected posts in the Gulf States to oversee the employment conditions and welfare of Pakistani workers. A Complaint Cell for Overseas Pakistanis was established in the Ministry, for resolution of grievances through the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF). A range of services have been set up by the OPF for the benefit of migrant workers, including pre-departure briefings, Foreign Exchange Remittance Card Scheme, vocational training, welfare fund and a Pension Scheme. Bilateral labour agreements have been concluded with a number of receiving countries, including the UAE (in 2006) and Qatar (in 1987).

³ US Department of State, "Trafficking in Persons Report", Washington DC., June 2007, page 61.

4. INITIAL FINDINGS OF FIELD RESEARCH

Profile of the contract workers

Of the 60 respondents sampled in Bangladesh, 45 were male and 15 female. The majority of male migrants came from Laxmipur and Sylhet districts, while all the women migrants were from Dhaka and Narayanganj. The average age was 33 years, while 40 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men were under 30. The case study thus confirms the findings of earlier studies that women migrants tend to be younger than men. It raises the question whether it is a deliberate strategy of employers and recruiters to seek out younger women, in order to ensure greater loyalty or greater productivity. (see Table 6: Bangladesh, Characteristics and socio-economic conditions of migrant workers' sample).

Over half the female migrants, and almost half the male migrants, had no formal schooling. The poorer background of the female migrants is reflected in their landlessness, dependence on a single wage earner in the family, and lower average incomes than their male counterparts.

A close correlation exists between the level of education and the jobs performed by the migrants. Over three quarters of returned migrants went as unskilled workers to the Gulf, while almost three fifths had either primary education alone or no formal schooling. Women, with education levels lower than those of the male migrants engaged in different occupations, were employed predominantly as domestic workers (70%), followed by cleaners (30%). The migrants with less than a secondary education level worked in agriculture, construction and domestic service. Those with secondary or a higher level of education were employed in the formal manufacturing industry, or as sales personnel in hotels and other establishments.

The destination place also varies by gender. More than 60 per cent of men went to Saudi Arabia. Women's destination places were spread more evenly, with Kuwait accounting for some 40 per cent, while Saudi Arabia and UAE each accounted for some 26.6% of the migrants. It appears that women had a preference for Kuwait with its relatively liberal labour legislation, while men preferred Saudi Arabia because of the strong social networks that have been established over time and also because more than 15% went on an Omrah visa.

A range of push factors can be identified, including severe economic hardship, hunger, and the burden of debt due to insufficient income. Nearly seven per cent of respondents, including both men and women, decided to migrate overseas when they saw no other option to escape from indebtedness. The sickness of a spouse, or the death of the main family income earner, family breakdown and unemployment were also cited. Over 70% of the migrants, both male and female, indicated that the hope of a better wage and more secure life, together with providing education for children, was behind the decision to migrate. Access to information, and supportive networks abroad, were important contributory factors. More than 90% of men and 80% of women had relatives abroad, while over half the male migrants had previous experience of overseas migration.

In Pakistan, more than half the sampled migrants were heads of their households. The average age was 29 years, with no differences across regions, and half

were married. Compared with the national average, the educational level of migrants was higher. Over 60% of urban migrants had at least ten or more years education, while even from rural areas one third of the migrants had attained this level. (See Table 7: Demographic characteristics of Pakistani migrants at the time of migration (most recent experience only)

Some 75% of all migrants, and as high as 84% of urban migrants, were employed in Pakistan before going abroad. More than half the respondents were landless before migration, though the landlessness among the rural migrant households was lower than the national average. Approximately half the migrants stated that they went abroad because of poverty and unemployment, while 58% of respondents said they took their own decision to go abroad. (see Table 8, Pakistan, Reasons given for decision to migrate).

Recruitment mechanisms

The field research confirmed that people seeking to find work in the Gulf States make use of a range of different sources of information and services to assist them in identifying potential job opportunities and undertaking the journey to the chosen country of destination. Three main channels are used in both countries to facilitate different aspects of the recruitment and migration process – first, “private” channels, namely relatives and friends; second, public (governmental) channels, namely the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) and Bangladesh Overseas Employment Services Limited (BOESL) in Bangladesh, and the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) in Pakistan; and third, private recruitment agents (and subagents), known as Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) in Pakistan.

The choices that individual workers make regarding which person or institution to approach for assistance appear to be conditioned by a wide variety of factors – including their sex, socio-economic and educational status, rural or urban background, past migration experience of themselves and their friends and family members (some of whom may still be working abroad, and therefore in a position to provide very direct assistance) and, importantly, the type of work which they are seeking abroad, whether “top-end” highly skilled jobs (for the minority) or unskilled or semi-skilled jobs (for the great majority).

It emerged from the research that people appear to combine different sources of assistance during a single migration episode, for different aspects of the process, rather than to rely on any one single source for all the types of assistance needed. They seek out assistance from the sources that they know about and trust, and to which they have relatively easy access. One service-provider rarely, if ever, provides the totality of support required.

Friends and relatives play a major role in both countries, though apparently more so in Bangladesh than in Pakistan. In both countries, they represent the major source of information about job opportunities abroad, much more so than do formal job advertisements (with the exception of highly skilled jobs, where advertisement are more important). Among Bangladeshi respondents, more than half procured their work permit through the assistance of their relatives, friends or fellow villagers. In Pakistan, while friends and relatives were the major source of information about the job abroad (more than half of respondents, especially among migrants from rural areas), only one fifth reported that friends and relatives represented their actual “channel” of recruitment.

In some cases (17%) these friends or relatives were actually local sub-agents. Friends and relatives are also important in both countries for checking the reputation of the recruitment agencies, as they may have used them in the past. They often also directly assist workers in the destination countries, for example by meeting them at the airport, providing them with accommodation or linking them up with potential employers. The choice of destination country is often heavily influenced by the presence of relatives or friends there, provoking “chain migration”.

In Pakistan, nearly half (45%) of the respondents were recruited through private agents (overseas employment promoters or OEPs). Interestingly, the proportion using OEPs was higher for rural (49%) than for urban (38%) migrants. Use of recruitment agents is higher among the lowest income group than for relatively wealthier groups, and concentrated also among those with a “pre-matriculation” level of education (i.e primary level). Irregular migration accounted for approximately 14 per cent of the total. Table 5 indicates the main forms of recruitment in Pakistan. Table 6 indicates the total number of Pakistanis who have migrated abroad over the 1971-2007 period. It can be seen that larger numbers have been registered by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment in recent years. (see Table 9: Pakistan. Type of recruitment by characteristics of returned migrants)

In Bangladesh (among the much smaller survey sample), private agents – whether main agents or the “sub-agents” popularly referred to as Dalals – are cited by only around a quarter of respondents as being their channel for migration. However, many more appear to use such agents for providing specific services (against payment of a fee) needed during the migration process, such as getting a passport, visa, medical check or air ticket.

Public channels are used by only a very small minority of workers. In Bangladesh, the researchers spoke to only one person recruited through a government channel. However, in both countries a significant minority of workers make use of official channels to obtain an “omrah” visa for religious observance rituals outside the Haj pilgrimage (“umra” in Pakistan), and then stay on illegally in the Gulf to try to find employment.

A final channel used is for the end employer to obtain the visa for the worker, and this occurs in both countries for a minority of workers, predominantly professional and skilled ones.

The research shed light on other aspects of the recruitment and migration process. The role of recruitment sub-agents, though not yet clear at this early stage of analysis of the research findings, appears to be key in both countries. Though sub-agents frequently deny that they are acting in this capacity, there are initial strong indications that they serve as intermediaries between workers and “official” private agencies, significantly increasing the cost of the recruitment process. While the agencies are based in the District headquarters or larger towns, sub-agents operate at the local and village levels. Often, these sub-agents are part of the social network of prospective migrants, and provide advice to them on which recruitment agencies to approach. In Bangladesh, women appear to rely on agents and sub-agents more than men do – probably reflecting their lower social capital compared to men. Many women interviewed were also first-time migrants, totally lacking experience and therefore needing help of subagents. The study revealed that sub-agents often provide services without requiring a fee from the

worker, which obviously helps to build up their goodwill. But in fact, they get a commission from the recruiting agencies which they service, on a case-by-case basis, which is inclusive of all types of services that they provide to clients.

Transaction costs of recruitment

For Bangladesh, initial analysis of the cost of overseas migration shows high costs, and wide variation. The average cost for men was around US\$1,400, and for women around half this amount. The highest costs are associated with the use of recruiting agencies followed by sub-agents, and the lowest with individual (unassisted) migration and with assistance of relatives. Country-wise, UAE emerges on average as the most costly destination, followed by Kuwait. The high costs of recruitment are associated with the high level of indebtedness of many workers before leaving their country of origin, which in some cases can result in failure of the migration project, if the income generated is insufficient to repay these debts. Rates of interest charged by moneylenders are generally of the order of 10% per month, meaning that the outstanding debt can rapidly escalate if repayment is not achieved quickly. (see Table 10, Bangladesh, Average cost of overseas migration, by gender, migration channel, destination country and overseas occupation)

In Bangladesh, the majority of women respondents borrowed at high interest rates from money lenders, though only one fifth of male respondents did so. One female respondent for example recollected that she and her family members decided to manage the cost of overseas migration by borrowing from two money lenders at an interest rate of 10% per month. Other respondents used multiple means to finance their migration cost. Nearly half of the men, and two of the women respondents, sold assets including land, livestock, ornaments, paddy rice and other assets. To a large extent however, the transaction costs appear to be incurred by relatives. Just over 40% of respondents had interest free loans from family members and relatives who in turn often had to sell their land and other assets.

The high transaction costs led to continued indebtedness for a significant proportion of returned migrants to Bangladesh. Of a total of 52 respondents, 17 men and eight women were able to make full repayment of their loans, seven men and one woman made partial repayment, and 14 men and five women stated that they had made no repayment. One respondent for example stated that he been unable to repay his loan during a period of migration to Kuwait and had to sell a small plot of inherited cultivable land upon return to Bangladesh.

Pre-departure information

Both country studies indicate that workers seem to be inadequately informed of or prepared for their employment overseas. In Bangladesh, regardless of the channel of recruitment, most respondents report they had “no information” about their working conditions in the destination country, and around half did not know the wages they could expect. These people were primarily those whose job had been arranged by a friend or relative, whom they said they trusted to find them a good job.

In Pakistan, while most migrants underwent a medical check-up before leaving the country, rather few went through other prescribed pre-departure formalities, such as

police verification, obtaining a foreign service agreement, or receiving briefing from the protector of emigrants or other forms of pre-departure training. While half of those migrants being recruited through OEPs signed a contract before departing, this was the case for only a quarter of those assisted by friends or relatives. Despite this, the vast majority of those placed by OEPs say they did not understand the terms of the contract, and most did not keep a copy. For migrants assisted by friends and relatives, most of whom had a “verbal” contract only, by contrast, the majority (71%) understood its terms.

Conditions in the destination country: job finding wages and payment

From Bangladesh, the vast majority of respondents were received at the airport in the destination country. Women were generally received by the employer or an agent and the representative from the recruiting agency; men were often received by family members and relatives. The different practice may be attributed to the channel of recruitment, the nature of the visa and the type of job. Women usually had a contract visa for domestic service, migrating for the first time. The men who migrated with the three types of visa (the contract, free and Omrah visas respectively) were engaged in a wide variety of occupations. As regards “unaccompanied” respondents, those not migrating for the first time had prior information as to job options, while first time migrants tended to have the contact details of relatives.

None of the women respondents had to wait more than one week to take up their jobs. By contrast, nearly one fifth of male respondents had to wait approximately three to four months. Their situation varied by type of visa, skills and type of employment. Those who entered with free or Omrah visas did not have to be met by employers or take up work. One for example, who did not have a work visa, found employment in Dubai as a steel fitter within fifteen days of arrival, with the help of his brother. Those with skills as carpenters or electricians also found jobs quickly, irrespective of the kind of visa. However, some unskilled migrants without contract visas had problems getting jobs. One respondent waited three months before getting a job as a head loader, with what he described as a very low wage and harsh working conditions. Another respondent lived in the house of a sub-agent who took his passport and never returned it. In a situation of illegality, he waited four months before taking up a job as a farm helper.

The preliminary findings from Bangladesh also shed some light on patterns of wage payment. The interviews indicated that the vast majority of respondents (two thirds of men, and almost three quarters of women) received their wages on a regular basis. But the main concern with regard to wages was the discrepancy between the promised and the actual wage. Almost a quarter of all respondents, and 40% of women respondents, referred to such discrepancies. One male respondent received less than 60% of the promised amount, while one female respondent after working for a full month was informed by her sub-agent that the wage would be 20% less than the promised amount. The sectors where this practice appears to be most widespread are cleaning, construction, domestic service and farm work.

Moreover, there are indications that contract workers can also be misinformed as to the nature of the job to be carried out upon arrival. Almost a quarter of Bangladesh respondents referred to this problem, though it is yet unclear whether this is a result of the migration and recruitment channel or of their low levels of skills and education. One respondent for example had been recruited for tiling work, but was instead given an

arduous job of heavy loading. When he protested to his employer, he was advised to recruit a further person for sharing this task, but had to bear part of the costs from his own salary. Another respondent had a work permit as a driver, but was engaged as a domestic helper. (see Table 11: Bangladesh, Information on working conditions by recruitment channel and gender).

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FOLLOW-UP

These pilot studies were commissioned, after consultation with the GCC countries and certain sender countries, in order to ensure that future dialogue on a complex issue between sender and destination countries is based wherever possible on sound information on practice as well as in law. It is also hoped that the studies can identify the scope for future ILO technical cooperation to the countries concerned.

These studies, complementing other ILO inputs to this Abu Dhabi Forum, focused in particular on recruitment practices in the sender countries, and on the extent to which deficiencies in these recruitment methods could contribute to abusive or exploitative practices in the destination countries. The studies also aim to identify ways in which, through both appropriate legislation and policy and practical measures, governments, employers' and workers' organisations can prevent abusive practices which in the worst case could amount to forced labour and trafficking.

While only preliminary findings are as yet available, and while larger samples would be required for a more comprehensive knowledge base, the studies already help portray the different dimensions of Asian temporary migrant labour to the GCC states.

For the most part, particularly for those skilled workers for which there is a continued high demand in the GCC countries, the situation appears to be positive and to respond to the interests of all parties. Remittances play a vitally important economic role for the sender countries, which have been able to sign agreements with the destination countries for the export of their manpower.

The problems inevitably occur at the lower skilled end of the labour market, where those men and women with limited assets have to take considerable financial risk, sometimes involving high levels of indebtedness, in order to embark on a temporary migration process with uncertain results. Average interest rates charged by moneylenders are high, and it can be difficult for the migrants and their families to calculate their capacity to repay such loans when there is uncertainty about wage rates in the destination country. The problems can be compounded, when the work and wage rates in the destination country do not correspond to the promises or job offers in the country of origin.

Moreover, there is a great deal of informality about recruitment systems. While governments have aimed to promote official channels, migrants rely largely on family networks, local agents or the "sub-agents" who can provide services to the main recruitment agencies but can also deal directly with the migrants in the destination country, perhaps holding their identity documents or acting as an intermediary with

potential employers. The initial studies have only scratched the surface of these informal recruitment systems and practices. Far more information is required about the linkages between money lenders and the sub-agents, the use made of such sub-agents by the registered private recruitment agencies, and the differing roles and linkages of the sub-agents in the countries of origin and destination.

Attention is now being given to the measures that need to be taken, to ensure a more satisfactory outcome for temporary contract workers at all levels of the labour market. In Pakistan, three “focus group” discussions were arranged in three selected districts, where returnees with different sources of recruitment, age and skill levels were invited to discuss migration issues, problems and solutions. Initial recommendations include those that:

- The cost of migration in Pakistan should be reduced, in order to control the risk of exploitation
- Contracts and agreements should be made more transparent
- New contracts upon arrival and new medical tests are exploitative
- The role of embassies should be made more effective.

Also in Bangladesh, it is clear that a number of measures are now being taken to exercise more control over the recruitment and licensing process. An official website reported this month that, of 256 complaints against different recruiting agencies received between January and November 2007, 142 of these complaints had been resolved while the license of four recruiting agencies had been cancelled for different irregularities. The Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary also observed that Bangladesh missions abroad have been advised to visit working sites and camps on a regular basis, to sort out any problems of Bangladeshi workers with employers. Furthermore, memoranda of understanding for the export of manpower had been signed with GCC countries including Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

In the meantime the ILO has been providing its own guidance on the ways in which migrant and contract labour systems can be managed in full accordance with the ILO's standards. In this regard, particular importance is attached to the core labour standards embodied in the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up, including the abolition of forced and compulsory labour. Training has been provided to labour inspectors on the means to identify and prevent the risk of forced labour and trafficking in general, including among temporary contract workers, and to take remedial action. An important guidance document on Human Trafficking and Forced Labour Exploitation: Guidance for Legislation and Law Enforcement, has recently been translated into Arabic and can now provide a useful input to further capacity building.

The ILO is now willing to promote further cooperation on these issues between the sender countries of Asia and the GCC destination countries. In the Asian region it already has important cooperation on forced labour and trafficking issues in countries including China, Indonesia, Pakistan and Vietnam. In Pakistan for example, in support for the country's National Action Plan against bonded labour, it has provided capacity building for actors including civil servants, the judiciary, other law enforcement agents and the media.

The ILO could provide assistance in raising the awareness of recruitment agencies and employers, developing guidelines and codes of good practice as well as assisting in the development of model employment contracts adapted to the requirements of different economic activities.

Protection is another area where progress has been detected in some of the GCC countries, including through access to legal and medical services. The ILO could help GCC countries put in place an efficient mechanism for identifying and supporting those subject to or at risk of labour exploitation, through an integrated package of services. On the basis of the present and follow-up empirical studies, it could also reinforce existing mechanisms of collaboration between sender and destination countries for the prevention of abuses. This should be underpinned by a process of consultation between the countries concerned, to ensure coordinated action and enable the sharing of good practice and lessons learned.

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TABLES

Table 1: Pakistan, High-migration and sampled districts and sample of returnees and prospective migrants by region

Regional office of PEs	High-migration districts	Selected districts	Sample of returnees	Sample of prospective migrants
Karachi	Karachi	Karachi	30	8
Rawalpindi	Rawalpindi, ,Chakwal,Poonch, Attock, Jehlum	Rawalpindi	28	8
Lahore	Lahore,Gujranwala, Gujrat,Sialkot,Sheikhupora,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

Table 2 : Pakistan, Sample of the Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs)

Region	Number of OEPs	% distribution of OEPs	No. of sample OEPs
Rawalpindi	430	38.3	15
Lahore	236	21.0	5
Karachi	181	16.1	5
Malakand	119	10.6	-
Peshawar	87	7.8	3
Multan	68	6.1	2
Quetta	1	0.1	-
Total	1122	100	30

Table 3: Distribution of Number of Overseas Pakistanis Living/Working Studying in Different Regions and Counties of the World on June 2004)

Region/Country	Number of overseas Pakistanis in 2004	% Share
All Counties	3.973	100.0
Middle East	1.893	47.7
Saudi Arabia	1.100	27.7
United Arab Emirates	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

Table 4: Pakistan, Number of Workers Abroad for Employment Registered by Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, 1971-2006

Country	1971-2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
S/Arabia	1648279	97262	104783	126397	70896	35177	45594	2128388
UAE	626705	18421	34113	61329	65786	73642	100207	980203
Oman	21231	3802	95	6911	8982	8019	12614	252554
Qatar	50481	1633	480	367	2383	2175	2247	59766
Bahrain	65987	1173	1022	809	855	1612	1630	73088
Kuwait	106307	440	3204	12087	18498	7185	10545	158266
Libya	63701	713	781	1374	375	261	67	67272
Yemen	3796	25	73	85	157	81	127	4344
Malaysia	1993	64	59	114	65	7690	4757	14742
Korea	3634	271	564	2144	2474	1970	1082	12139
UK	1059	800	703	858	1419	1611	1741	8191
USA	802	788	310	140	130	238	202	2610
Italy	405	824	48	128	581	551	431	2968
Spain	159	362	189	202	254	290	183	1839
Other	96578	1351	798	1094	969	1633	1764	104187
Total:-	2882017	127929	147422	214039	173824	142135	183191	3870557

Table 5: Pakistan, Emigration by category of employment, 2000-2007

Occupational Group	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007 up to Oct.
Highly Qualified	2999	3155	2618	2719	3291	3737	5708	5586
Highly Skilled	10292	10846	14778	22152	15557	15467	16332	17556
Skilled	54110	64098	74968	101713	77033	57793	71898	90953
Semi-Skilled	2125	2768	3236	4301	3840	2657	3375	2741
Unskilled	38207	47062	51822	82854	74103	62463	85878	117424
Total	107733	127929	147422	214039	173824	142135	183191	234260

Table 6: Bangladesh, Characteristics and socio-economic conditions of migrant workers' sample

District of origin	Male	Female	Destination country	Male	Female
Dhaka	10	5	Bahrain	--	1
Narayanganj	5	10	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)	28	4
Laxmipur	15	--	Kuwait	3	6
Sylhet	15	--	United Arab Emirates (UAE)	14	4
Age: <30 year	13	6	Socio-economic condition before last migration		
30+ year	32	9	One earning member	46.7	92.9
Never married	9	1	Two earning members	28.9	7.1
Married	34	9	Three earning members	24.4	--
Divorced	--	5	Economic scarcity (%)	44.4	26.7
No schooling	13	8	Income erosion (%)	4.4	40.0
Primary	10	4	Unemployment (%)	17.8	13.3
Secondary	12	3	Discontent (%)	20.0	--
High school plus	10	--	Solvent (%)	5.0	--

Source: In-depth interviews with return migrants, 2007

Table 7: Demographic characteristics of Pakistani migrants at the time of migration (most recent experience only)

Characteristics at the time of migration	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
Others	11.6	11.4	12.0	7.7	16.7
Mean age (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 (All)	100	100	100	100	100
Illiterate	23.9	28.4	16.0	29.5	16.7
Primary & middle (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	13.8	10.2	20.0	14.1	13.3
M.A/Professional Degree	8.0	-	22.0	3.8	13.3

Table 8, Pakistan, Reasons given for decision to migrate

	All	Rural	Urban	Punjab	Sindh/NWFP
Reasons for migration					
Unemployment	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
House	1.9	0	4.6	0	4.1
Marriage	3.8	3.2	4.6	0	8.1
Others	16.4	18.1	13.8	24.7	6.8
Decision to migrate					
Self	58.0	52.3	68.0	55.0	58.0
Father	17.4	19.3	14.0	30.0	17.4
Family	24.8	28.4	18.0	15.0	24.6

Table 9: Pakistan. Type of recruitment by characteristics of returned migrants.

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
Pre-matric	62.2	11.1	15.6	11.1	100
Matric	40.0	36.7	16.7	6.7	100
Inter/BA	36.8	42.1	15.8	5.3	100
Higher	45.5	18.2	27.3	9.1	100
Work 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.)					
≤4000	61.0	11.9	16.9	10.2	100
4001-7000	36.6	27.8	22.2	19.4	100
7001-10,000	37.5	25.0	25.0	12.5	100
10001-15000	40.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	100
> 15000	25.0	37.5	37.5	0	100
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

Table 10: Bangladesh, Average cost of overseas migration (in Bangladesh Taka)

GENDER	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sum
Male	97,748.67	45	81,345.334	4398,690
Female	52,626.67	15	18,762.214	789,400
Channel of migration				
Direct company	77,000.00	1	.	77,000
Friend	89,000.00	2	76,367.532	178,000
Government	38,000.00	1	.	38,000
Recruiting agency	138,200.00	5	65,028.455	691,000
Relative	71,827.19	32	76,739.324	2298,470
Self	53,000.00	6	56,816.089	318,000
Sub agent	122,124.62	13	65,574.100	1587,620
Destination country				
Bahrain	40,000.00	1	.	40,000
Kuwait	80,522.22	9	83,039.626	724,700
Saudi Arabia	69,494.37	32	57,147.983	2223,820
United Arab Emirates	122,198.33	18	86,738.328	2199,570
Overseas Occupation				
Agricultural work	87,551.25	8	97,522.745	700,410
Business	39,300.00	1	.	39,300
Carpenter	23,200.00	2	32,809.755	46,400
Cleaner	91,333.33	9	89,537.702	822,000
Construction labour	109,862.22	9	76,570.786	988,760
Electrician	104,940.00	5	104,361.238	524,700
Employee	53,600.00	3	6,858.936	160,800
Hotel boy	185,000.00	2	45,254.834	370,000
Housemaid	54,440.00	10	11,726.722	544,400
Factory labour	46,200	4	5,288.037	184,800
Mason	176,106.67	3	32,201.772	528,320
Tailoring	81,066.67	3	4,5618.125	243,200
Time keeper	35,000.00	1	.	35,000
Total	86,468.17	60	73,528.966	518,8090

Table 11: Bangladesh, Information on working conditions by recruitment channel and gender

Working conditions	Relative	Subagent	Self	Private recruiting agency	Government	Direct company of the host country
	24	13	0	1	0	0
Daily working hours	9	1	0	3	1	1
Overtime facilities	0	0	0	1	0	0
No information	1	0	0	0	0	0
NA (omrah visa)	0	0	7	0	0	0
Total	34	14	7	4	1	1

Wages by recruitment channel

	Relative	Subagent	Self	Private recruiting agency	Government
About monthly Salary	15	12	0	3	1
No information	17	3	0	1	0
NA (omrah visa)	0	0	7	0	0

Working condition and wages by gender

Working condition	Male	Female
Had no information	25	13
Knew about working hours	13	2
Knew about Overtime facilities	1	0
N.A. (omrah visa)	7	0
Friday as weekly holiday	1	0
Wage		
Monthly Salary	21	11
No information	16	4
NA (Omrah visa)	7	0

Other entitlements by channel of recruitment

Information on entitlements	Relative	Subagent	Self	Private recruiting agency	Government
Employer will provide food and living cost	4	2	0	1	0
No information on entitlements	24	8	0	2	0
No information due to Omrah visa	0	0	7	0	0
Other entitlements*	2	1	0	0	1

Other entitlements by gender

Information on entitlements	Male	Female
Employer will provide food and living cost	5	2
No information	23	11
N.A. (Omrah visa)	7	0
Other entitlements	5	0

*Other entitlement include employers to provide either food or accommodation, pension scheme, overtime.