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1 **CHAPTER 15: MIGRATION IN THE HKH REGION: GOVERNANCE, DRIVERS, AND**  
2 **CONSEQUENCES**

3

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### KEY FINDINGS

1. **In the HKH, rural to urban migration within the region is likely to increase in the near term, and temporary international migration is likely to continue (*Established but incomplete*).** Urban centres—especially within the country of origin—will likely be the favoured destination for a majority of migrants.
2. **Majority of the migrants originating in the HKH are young males; most of them have some form of education; and internal migrants are more likely than others to be employed in the informal sector (*Established but incomplete*).**
3. **Migration drives a broad range of economic, social and political changes throughout the HKH, while migration itself is determined by multiple factors (*Well established*).** The drivers of migration are influenced by different social, economic, environmental, demographic and political conditions, as well as by individual and household characteristics. Migration decisions are also determined by intervening obstacles and facilitators (*Well established*).
4. **While mountain-specific data are lacking for the HKH, studies show that migration—whether internal or international—can generally help households to stay out of poverty or help lift them out of poverty. (*Established but incomplete*).** This effect appears both in sending and in receiving areas. Migration’s effects in sending areas depend further on individual and household characteristics and on the level of generic development.
5. **Recognizing the potential benefits of migration for origin countries, governments in the HKH have begun to harness international migration for economic development (*Well established*).** Examples include establishment of separate ministries, framing of national policies, integration of migration into long-term perspective plan, climate change action plans, delta plans, intervention to reduce migration costs, to facilitate remittance payments, support returnee reintegration and engage the diaspora in national development programmes.
6. **Issues associated with internal migration remain peripheral to the policy discourse of most HKH countries (*Well established*).** Moreover, policymakers and planners tend to perceive rural to urban migration as a threat to urban and rural development.

### POLICY MESSAGES

1. **Policy makers should not approach migration as a threat or challenge to the HKH, and instead seek ways to mainstream it into development.** Such mainstreaming can occur within national processes associated with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
2. **Inclusive urban planning efforts in the HKH should treat migrants as stakeholders.** The urban planning could focus on affordable public and private accommodation, education, health care, public transport, sanitation, and water supply.

**3. Social protections—such as the right to access public amenities and services—should be made portable across administrative boundaries.** To ensure portability of rights, special efforts may be needed in countries with a federal model of governance.

**4. Measures to reduce migration costs and decentralize migration governance will boost international migration from low-income households and will enhance the benefits of migration for the sending families—especially female family members.**

**5. Measures to enhance the human development as well as skills of migrants in the communities of origin would make these migrants more attractive to investors.**

**6. Policy makers, researchers as well as grass roots NGOs in the HKH countries urgently need quality data on seasonal migration, remittances, and reintegration of returnee migrants.**

54

55 For the countries of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region, the importance of migration is likely to  
56 continue increasing. Migration governance, therefore, is a critical priority (*well established*). This  
57 chapter focuses on labour migration in the eight HKH countries. It explores the countries' overall  
58 migration experience and, where possible, highlights findings specific to mountain areas of the HKH.

59 Migration generally leads to changes in sending households and origin communities (*Established but*  
60 *incomplete*). Assets are created; livelihoods are diversified. People in these households and  
61 communities gain more access to food, and they are more likely to have a safety net during a crisis.  
62 They are more able to access information. They acquire new knowledge and skills. Their social  
63 networks expand.

64 Remittances from migrants can have both positive and negative effects on the remittance-receiving  
65 households and origin communities, depending on context-specific factors (*Established but*  
66 *incomplete*). Among these factors are the type of migration; the stage in the migration cycle; the asset  
67 base of the sending household; and the institutions and generic development conditions present in the  
68 origin community.

69 Migration governance in the HKH comprises various national, regional and international policies and  
70 frameworks (*Well established*). Both national polices and regional and international instruments  
71 govern migration from and within HKH countries. The range and coverage of these policies vary  
72 significantly by country. Where international migration is seen as a significant issue—as in  
73 Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan—it is governed by comprehensive policies and regulations and  
74 by nodal ministries.

75 Over time, major origin countries have increasingly recognized that migration can promote economic  
76 development—through decent wages for migrant labour, and also through the earning of foreign  
77 exchange (*Established but incomplete*). Accordingly, countries have acted in various ways to facilitate  
78 international migration (*Established but incomplete*). These measures include establishment of a  
79 migration governance system; reducing migration costs; streamlining the remittance transfer process;  
80 assisting the reintegration of returnee migrants; and engaging the diaspora in national development.

81 Earlier, international migration governance was based on regulation and control (*Well established*).  
82 They have sought to manage recruitment, introduced restriction on movements of certain categories

83 of workers (such as unskilled women). Some of the HKH countries have criminalised irregular and  
84 undocumented migration. Nonetheless, protection mechanism in both origin and the destination  
85 countries remained weak. In recent times some of the HKH governments have introduced new  
86 migration polices, framed new laws, created a separate ministry, etc. (*Established but incomplete*).

87 Along with international migration, the HKH also experiences internal and cross-border migration. On  
88 internal migration, most HKH countries have public policies that reflect a strong sedentary bias:  
89 migration is perceived as a challenge to urbanization and planning processes. Discussion on internal  
90 migration in the context of urban development mostly concentrates on measures to reduce migration  
91 from rural to urban areas. This negative attitude towards internal migrants is often supplemented by  
92 a “sons of the soil” ideology (*Well established*).

93 Internal migrants to urban areas of HKH countries—who are relatively less educated, less skilled, and  
94 employed in the informal sector—experience exclusion of various nature (*Established but incomplete*).  
95 Denied their rights, these internal migrants hardly enjoy social security such as public food  
96 distribution. They lack access to education and health care. Most importantly, they lack entitlement to  
97 housing at their migration destination, because they lack proof of identity and residence. In many cases  
98 they and their families end up living in informal settlements, with limited access to public amenities.

99 These forms of exclusion limit the benefits of rural to urban migration (*Well established*). Moreover,  
100 they create new risks for internal migrants and their families (*Established but incomplete*). Accordingly,  
101 vulnerable internal migrants in HKH countries—who work in marginalised areas such as domestic  
102 work, construction, hawkers, and security guards—should be supported with new social protection  
103 measures.

104 Many regional and international instruments are important for the governance of migration. The  
105 countries of the HKH have acceded to some of these instruments more than others. Recently, major  
106 sending countries in the region—Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan—have joined  
107 regional consultative forums, such as the Colombo Process and Abu Dhabi Dialogue. A few of them  
108 have ratified the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their  
109 Families. But none of these countries has ratified the ILO Conventions that are considered significant  
110 for migrants: the Domestic Workers’ Convention (2011) (C189), the Migrant Workers (Supplementary  
111 Provisions) Convention (1975) (or C143), and the Private Employment Agencies Convention (1997) (or  
112 C181) (*Well established*).

113 A significant development for the HKH in recent years has been the expansion of laws and policies  
114 against human trafficking (*Established but incomplete*). Countries in the region have shifted away from  
115 a narrow definition of trafficking—limited to intended commercial sexual exploitation—to a broader  
116 interpretation that includes labour trafficking, slavery, bonded labour, organ trade, and drug  
117 trafficking. Laws in Bangladesh and Nepal have enabled the creation of special funds to support  
118 victims. Although gaps remain in the implementation of these anti-trafficking laws and policies, the  
119 changes are welcome.

120 A challenge to analysing migration’s effects across the HKH is that certain countries in the region, such  
121 as Nepal and Afghanistan, are mostly mountainous, whereas others are not. For example, only a small  
122 part of Bangladesh (the Chittagong Hill Tracts) belongs to the Himalaya mountain system. Whereas  
123 Nepal’s experience—as a country—of short-term international contractual migration can generally be

124 applied to its mountain areas, Bangladesh does not allow for such generalization: its national data may  
125 not reflect any conditions specific to the mountains (*Well established*).

### MIGRATION FROM AND WITHIN THE HKH AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Two of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) directly pertain to migration governance. The first of these is SDG 8: *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*. Under this goal, Target 8.8 especially highlights the need to protect migrant workers: “Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all, including migrants, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.” Other targets under SDG 8 with implications for migrants include 8.2, 8.5, and 8.10.

The second SDG with targets focused on migrants is SDG 10: *Reduce inequality within and among countries*. Two targets under this goal call for efforts specifically related to migration:

- Target 10.7—“Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.”
- Target 10.C—“By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent.”

Beyond SDGs 8 and 10, migration will also be affected by initiatives under the SDGs to end hunger (Targets 2.4 and 2.C); to educate and develop skills equitably, including for women and the marginalized (Targets 4.4, 5.A, 13.B); to promote inclusive cities, with safe, affordable housing and secure living conditions (Targets 11.1. and 11.5); and to meet a range of other development objectives (Targets 1.5, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 9.1, 9.C, 13.1).

Households in the HKH adopt migration as a strategy to increase their income, diversify their livelihoods, seek a better life, and manage risks arising from various stresses and shocks. As countries in the region pursue their development priorities, they should emphasize programmes that provide for social inclusion, social protection, and adaptation planning. Countries can unlock the potential of migration by reducing its risks—protecting households against the possibility that migration will erode their assets. Other recommended steps are to make the policy response on human mobility comprehensive; to enable migrants to benefit from government development initiatives, including the response to climate change; and to bring remittances into development planning, exploring how they may enhance capacity in communities of origin.

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## 127 **MIGRATION IN THE HKH: A POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BOON WITH CLEAR PRIORITIES** 128 **FOR POLICY MAKERS**

129 Migration from rural communities in high mountains to urban centres in the middle-hills, rural to  
130 urban migration within the HKH region, and migration from hill areas to the plains will continue to  
131 increase in the near future. This population movement requires the attention of the policymakers in  
132 order to create enabling conditions that will maximize benefits and reduce risks for the migrants, their  
133 families, and origin and host communities. The 2009 Human Development Report estimated 740  
134 million internal migrants in the world (UNDP 2009, p.1). This is nearly four times the number of  
135 migrants who moved to an international destination (UNDP 2009). UNDESA (2013) estimated that,  
136 altogether 232 million people were staying outside their countries of origin. The patterns of mobility  
137 vary not only from country to country in the HKH region, but even within countries. Various types of  
138 mobility are taking place in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH): internal displacement, internal labour  
139 migration, cross-border migration, short-term contractual international migration, and long-term  
140 permanent migration. A number of studies show that both internal and international migration can  
141 help reduce or prevent households sliding into poverty in both origin and destination areas, and  
142 significantly improve expenditure in the areas of education and health (Harris, 2004; Deshingkar and  
143 Grimm, 2005; Higgins et al., 2010; Chellaraj and Mohapatra, 2014; UNDP, 2009; Bhagat, 2014; Siddiqui  
144 and Mahmood, 2015).

145 There are several challenges to analysing migration in the HKH. For one, most parts of Afghanistan,  
146 Bhutan, and Nepal are considered to be within the HKH whereas only a small part of Bangladesh  
147 inhabits the Himalaya. Therefore, while the experience of short-term international contractual  
148 migration of Nepal, for example, can be generalized for the mountain and mid-hill areas of the country,  
149 such a generalization is not possible in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. It is challenging to  
150 meaningfully analyse the implications of migration, particularly for the areas belonging to the HKH  
151 region, due to lack of mountain specific data in nationally representative sample surveys. The  
152 migration data from census underestimates circular and temporary migration. Though the data on  
153 international remittances have been improving over the past decade, data on domestic remittances  
154 remains scarce and scattered in several HKH countries. Moreover, there is a lack of standardized data  
155 on migration in the HKH countries, which limits the scope of cross-country comparisons.

156 Given the limited scope of this assessment, this chapter focuses on labour migration in the HKH  
157 countries (hereafter migration). It will explore the overall migration experience of HKH countries, and  
158 where possible highlight the mountain specific findings. The aim of this assessment is to consolidate  
159 current state of knowledge on migration, analyse the drivers of migration and the role migration has  
160 played in socio-economic change, understand the governance of migration in these countries, and  
161 suggest policy recommendations.

### 162 **15.1 MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE HKH**

163 This section provides a brief country-specific overview of the diverse patterns of migration and  
164 remittance flow in the HKH. All HKH countries, except Afghanistan and Bhutan, show an increasing  
165 stock of emigrants (see Figure 1). The economic ramification of international contractual migration  
166 from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan has been well-documented. The mobility experience of  
167 Afghanistan is associated with the protracted conflicts that have led to internal displacement, refugee

168 flows, and international migration. The highest increase in remittance inflow has been in Myanmar  
169 followed by India, China, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan (World Bank, 2014).

### 170 **15.1.1 Afghanistan**

171 Afghanistan's migration patterns are perhaps the most unique across the world. During its recent  
172 history the country has had one of the highest number of refugees and internally displaced persons,  
173 while it has also become the largest recipient of returnees in comparison to all European and South  
174 Asian countries put together (Norland, 2016). The history of internal, regional and international  
175 displacement in Afghanistan is directly linked to its political, economic and social formations, and in  
176 particular, it is linked with protracted years of war and violent conflict. Since 1979 when Afghans left  
177 the country due to Soviet invasion, the net negative migration rate was 56.7/1000 persons. Between  
178 1990 and 1995 it reversed to positive net migration of 44.4/1000 persons, and under the Taliban regime  
179 (1995 to 2000) this rate sank below parity to -6.5/1000 persons (IOM, 2014). Over 6 million Afghans  
180 have returned since 2002. Over 320,000 returned in 2016 alone. There are 1.2 million refugees still  
181 living in Pakistan and 950,000 in Iran, while over 1.2 million persons are displaced internally.  
182 Afghanistan is also the second largest source country for refugees globally. There are 2.7 million  
183 Afghan refugees across the world; Afghanistan is the largest refugee producing country in Asia  
184 (UNHCR, 2017). In recent times the main factors leading to displacement in Afghanistan have been  
185 limited economic opportunities and a high unemployment rate, deterioration of the overall security  
186 situation, and natural disasters and droughts in some regions of the country.

### 187 **15.1.2 Bangladesh**

188 With a population of 160 million, Bangladesh is the most densely populated country of the HKH region.  
189 In 2015, 90 out of every 1000 people moved from rural to urban areas (BBS, 2016). Bangladesh is rapidly  
190 becoming urban. Rural-urban population movement is one of the major reasons behind such  
191 urbanization. Seasonal migration is also extremely common in Bangladesh. However, there is very  
192 little data on this.

193 Since 1970 Bangladesh has been participating in the short-term labour market of the Gulf and other  
194 Arab countries, and Southeast Asia. Traditionally only men participated in this market. Since the lifting  
195 of the ban in 2003, the number of female migrants also started increasing. In 2016 around 750,000  
196 migrated overseas for employment. Sixteen percent of them were women. Bangladeshi workers mostly  
197 get jobs under unskilled and semi-skilled categories. However, as BMET consider domestic workers as  
198 skilled, government statistics show quite a high proportion of skilled workers. BMET data indicate that  
199 among the total migrant workers who went abroad in 2016, 40.1 percent were skilled, 40.08 percent  
200 were less skilled, 15.83 were semi-skilled, and 0.61 percent were professionals (BMET, 2016).  
201 Interestingly, the education level of those who participate in the short-term international labour  
202 market is lower than that of people who migrate from rural to urban areas for work (Siddiqui and  
203 Mahmood, 2015). Eighty-one percent of the total workers who migrated in 2016 went to Gulf and other  
204 Arab countries. The remaining 19 percent went to Southeast Asia. Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain  
205 and Singapore were the major labour receiving countries in 2016 (BMET, 2017).

206 Bangladesh is a major remittance receiving country. Among the developing countries, its position  
207 usually hovers around 7 to 8. The flow of remittance has dropped substantially in 2016. That year  
208 Bangladesh received USD 136 billion. The figure was almost 11 percent less than in the previous year

209 (USD 15.31 billion) (Bangladesh Bank, 2017). This decline has also been experienced by India and  
210 Nepal. Drop in oil prices, low economic growth in the Gulf region and the lowering of the value of Euro  
211 and Pound Sterling have been identified as major reasons (World Bank, 2016a). Saudi Arabia is still the  
212 most important source of remittance for Bangladesh, followed by the UAE, US and Malaysia.

### 213 **15.1.3 Bhutan**

214 Bhutan has an estimated population of 764,667 people of whom 30.6 percent live in the urban areas  
215 and the remaining continue to live in the rural areas (MoLHR, 2015). One of the key issues facing  
216 Bhutan is the migration of people from rural to urban areas. Between 2000 and 2013, the migration  
217 rate in Bhutan was estimated to be 10.9/1000 people (MoAF, 2013). It has been reported that nearly  
218 65.6 percent of rural households have at least one member who has migrated to an urban centre (MoAF,  
219 2013). Previous research has shown that lack of employment opportunities, limited access to  
220 education, small landholding, limited access to market, and limited access to other services are the  
221 major reasons why people leave their rural homes (MoAF, 2013; MoA, 2006). It is the economically  
222 active population (aged 14–64 years) that is migrating out of rural areas (MoAF, 2013; MoA, 2006).  
223 Rural households benefit from remittances, less pressure on household and natural resources, and  
224 increased inheritance as a result of their family members migrating to urban areas. At the same time,  
225 rural to urban migration leads to congestion and increased pressure on public amenities in the urban  
226 areas and to lack of labour, weakening of family and cultural values, and destitution of the elderly in  
227 rural areas. Some of the people who had left their rural homes are now returning to take up commercial  
228 agriculture in rural areas (MoAF, 2013). Out-migration from Bhutan is minimal and consists mostly of  
229 Bhutanese students studying abroad. Bhutan receives a large number of emigrants, particularly from  
230 India (about 75 percent), who work in the construction sector (citation year).

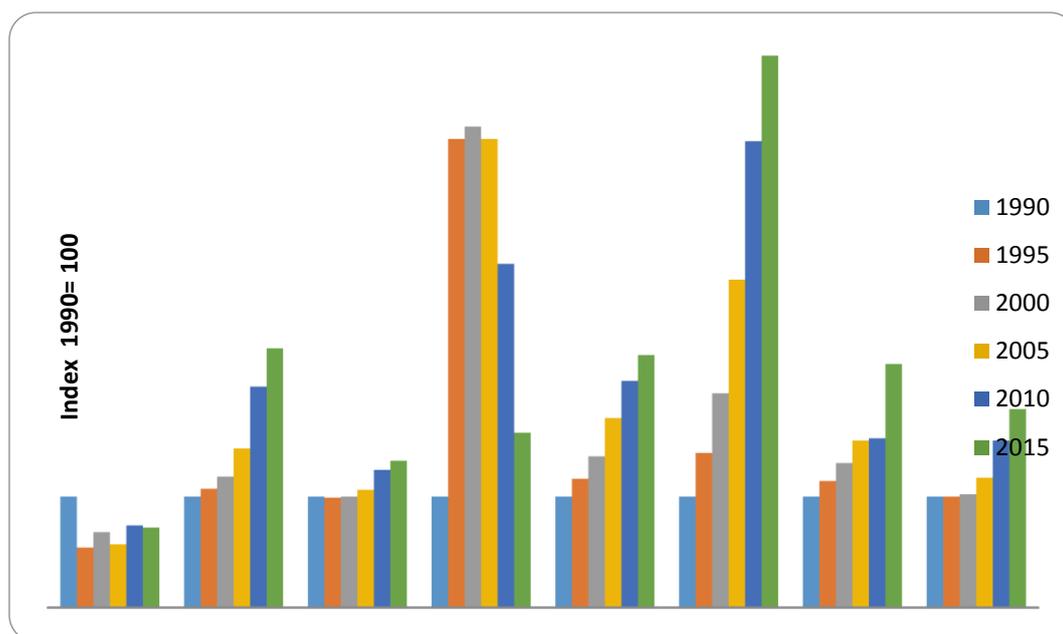
### 231 **15.1.4 China**

232 China's rapid development and urbanization has induced large numbers of rural residents to migrate  
233 from their homes in the countryside to urban areas (Hu et al., 2008; Wen and Lin, 2012; MHRSS, 2013).  
234 Between 1983 and 2015, the proportion of rural workers who migrated increased from less than 1  
235 percent to over 20 percent.<sup>1</sup> Nationally representative household survey data reveal an increasing trend  
236 of rural to urban migration. Wang et al. (2011) have shown that the proportion of wage earning  
237 migrants increased from 4.2 percent to 25 percent between 1982 and 2008, defined as those wage  
238 earners who did not live in the household while working. Li et al. (2013) have also found that the  
239 proportion of rural labour with any off-farm employment, either wage earning or self-employed, has  
240 increased from 28 percent to 61 percent between 1995 and 2011. According to Gong et al. (2008),  
241 migrants to rural areas in China sent about USD 30 billion remittances in 2005. The growth of rural  
242 labour markets is important beyond its role in providing rural labour with a means to raise income  
243 (Todaro, 1976). China's modernization efforts rely on labour markets, which facilitate the  
244 transformation from a largely rural population into an urban population. Without well-functioning  
245 labour markets, it will be difficult to shift from agriculture to industry or service sectors as the primary  
246 mode of production.

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<sup>1</sup> Estimated by authors from the datasets of the National Bureau of Statistics of China.



248 **Figure 15.1:** Changes in the Index of Migrant Stock by Country of Origin (1990=100). Source: United Nations,  
 249 Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015)

### 250 15.1.5 India

251 Internal migrants account for 37 percent (453 million) of the country's population as per the 2011  
 252 census of India. Compared to internal migration, the stock of emigrants was 15.5 million i.e., about 1.2  
 253 percent of India's population (UN, 2015) Increasing urbanization and development of growth centres  
 254 in urban locations are contributing to internal migration in India. Rural to urban migration has been  
 255 contributing substantially to urbanization and the rural-urban demographic composition of  
 256 households. The rural households are increasingly dependent on urban resources and off-farm jobs as  
 257 urbanization has been shaping rural-urban relationship through various flows of goods and services,  
 258 financial flows, and movement of people. Several parts of the Indian Himalayan region have been  
 259 urbanizing fast, which influences mobility of labour (Mohanty and Bhagat, 2013; Lusome and Bhagat,  
 260 2013). Increasing urbanization is also accompanied by a change in mobility among women. Although  
 261 women predominantly migrate due to marriage and family related reasons, a significant proportion of  
 262 them are now joining the workforce after migration (e.g., domestic work and construction sector). A  
 263 large number of placement agencies are involved in the recruitment process (Neetha, 2003; Srivastava,  
 264 2012). Household remittances sent by internal migrants in 2007-2008 were twice those sent by  
 265 international migrants for the same period (NSSO, 2010).

266 Emigration from the Indian Himalayan region is lower compared to that from the plains. The  
 267 emigration is largely influenced by a higher socio-economic status, a network of emigrants and  
 268 emigration infrastructure (Bhagat, Keshri and Ali, 2013). On the other hand, inter-state migration from  
 269 the Himalayan region is higher than from the plains. About one-third of out-migrants from the  
 270 Himalayan region had moved to seek employment. Among the drivers of migration in the mountains,  
 271 the economic driver is the most important, followed by marriage and education. However, the data has  
 272 some obvious limitations. For example, if entire households have migrated, this has not been captured,  
 273 and the survey underestimates both internal and international out-migration.

274 India is the world's largest remittance recipient. It received USD 70 billion as per the latest data  
275 available from the World Bank in 2014.<sup>2</sup> The survey-based estimates show that household remittances  
276 sent by internal migrants in 2007-2008 were twice those sent by international migrants for the same  
277 period (NSSO, 2010). Further, in the Indian Himalayan region a relatively higher proportion of  
278 households (12 percent) received remittances compared to the non-Himalayan part of the country (9  
279 percent), according to NSSO 64<sup>th</sup> conducted in 2007-2008. Studies on India have concluded that  
280 remittances have a poverty-reducing effect and shown that remittances are associated with higher  
281 household expenditure on health and education. Remittance also helps increase school attendance and  
282 ensure food security, as higher proportions of households from the lower socio-economic strata  
283 depend on remittance to meet the costs of food and education (Deshingkar and Sandi, 2012; Smita,  
284 2008; Chellaraj and Mohapatra, 2014).

### 285 **15.1.6 Pakistan**

286 Labour migrants moving internally in Pakistan account for approximately 2 percent of the population  
287 – a rate that has been roughly constant over the last twenty years.<sup>3</sup> Given the country's size, however,  
288 this suggests a stock of 36 million migrant workers at any given period of time. The stock of  
289 *international* migration is much smaller at 9.6 million (1971-2016).<sup>4</sup> That being said, the flow of  
290 international migration has seen a strong uptick since 2005. The number of workers emigrating  
291 annually has steadily increased from roughly 150 thousand in 2005 to roughly 850 thousand in 2016.<sup>5</sup>  
292 In terms of areas of origin, nearly 45 percent of emigrants are from the 10 HKH districts of Abbotabad,  
293 Bannu, Lower Dir, Kohat, Mansehra, Mardan, Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, and Swat. In terms of  
294 gender, only 4 percent of internal migrants are women while the gender composition of international  
295 migrants is unknown (LFS various rounds).

296 In 2016, 90 percent of international flows were towards just two countries, U.A.E and Saudi Arabia,  
297 popular destinations for Pakistani workers since the 1970s. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these  
298 flows generally consist of young single men, and the implications for remittances are obvious.  
299 Moreover, the skill levels of the emigrants also appear to be improving over the years, suggesting an  
300 impact on the magnitude of the remittances (Amjad, Irfan and Arif, 2015). In fact, remittances have  
301 increased from roughly USD 1 billion to USD 12 billion in 2012 or from 2.0 percent of GDP to 7.0  
302 percent. Perhaps more importantly, data from 2012 suggest that remittances constitute roughly half  
303 of the exports of goods and services and thus provide critical balance of payments support (ibid).

304 Few studies have looked into the impact of remittances at the household level. Ahmed, Sugiyarto and  
305 Jha (2010) show that the mean expenditure of a migrant household is 41 percent higher than that of a  
306 non-migrant household. While remittances have a positive effect on the shares of household  
307 expenditures on food, education, clothing and recreation, the highest increase is in the expenditure  
308 share on durables at 74 percent, while the budget share of education increases only by 2.9 percent.  
309 Moreover, the impact of remittances on household welfare would be strongest in rural rather than  
310 urban Pakistan. That being said, Ahmed, Mughal and Klasen (2016) note that it is important to

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<sup>2</sup> <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS>

<sup>3</sup> Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Surveys various rounds

<sup>4</sup> <http://beoe.gov.pk/reports-and-statistics>. This is an overestimate since it is a sum of outflows over the years. No data is available on return migration.

<sup>5</sup> ibid

311 distinguish between the types of remittances: foreign remittances are considered to be a transitory  
312 income and lead to a substantial increase in household assets while domestic remittances are mainly  
313 used for non-durable consumption.

### 314 **15.1.7 Nepal**

315 In recent years, migration from Nepal has reached unprecedented levels with a surge in the number of  
316 people seeking employment abroad. As reported in the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) 2010/11,  
317 53 percent of households in Nepal have at least one absentee living within or outside the country (GoN  
318 2012, p.133). As per the 2011 census, this indicates more than two-fold increase in the number of  
319 Nepalis living away from the country from 2001 to 2011 (GoN, 2012). The figures for labour migrants  
320 are equally significant with a total of 2,723,587 labour permits issued by the Department of Labour and  
321 Employment from 2008/2009 through 2014-2015 (GoN, 2016). While men account for approximately  
322 96 percent of the labour permits issued between 2008 and 2015, the number of females seeking  
323 employment has increased by 2.5 times over the same period (GoN, 2016, p.7-8). In terms of age, youths  
324 constitute the largest proportion of people leaving the country for employment. According to data  
325 available at the Department of Foreign Employment, 47 percent of migrants are from the age group  
326 26–35 followed by age group 36–45 (25.85 percent). There is no significant variation in the age  
327 categories of male and female migrants (GoN, 2016).

328 In terms of destination, the data available from DoFE does not include migrant workers going to India  
329 since labour permits are not required for India, and to the Republic of Korea since workers go through  
330 the government-to-government agreement (GoN, 2016). However, if one were to include these  
331 countries, the 2011 census figures indicate that the percentage of Nepalis going to India is equal to  
332 those headed towards the Gulf (approximately 38 percent)<sup>6</sup> followed by the ASEAN countries (13  
333 percent) (GoN, 2013). Primary destinations include Malaysia and the Gulf countries, which account  
334 for 85 percent of the labour permits issued during the same period (GoN, 2016). There is however a  
335 slight variation in the destination countries for women and men with a higher percentage of men going  
336 to Malaysia, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, where the demand for construction workers is higher, while the  
337 proportion of females is higher for countries like the UAE and Kuwait, where women mostly go as  
338 domestic workers (GoN, 2016).

339 Overall, this increasing trend of Nepalis migrating for employment abroad has meant that the  
340 remittances these migrants send constitute about 30 percent of the country's GDP—a significant  
341 increase from 10.9 percent in 2003/2004,<sup>7</sup> making Nepal the third-largest recipient of remittances as a  
342 share of GDP among all countries in the world (World Bank, 2014). The unsustainability of a  
343 remittance-driven economy has been noted. Studies have indicated that although remittances  
344 constitute a high proportion of the GDP and the stock of migrants has increased, there has been a  
345 notable slowdown in remittance growth. The growth rate of remittances has plummeted from 27.6  
346 percent in June 2015 to 5.3 percent in April 2016 (World Bank 2016b, p. 18). Further, recent data on  
347 the use of remittances indicate that 79 percent of remittances is spent on daily consumption (79

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<sup>6</sup> The proportion of Nepali migrants going to India has however considerably decreased, from 77.2 per cent in 2001 to 37.6 per cent in 2011. Source: Population Monograph of Nepal, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Nepal Economic Forum. *Docking Nepal's Economic Analysis*. Lalitpur: Nefport, 2014; Government of Nepal. Labour migration for employment. A status report for Nepal: 2014/2015. Kathmandu, Nepal: Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2016.

348 percent), followed by repayment of loan (7 percent); capital formation and investment in business  
349 comprises a minimal share (GoN, 2012). It is also argued that the shortage of labour due to emigration  
350 might compel agricultural households to keep land barren, reduce agricultural productivity and  
351 ultimately lead to acute food shortages (Bhatta, 2013).

## 352 **15.2 DETERMINANTS OF MIGRATION**

353 The Foresight Report (2011) suggests that migration decision is influenced by different drivers, i.e.,  
354 economic, environmental, demographic, social, and political. Due to complex interactions between  
355 these drivers, it is rarely possible to identify individuals whose migration decision was solely  
356 influenced by one particular driver. Despite the existence of migration drivers, whether migration  
357 occurs or not depends on a series of intervening factors and personal household characteristics  
358 (Foresight, 2011).

### 359 **15.2.1 Economic**

360 Mountain specificities, such as inaccessibility, fragility, marginality, diversity, niche opportunities,  
361 and human adaptation mechanisms, have significant implications for local economies (Jodha, 2001).  
362 Livelihood opportunities in the rural areas of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region are generally restricted  
363 to primary sector occupations. Factors such as lack of employment and livelihood security, increase in  
364 population density, market volatility, environmental shocks and stress, land degradation, and lack of  
365 basic infrastructure and market access undermined agricultural growth, its labour absorption  
366 potential, income generating capacity and role in food security (see Tulachan, 2001; Goodall, 2004;  
367 Hoermann et al., 2010; Hunzai, Gerlitz and Hoermann, 2011; Tiwari and Joshi, 2016; Massey, Axinn  
368 and Ghimire, 2010). For example, poor performance in the agriculture sector, especially the fact that  
369 agricultural production has not kept pace with population growth, is of particular concern in Nepal  
370 since agriculture provides about 35 percent of GDP, and employs approximately 75 percent of labour  
371 force (ILO, 2014). Yet, the majority of agricultural households do not produce enough food to meet  
372 their entire consumption needs. Average food prices in the mountain and hill regions are over 100  
373 percent higher than in other locations. Approximately 5 million people out of the estimated total  
374 population of 27 million are undernourished, and approximately 1.6 million out of the 3.5 million  
375 under five population are estimated to suffer from chronic under-nutrition.<sup>8</sup> Unlike in most other  
376 developing countries, in Bhutan people migrating to urban areas are relatively well-off and have a  
377 certain level of qualification (Ura, 2013). In Afghanistan, the deterioration of the security situation at  
378 sub-national level has also led to an increase in migration from the villages to urban centres. People  
379 who leave rural areas find limited opportunities in the urban centres due to their limited capacities.  
380 Despite this, the rural-urban migration in Afghanistan is rising rapidly.

381 The introduction of modern agricultural technology and natural increase in the rural population has  
382 created a surplus of rural labour (Bohle and Adhikari, 1998; Liang and Ma, 2004; Huo et al., 2006;  
383 Olimova and Olimov, 2007). The slow economic development in the mountainous regions of  
384 developing countries contrasts sharply with the economic vibrancy of the lowlands, foothills, and

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<sup>8</sup> National Planning Commission/GoN. *Nepal thematic report on food security*, 2013; World Food Programme, "Top Facts About Hunger in Nepal," 28 April 2015, available at <https://www.wfp.org/stories/top-facts-about-hunger-nepal>

385 urban areas. Economic opportunities within the region also shape the flow of migrants within the  
386 region and neighbouring lowlands (Liang and Ma, 2004; Nepal, 2007; Brusle, 2008). In Bhutan, internal  
387 migration mostly takes place from the rest of the country to Thimphu, Paro and Chukha, which are the  
388 economic hubs of the country (MoAF, 2013; Ura, 2013). In Afghanistan, Kabul receives the largest  
389 number of migrants followed by Jalalabad, Herat, Kandahar and Mazar (Opel 2005) and a majority of  
390 the migrants are men in the 15–45 age-group. Respondents of two CHT districts of Bangladesh  
391 identified all kinds of economic reasons ranging from low wage in the area of origin and better income  
392 opportunities at the destination to desire for economic betterment and coming out of poverty (Siddiqui  
393 et al., 2014).

### 394 **15.2.2 Social**

395 Education has emerged as an important social determinant of migration. The lack of adequate  
396 education facilities and limited access to better education was the most commonly cited reason for  
397 leaving rural homes in Bhutan (MoAF, 2013; MoA, 2006). For migrants from Far West Nepal, access to  
398 better education facilities for their children was one of the factors (Poertner et al. 2011). Marriage is a  
399 major reason behind female migration in the entire HKH region. Gender and other forms of social  
400 inequities are some notable drivers of migration; severe exclusion is one of the factors that compel  
401 people to migrate. A few studies on female migration have identified family violence and/or broken  
402 homes as a reason behind women’s migration from Nepal (Bhadra, 2013; ILO, 2015). In Bangladesh  
403 some women migrated to accumulate resources to bear the cost of their own or their family members’  
404 wedding including dowry (Siddiqui, 2001). Further, as the experience of Nepal suggests, both the  
405 decision to migrate and the choice of destination are determined by the socio-economic status of  
406 households (Gurung, 2008).

### 407 **15.2.3 Demographic**

408 Demographic factors such as household composition, age, and gender influence the migration process.  
409 In Afghanistan, the likelihood of migration has been found to be higher in households with more  
410 people of working age (Ghobadi et al., 2005). MoAF (2013) reports that the economically and physically  
411 active population migrated the most in Bhutan. Ura (2013) indicates that 61.2 percent of migrants in  
412 Bhutan comprised young people in the age group of 10–34 years, majority of whom were men. In Nepal,  
413 Massey et al. (2007) reported that both local mobility and long-distance migration was age-selective in  
414 nature. The same study found that the likelihood of local mobility and long-distance migration  
415 declined with rising age. This effect was more pronounced for local rather than long-distance  
416 migration. Shrestha and Bhandari (2007) found that the presence of both men and women was  
417 important for international migration from Nepal, but only the availability of men positively  
418 contributed to internal migration. Siddiqui et al. (2014b) found that in two Chittagong Hill Tracts  
419 (CHT) districts of Bangladesh, 25 percent of the interviewees had migrated owing to factors, such as  
420 expansion of family size through marriage of sons and daughters and government restriction on  
421 encroachment of forests to build additional shelters.

422 Urban centres are attractive to potential migrants because of access to employment opportunities,  
423 access to urban amenities and services such as education, health, electricity and water, and  
424 opportunities for participating in the market. According to the MoA (2006), rural to urban migration is  
425 a significant contributor to the urbanization process in Bhutan as 72 percent of all urban dwellers could

426 be classified as migrants from rural areas. Increased urbanization has been a significant cause of rural  
427 to urban migration in the Indian Himalayas (Mohanty and Bhagat, 2013; Lusome and Bhagat, 2013).

#### 428 **15.2.4 Political**

429 Political unrest contributes to migration. In Bangladesh the demand of ethnic communities of CHT for  
430 regional autonomy culminated in armed struggle, and as a result around 60 thousand people belonging  
431 to ethnic communities fled to India as refugees. A large number of them also became internally  
432 displaced (Mohsin 2003). Some policies, either explicitly or implicitly, seek to control migration, or  
433 may have an independent effect on whether people move or not. A core aspect of the challenges that  
434 migrants face in China is the hukou household registration system (Naughton, 2007), which classifies  
435 China's citizens as either rural or urban residents. Without an urban hukou, migrants and their families  
436 have limited access to urban public services, including housing, healthcare, social security, and above  
437 all, education. The education of migrant children has become one of the major challenges for both  
438 migrant families and the Chinese education system. In China, public schools in both rural and urban  
439 areas are supposed to provide free education to children. However, the free education is only  
440 guaranteed to children whose hukou matches the school's location (Fu and Ren, 2010). Since migrant  
441 children in cities still retain their rural hukous, they are allowed to enroll in urban public schools only  
442 if there is available space. In many cases migrant parents can only enroll their children if they are  
443 willing and able to pay steep out-of-district tuition fees. Consequently, in major metropolitan areas  
444 such as Beijing, tens of thousands of children are still unable to attend public schools, falling into a  
445 conspicuous gap in the provision of public education (Jialing, 2004; Kwong, 2004). In India the  
446 government-sponsored Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act guarantees every  
447 rural household 100 days of wage employment in a financial year (Ministry of Rural Development,  
448 2008). Jain (2010) found that this programme has reduced the need for seasonal migration to some  
449 extent in the province of Uttarakhand, mainly among unskilled or less educated persons. The  
450 Government of Nepal in August 2012 placed another ban barring women less than 30 years of age from  
451 migrating abroad for domestic help jobs; the ban was lifted in 2016 but on the condition that the  
452 minimum wage requirements for domestic workers have been met.

453 In turn, other policies seek to facilitate migration. The India-Nepal Treaty of Friendship of 1950  
454 created an open border between the two countries, which includes visa and passport-free entry and  
455 access to employment without the necessity of a work permit. Citizens of either country can migrate  
456 to the other country and stay as long as desired (Subedi, 1991; Adhikari et al., 2008). For people in  
457 areas such as the Far West of Nepal, the cities of the northern Indian plains are geographically closer  
458 than Kathmandu and the cities of central Nepal (Skeldon, 2011). For the poor, even the acquisition of  
459 official documents such as a passport is often an insurmountable hurdle (Hoermann and Kollmar,  
460 2008). The open border allows them to use any national identification documents, such as electoral  
461 identity cards or driving license, to gain entry. On 9 June 2015 the government of Nepal issued a notice  
462 indicating that the process of labour migration from Nepal will be free of cost, or incur the minimum  
463 cost possible (MoLE, 2015a)

#### 464 **15.2.5 Environmental**

465 There is a relative lack of specific empirical evidence on the role of environmental drivers of migration  
466 in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. Some case studies (Massey et al., 2007; Shrestha and Bhandari,

2007; Banerjee et al., 2011; Bohra-Mishra and Massey, 2011) specifically focus on the relationship between environmental change and migration. In other case studies (Ghobadi et al., 2005; IUCN, 2005), the effects of environmental variables are mentioned as a passing reference within a wider study. Drought affected households in Afghanistan are more likely to have migrant members than those unaffected by drought (Ghobadi et al., 2005). Since the majority of the rural population of Bhutan lives in close proximity to forests, conflict between wild animals and people are common. In a study conducted in Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park (central Bhutan), Wang and Macdonald (2006) described the loss of 2.3 percent of domestic animals to wild predators over a 12-month period. This loss amounted to an average annual financial loss of 17 percent of Bhutan's total per capita cash income. About 3 percent and 0.8 percent of the rural communities mentioned wildlife problem as one of the causes of migration in MoA (2006) and MoAF (2013) respectively. Other factors such as the drying up of water sources, outbreak of pests and diseases and other natural calamities contribute significantly to migration (MoAF, 2013).

A study by Massey et al. (2015) found that environmental change had a greater chance of influencing local (within the Chitwan valley) rather than long-distance (outside the Chitwan valley) mobility. The likelihood of moving within the Chitwan valley was found to be greater if there was a decline in agricultural productivity, the share of the neighbourhood covered in flora declined, or the time required for gathering firewood increased. For long-distance mobility, only a perceived decline of agricultural productivity was significant but the effect was considerably less powerful (Massey et al., 2007). During long winters when the valleys are covered with snow, migration to urban centres in the plains had been a traditional strategy among the lower income rural migrants of northern Pakistan (IUCN, 2005). Ninety four migrant and non-migrant households of two CHT districts highlighted 584 times of 28 types of environmental and climatic hazards that have led some households or their members to migrate. These are irregular rainfall, temperature rise, deforestation, river erosion, hill slide, drought/lowering of water level and flash floods. These hazards had profound impact on their ecosystem, resulting in the drying of mountain streams, shortage of water for irrigation and drinking, increased sedimentation and reduction in *Jhum* production, etc. Over time many of the people left their villages in search of employment; many households now have one or more members migrate working in other places (Siddiqui et al., 2014).

### 15.3 INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Migrants from the HKH region are mostly young adults. Similar observations about the age of migrants have been made in Bhutan (MoA, 2006), China (NBS, 2010; Li et al., 2013), India (Banerjee et al., 2017) and Nepal (GoN, 2016; Sijapati et al., 2016). Labour migrants from mountainous regions are predominantly male. The traditional division of labour between genders and lack of education and exposure of women, especially in the HKH region in Afghanistan, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, explain the low volume of female labour migration in this area (Hoermann et al., 2010). Although men still dominate migration flows in China, the gap between male and female participation in the migrant labour force is narrowing, especially among cohorts aged between 16 and 20 years old (Li et al., 2013). Most of the migrants from this region have some form of education. The literacy rate of the migrating population in Bhutan is considerably higher than the national average (MoA, 2006). Many scholars have found that rural labourers in China with better education are more likely to migrate in the first

508 place, and they are more likely to get higher wages when they migrate (Li et al., 2005; Chen and Hanori,  
509 2009; Li et al., 2010).

510 In Nepal, Massey et al. (2007) found that each additional year of schooling raised the odds of long  
511 distance migration by a highly significant 5 percent. Migration has a cost and requires certain resources  
512 (financial and social) to meet or mitigate these costs. Therefore, migration may not be feasible for all  
513 households. Some households may not choose migration if other comparatively more feasible options  
514 are available to them. In China, Du et al. (2004) found that the likelihood of migration increased with  
515 low endowment levels. The socially dominant castes have better access to education, financial means  
516 and social networks. In Nepal, Bhandari (2004) reported that, even at the lower level of relative  
517 deprivation, individuals with relatively better socio-economic conditions are more likely to move.  
518 Since the establishment of the current political setting in 2001, patterns of international migration  
519 from Afghanistan have changed in terms of gender and age group. For instance, most migrants from  
520 Afghanistan to the United Kingdom in 2001 were young men in their 20s and 30s. In 2006 the number  
521 of unaccompanied minors increased. Although the majority of Afghan migrants are still young males,  
522 the number of female migrants – who are married to Afghan residents in other countries – has  
523 increased since 2008.<sup>9</sup>

#### 524 **15.4 INTERVENING OBSTACLES AND FACILITATORS**

525 Social networks based on familial affiliation to a social or cultural group strongly influence people's  
526 decision to migrate and choice of destination. These networks support migration by extending loans,  
527 assisting with logistics, arranging jobs and accommodation, and providing emotional support to the  
528 migrant or the family left behind. The influence of social networks on migration was documented in  
529 Afghanistan (Opel, 2005; Ghobadi et al., 2005); Bhutan (Walcott, 2009); China (Liang and Ma 2004);  
530 India (Mamgain, 2004); Nepal (Seddon et al., 2002; Thieme, 2006; Sharma, 2008); Bangladesh  
531 (Siddiqui, 2001; Litchfield et al., 2015); and Pakistan (Nadeem et al., 2009). With progress in  
532 communication, electrification, and transportation networks, marginal mountain communities have  
533 become connected to the main market economies of the region (Massey et al., 2007; Olimova and  
534 Olimov, 2007). According to Du et al. (2004), the low population density and high transportation costs  
535 of rural mountainous regions of China has been a major challenge to the growth of industries in the  
536 interior rural areas, which implies that migration may be an important component of the structural  
537 change occurring there. Yet the creation of supportive infrastructure, particularly roads and  
538 communication facilities, could facilitate out-migration as well as in-migration (Bhandari, 2004;  
539 Massey et al., 2007). Conversely, the probability of migration has been shown to be lower among  
540 households in Afghanistan that resided in large communities with more irrigated land and services  
541 such as markets, public transportation or health facilities (Ghobadi et al., 2005). Some households may  
542 not be able to meet the cost of migration. For example, the economic cost of migration for Nepalese  
543 workers ranges from NPR 70,000 (USD 986) per migrant for the Gulf countries to NPR 204,000 (USD  
544 2873) for South Korea (Adhikari et al., 2008). Yet, migration for work may be a necessary livelihood  
545 choice for them. If the expected income at the destination is higher than the actual income at the place  
546 of origin, some households take loans from friends, relatives, moneylenders, or self-help groups to  
547 finance the migration of a household member (Zhao, 2003; Nadeem et al., 2009; Jain, 2010).

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<sup>9</sup> Samuel Hall, Complexities and challenges in afghan migration, April 2013

548 Afghans also confront challenges that are specific to their status as refugees. For Afghan living in  
549 refugee camps, access to labour markets and free movement are restricted, and this leads to stymying  
550 of opportunities for employment, and access to basic services (citation). The study on migration  
551 decisions of CHT population covered non-migrant households as well. The respondents cited  
552 economic, social, environmental and demographic reasons for not sending family members to work  
553 away from home. However, 37 percent of these households wanted to send family members for work  
554 but could not. They did not have information on work opportunities outside the village. They also did  
555 not know anyone at the destination. They lived in remote areas without good roads or communication  
556 facilities. Some of them mentioned lack of skill as well as inability to bear the cost of migration as  
557 obstacles to migration (Siddiqui et al., 2014).

## 558 **15.5 MIGRATION AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE**

559 Migration decision depends upon individual, household, and community characteristics, interplay of  
560 intervening obstacles, and influence of demographic, political and environmental factors. In this  
561 section, we analyse the ways in which migration outcomes have influenced the drivers of migration or  
562 intervening obstacles. In other words, we will be exploring how migration has acted as a driver of  
563 change.

### 564 **15.5.1 Migration as a driver of economic change**

565 The economic consequences of migration vary across countries and communities. Nonetheless,  
566 migrant-sending households, be they internal, cross-border, regional or short-term contract workers,  
567 benefit economically from their investment in migration. Migration increases livelihood and  
568 employment opportunities, and more importantly, their financial income (Du et al., 2005; IOM and  
569 Bangladesh Bank, 2009; Park and Wang, 2010; Mahmood, 2011; Adhikari, 2011; Billah, 2011;  
570 Srivastava, 2011; Zhao et al.; 2012; Siddiqui and Mahmood, 2015). About 59.1 percent of people living  
571 in rural areas in Bhutan saw the remittances they received as the main benefit of having some of their  
572 household members living and working in urban areas (MoAF, 2013). Using household panel data from  
573 China, Du et al. (2005) estimates that a household's income per capita increases by 8.5–13.1 percent if  
574 a member migrates for work, but the overall impact on poverty is modest because most poor people do  
575 not migrate. A study that compared results from the Nepal Living Standards Survey found that one-  
576 fifth of poverty reduction in Nepal that occurred between 1995 and 2004 – from 42 percent below  
577 poverty line to 31 percent in 2003/2004 – can be attributed to increased levels of work-related  
578 migration and remittances sent home (Lokshin et al., 2010). The same study also found that while the  
579 increase in migration abroad was the leading cause of this poverty reduction, internal migration also  
580 played an important role. In the Gojal region of Gilgit-Baltistan, migration contributed to the sectoral  
581 and spatial livelihood diversification, leading to unprecedented economic upliftment of the mountain  
582 people in Pakistan (Benz, 2016).

583 A number of studies suggest that remittances play a crucial role in rural economic development (Hugo,  
584 2002). Remittances can provide flows of capital into small farms in the peripheral rural areas (Ratha,  
585 2003). Siddiqui and Mahmood (2015) found that short-term international migrants contributed more  
586 to agricultural development than internal migrants by using improved seeds, adequate fertilizer,  
587 regular irrigation and insecticides. This group also made investment in irrigation pump, power tiller,  
588 tractor, paddy separators and portable rice processing machines. However, compared to female

589 migrants, male migrants invested more in agricultural development. Remittances can also create  
590 considerable multiplier effects in the local economies of origin areas and countries. In India, for  
591 example, remittances sent by short-term international migrants from Kerala and the diaspora of  
592 Punjab boosted agricultural growth at the local level. Greater production in agriculture generated local  
593 demands for certain products such as water pumps, high quality seeds, chemical fertilizers and  
594 pesticides (Srivastava et al., 2011). A study by RMMRU (2011) showed that returnee migrants and  
595 families of current migrants in Bangladesh invested a portion of their remittances in small and medium  
596 enterprises that employed 5 to 200 workers. In Afghanistan, financial and social remittances are  
597 invaluable to the families of migrants. For instance, 73 percent of interviewees in a UNAMA study  
598 (2008) stated that they shared the new skills they learnt abroad with their families upon return.  
599 Furthermore, these remittances are more dependable and less volatile than other flows from abroad  
600 such as direct investment or official development projects.

601 In some cases remittances may have negative impacts on origin communities due to accentuation of  
602 existing inequalities or creation of dependency on such external flows. The sixth five-year plan of  
603 Bangladesh highlighted that poverty levels of districts from where short-term international migration  
604 takes place are lower. Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is the only area that belongs to the HKH region and  
605 the three districts, Rangamati, Khagrachori and Bandarban, hardly had any experience of short-term  
606 international migration. Lack of access to short-term international migration reduces the scope of  
607 upward mobility of indigenous community members of the CHT. International short-term migration  
608 may increase inequality initially, as only the relatively well-off have the resources to send workers  
609 abroad and therefore receive remittances (Lipton, 1980) However, as migrant networks are established  
610 in destination countries, the cost of migration drops, creating scope for the relatively poor to migrate  
611 (Docquier et al., 2010; Koehlin and Leon, 2007; Taylor et al. 2005). Black et al.'s (2006) work  
612 demonstrates how mutual causality between migration and inequality varies across space, both  
613 between and within different continents. They also highlight the important roles institutions play in  
614 mediating the impact of migration on equality.

615 In a study conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in 2013, about 49.2 percent of rural  
616 households reported farm labour shortage as a result of out-migration. Interestingly, an analysis of the  
617 National Labour Force Survey from 2010 to 2012 reveals a very different scenario, suggesting that rural  
618 employment expanded by 3.6 percent annually. However, the expansion is due to increased  
619 employment of people over 45 years of age; it is also important to note that rural agricultural  
620 employment of age group 15–24 declined by 24.7 percent per annum. It is evident that the elderly and  
621 women are now engaged in agriculture. Given the composition of farm labour, they are not able to  
622 optimally utilize the resources. This has direct impact on agricultural production and poses a risk to  
623 the national goal of food security and food self-sufficiency. Available data also indicate that Bhutan  
624 continues to import most of its food from other countries. A study by (citation) in Afghanistan reported  
625 that only 1 percent of respondents had invested remittances in livestock or land in their home villages.

### 626 **15.5.2 Migration as a driver of social change**

627 Ratha et al. (2011) highlighted that international migration contributes to the formation of human  
628 capital. Various studies showed that a disproportionately higher portion of remittances from  
629 international migration is spent on education and health than on everyday consumption (Adams, 2005;  
630 Adams et al., 2008, Nagarajan 2009, Ratha et al. 2011, World Bank 2006). Evidence from rural Pakistan,

631 India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh suggest that short-term international migration is associated  
632 with increased school enrolment (Bhadra, 2007; Mansuri, 2006; SMC, 2004). Again, it is difficult to  
633 compare the impact of internal and international migration on education. Srivastava (2011) and  
634 Srivastava and Dasgupta (2010) showed that in India children accompanying seasonal and circular  
635 internal migrants do not attend school, as school systems generally do not allow children to be absent  
636 for prolonged periods. In Sri Lanka, internal migrants who live in slum areas face problems accessing  
637 schools for their children (Fernando 2005, Hugo 2002). However, these studies do not indicate if  
638 children of non-migrant families face the same problems in the same settlements.

639 In China, some studies have examined the impact of parental migration on the development outcomes  
640 of children. For example, from a comprehensive dataset covering 141,000 children in ten provinces  
641 (from 27 surveys conducted between 2009 and 2013), Zhou et al. (2015) analysed nine indicators of  
642 health, nutrition, and education. They found that for all nine indicators, children (children left behind  
643 by their migrant parents with a caregiver—typically paternal grandparents—in their home  
644 communities) performed as well as or better than children living with both parents in their home  
645 communities. As for children who migrate with their parents to cities, Lai et al. (2014) compared the  
646 academic performance, student backgrounds and measures of school quality between private schools  
647 attended only by migrant children in Beijing (Beijing migrant schools) and rural public schools in  
648 Shaanxi province in the northwestern part of China. They found that although migrant students  
649 outperform students in Shaanxi's rural public schools when they initially arrive in Beijing, they  
650 gradually lose ground to rural students due to poorer resources and teacher quality in the schools.  
651 Additional analysis comparing migrant students in migrant schools to migrant students in Beijing  
652 public schools demonstrates that if provided access to better educational resources, migrant students  
653 may be able to significantly improve their performance.

654 In recent years, some studies have looked into the gendered outcome of education of family members  
655 left behind. Hugo (2003) and Asis (2000) provided evidence that in many parts of Southeast Asia,  
656 parents prefer to educate their sons rather than their daughters. Compared to non-migrant  
657 households, children of migrants tend to marry early. For example, migrants marry off their sons early  
658 so that their wives can look after the household, whilst daughters are married off early to ensure their  
659 physical and sexual chastity in the absence of their mothers (INSTRAW/IOM, 2000).

660 The migration of their male spouses appears to have a positive influence on many left-behind wives,  
661 who receive and manage the remittances. If a woman becomes the head of the household in the  
662 absence of her husband, her decision-making power increases. After the earthquake in Nepal, Sijapati  
663 et al. (2015) found that left-behind wives of migrant households went through major emotional strain  
664 as their male counterparts were absent. In some cases, temporary and circular migration increases the  
665 risk of family breakdown, fragmentation of social networks and psychological stress. In Kerala, India,  
666 left-behind wives of male migrants in the Gulf reported considerable 'insecurity' (32.6 percent),  
667 'loneliness' (85.8 per cent), 'added responsibilities' (86.7 percent) and 'difficulties in bringing up  
668 children alone' (38.6 percent) (Zachariah and Irudaya Rajan, 2009).

669 Migration provides income to the elderly but also creates a vacuum for care (Hoang, 2011). Fathers who  
670 were 50 years and above were major receivers of remittances, followed by brothers, wives and mothers  
671 (Siddiqui and Abrar, 2003). Hugo (2002) suggests that in Indonesia, ties between the elderly and their  
672 adult migrant children have been weakened by international migration. In these instances, migration  
673 creates a vacuum for the much-needed care of the elderly. In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, female

674 migration has increased the workload of elderly women (INSTRAW/IOM, 2000). In particular, having  
675 to look after their grandchildren is an extremely demanding task for these elderly women. However, it  
676 also strengthens extended family bonds (INSTRAW/IOM, 2000; Siddiqui, 2001).

677 The general understanding is that migrants often contribute to the welfare of their communities of  
678 origin. The Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK and the USA have been organising economic and social  
679 support through four types of associations: hometown associations, professional bodies, spiritual and  
680 religious bodies, and federating bodies. These associations formed in destination countries have  
681 different types of impacts in Bangladesh. They organise scholarship programmes for children of poorer  
682 backgrounds within the community, run health camps for those who cannot afford treatment, and  
683 create local infrastructure (Siddiqui, 2004). The Nepal Institute of Development Studies (NIDS) and the  
684 World Bank (2009) survey reveals that collective remittances from both the Nepali diaspora and short-  
685 term migrants have contributed to the establishment of public libraries, trade schools, health posts in  
686 schools, water supply in remote areas, tower clocks in village centres and computers in schools.  
687 Migrants from India and Bangladesh have established orphanages and faith-based schools, mostly in  
688 their own villages (Singhvi, 2001; Siddiqui, 2004).

689 Beyond economic returns, recent studies also indicate that migration has yielded significant social  
690 benefits. For example, in the case of Nepalese Dalits, urban migration has not only provided them  
691 social, economic and educational opportunities, but also the possibility of escaping traditional caste-  
692 based discrimination (Pariyar and Lovett, 2016). However, a more recent study that utilized Nepal  
693 Living Standard Survey results from 2010/11 while confirming the significant benefits of migration—  
694 remittances contributed twenty percentages of total poverty headcount ratio reduction in Nepal—has  
695 nevertheless also pointed out that migration has widened inequality in Nepal since the probability of  
696 receiving remittances is higher in richer households than poorer households.

697 Although the above evidence highlights examples related to international migration, this does not  
698 mean that internal migrants do not contribute to their community of origin. Rather, it suggests a lack  
699 of research on the role of internal migration in community development in origin areas.

### 700 **15.5.3 Role of migration in facing environmental shocks**

701 As mentioned in the earlier section on the drivers of migration, mountain regions are particularly  
702 vulnerable to climate change, as well as to a range of environmental shocks and hazards such as floods,  
703 droughts, storms, earthquake and landslides. Emerging country-specific studies show that the  
704 environment is an important influencing factor of population movements in this region (Guha-Sapir  
705 et. al., 2011; Max et al, 2011). It is estimated that by 2050, one in every seven people of Bangladesh will  
706 be displaced by climate change (Displacement Solution, Geneva, 2012). Based on historical analysis of  
707 upazila level census data of Bangladesh from 2001 and 2011 and predictions of global climate models  
708 and the World Bank Studies of 2010 and 2011, Kniveton et al. (2013) projected that from 2011 to 2050  
709 as many as 16 to 26 million people would migrate from their place of origin due to floods, storm surges,  
710 riverbank erosion and sea-level rise.

711 Due to climate shocks and hazards, loss of homestead, traditional livelihoods, agricultural land,  
712 unplanned urbanization, etc. are the major problems identified as negative outcomes of climate  
713 change related population movement (Siddiqui et al. forthcoming), however, has shown that not all  
714 types of climate-related migration produce negative consequences. Rather, on many occasions,

715 affected households autonomously adopt migration as an adaptation tool. When some of the villages  
716 were submerged in the river and some others became unlivable due to drought or water logging, the  
717 villagers created new settlements in other locations. Again some of the households of partially affected  
718 villages adapted to climate shocks by relocating to nearby villages or to towns or cities. Therefore the  
719 authors concluded that households that could maintain the economic and social condition at the pre-  
720 climate shock level are examples of successful adaptation. Those who resettled themselves temporarily  
721 on roadsides or embankments definitely serve as examples of maladaptation; in other words, migration  
722 in these cases worked as drivers of negative change. Further, the research found that short-term  
723 international contract migration of one or a few members of a family in fact helped some of the climate  
724 change affected households to adapt in situ through transfer of remittances.

#### 725 **15.5.5 Migration and political change**

726 Political reality also plays a role in shaping migration outcome. In many cases migration has allowed  
727 people to avoid political persecution. During the civil war of Sri Lanka, a section of the Tamil  
728 population saved their lives through migration. Rohingya refugees of Myanmar have been fleeing  
729 Myanmar and taking refuge in Bangladesh. Since 2012 the Bangladesh government has imposed  
730 stricter restrictions on the admission of the Rohingyas. This has made the Rohingya community more  
731 vulnerable. A section of them embarked on a life-threatening voyage to Malaysia via Thailand by boat  
732 through maritime routes of the Bay of Bengal. Studies have shown that at the destination, people who  
733 migrated for political reasons cannot exercise their voting rights, are occasionally used as vote banks,  
734 face discrimination and often encounter xenophobic backlash from the receiving community.  
735 Therefore, in such cases of forced migration, although the individual or group concerned may be able  
736 to save their lives by fleeing difficult conditions at home, they are likely to face adverse conditions in  
737 the destination countries.

#### 738 **15.5.6 Migration consequences are determined by personal and household characteristics**

739 Consequences of migration also depend on personal and household characteristics such as age, sex,  
740 wealth, marital status, religion, ethnicity, etc. Siddiqui and Abrar (2003) found that whether remittance  
741 will be used as current income or a portion of it will be invested in enterprises for further income  
742 generation depends on household members' age characteristics. Families with male members in the  
743 age group 25 to 45 years invested in different business enterprises, whereas most families with female  
744 members who had to be married off spent more on dowry. Families who only had elderly members did  
745 not invest in business enterprises. Along with day-to-day consumption they invested a portion of the  
746 remittances in buying land.

747 Marital status also determines some of the social and economic outcomes of migration. Siddiqui (2001)  
748 showed that majority of divorced and separated women became both economically and socially  
749 empowered through migration. Some found new partners and some others came out of abusive  
750 marriage. On the other hand, some of the stable marriages broke down because in the absence of their  
751 wives, migrants enter into new relationships. Similarly religious background also influences migration  
752 outcome. In Bangladesh, compared to the dominant religious group, minority communities have lesser  
753 access to international short-term contract migration (Siddiqui and Abrar, 2003).

754 Migration outcome is also influenced by pre-migration wealth and skill level. Rich households have  
755 more choices with respect to migration destination. Those who migrate to developed western countries

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756 belong to the richest economic quartile or to the highly skilled category. Majority of those who migrate  
757 to the Gulf region, other Arab countries and Southeast Asia to do unskilled work are not from rich or  
758 middle-income households but they are mostly from households above the poverty level. Poorer  
759 people are likely to opt for rural-to-rural and rural-to-urban, seasonal and temporary internal  
760 migration with lower salaries and wages and thus low remittances.

761 It is natural that the migration outcome of these three streams will be different. Studies have found  
762 that permanent migrants in the western world hardly remit to their countries of origin. Some of them  
763 support their countries of origin through sharing knowledge and technology as well as through  
764 philanthropy wards. The Nepali diaspora in Europe and North America are promoting the tourism  
765 sector of their country of origin. The Indian and Chinese diaspora is making large-scale investment in  
766 their respective countries of origin. Short-term contract workers from Gulf and other countries or  
767 Southeast Asia remit more than fifty percent of their earnings. The garment workers of Bangladesh,  
768 who are mostly rural-to-urban migrants, do not remit much. However they have played a pioneering  
769 role in creating demand for certain types of clothing and household goods in the marketplaces of their  
770 villages. In other words, they have created a rural-urban continuum (Siddiqui et al., 2010).

771 Wealth enables people to accumulate more savings and they can afford to migrate through regular  
772 channels and higher savings. Those who migrated from Bangladesh through irregular maritime routes  
773 came from very poor economic backgrounds. Many ended up facing death, imprisonment and slavery-  
774 like conditions at their destinations. However, poor people are not the only ones who migrate through  
775 irregular channels. As opportunities for migrating to developed western countries are limited, large  
776 numbers of relatively well-off people resort to irregular migration. Not surprisingly, their migration  
777 outcome is much worse compared to that of people who migrate through regular channels. Migration  
778 outcome varies according to the economic status of the migrant.

779 Migrants in Bhutan feel that migration has enhanced their access to social services, employment, diet,  
780 income, living conditions, gender equity and happiness. Our study from 2013 indicates that on an  
781 average, about 80.3 percent of migrants had gained access to improved facilities, better employment  
782 opportunities, improved quality of food and living conditions after migrating to urban areas.

### 783 **15.5.7 Intervening obstacles and facilitators of migration outcomes**

784 A number of intervening obstacles or facilitators influence migration outcome. Absence or presence of  
785 such factors determines whether migration will have positive or negative outcome. The nature of  
786 migration governance, cost of migration and access to technology are some of the important elements  
787 that determine migration outcome.

788 Cost has direct impact on the outcome of migration. Those who pay high costs are likely to gain less  
789 economic benefits. As the cost of migration was low in the 1980s and 1990s, short-term contract  
790 migration produced positive economic and social results for the majority of migrant-sending  
791 households. Studies have shown that over the years the cost of migration has become exorbitantly high  
792 and it is near impossible to reap sustainable economic benefit from migration. Visa trading in  
793 destination countries, existence of tiers of intermediaries in both the countries of origin and  
794 destination, lack of accountability of recruiting agencies, lack of efficient governance system, and lack  
795 of information on safe migration among potential migrants have contributed to the soaring cost of  
796 migration. Among migrants from the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, Bangladeshi migrants bear the

797 highest migration cost. According to a report by the MFA (n.d.), Bangladeshi workers pay USD 2500–  
798 5000 to go to Gulf countries while their Indian and Nepali counterparts pay USD 1000–3000 (MFA).

799 Migration outcome is also determined by the migration governance system. Migration governance is  
800 extremely complicated as it involves more than one country. Contract migration between origin and  
801 destination countries are mostly facilitated by bilateral arrangements. In reality the destination  
802 countries set the terms and conditions, which may not respect decent work and the human rights of  
803 the workers. This has major ramifications for migration outcomes. Origin countries of the Hindu Kush  
804 Himalayan region have taken steps to improve migration governance. These include framing of  
805 emigration laws, establishment of separate ministries, setting up of labour offices in destination,  
806 developing welfare programmes for migrants, etc. However, only a few countries could make  
807 reasonable progress in implementing such programmes and policies. In South Asia, Sri Lanka is at the  
808 forefront in this respect. Poor governance leads to fraudulent schemes, unprotected working  
809 conditions, non-payment of salary, and physical, verbal and sexual abuse. Therefore inability to govern  
810 produces lower migration outcome.

811 Migration has led to economic diversification in some of the origin areas in the HKH. In some regions  
812 it led to enterprise development and in others it stimulated agricultural innovation and technological  
813 advancement. Ballard (2005), however, has shown that remittance flow alone cannot cause significant  
814 economic development. Smooth functioning local level institutions, infrastructure and policy  
815 interventions are needed as well. He compared the outcomes of diaspora remittance in two receiving  
816 areas in the bordering districts of India and Pakistan – Jullundhur and Mirpur. He found that even with  
817 similar types of remittance flows, Jullundhur experienced agricultural development whereas Mirpur  
818 did not. Difference in the levels of infrastructural development, extent of industrialisation and policy  
819 environment between the two locations accounted for these different outcomes.

820 In recent times, improved access to technology has significantly shaped migration outcomes. Siddiqui  
821 and Mahmood (2015) found that in Bangladesh, 98 percent of migrant households own at least one  
822 mobile phone. In the past migrants had very little control over the remittances they sent, as it was  
823 difficult for them to communicate with the recipients on a regular basis. Once the family members  
824 received the remittances, they could get away with not using the money according to the migrant's  
825 wishes. Now that migrants own mobile phones, they can monitor how the remittance they send is being  
826 used on a day-to-day basis. One-fourth of the migrants interviewed under SDC-RMMRU survey (2015)  
827 said they directly oversee the investment of remittance. For instance, they proactively shape decisions  
828 related to the purchase of land and agricultural equipment, the number of day labourers to be  
829 employed, and the type of seeds to be bought.

830 From the discussion above it is evident that people try to attain the goals for which they have migrated  
831 in the first place. They can attain some of the goals while others may remain unfulfilled. Achieving the  
832 desired outcome of migration depends not only on the individual's or household's ability but also on  
833 other interrelated factors in both origin and destination.

## 834 **15.6 MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND PROGRAMMES**

835 Migration will continue to increase; migration governance in the region is hence critical. Migration  
836 could lead to conflict between the host population and the migrants over ethnic and religious matters,  
837 resource ownership, and provision of public goods and services. Migration governance comprises a

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838 variety of national, regional and international policies and frameworks. There are a number of national  
839 polices and regional and international instruments that govern migration from and within the HKH  
840 countries. The range and coverage of these policies significantly vary across countries. In countries  
841 where international migration is perceived as a significant issue (e.g., Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and  
842 Pakistan), there are comprehensive policies and regulations as well as nodal ministries for  
843 international migration. Over time, many labour-sending have increasingly recognized labour  
844 migration as an avenue for development; work that pays decent wages in destination countries can  
845 bring substantial foreign exchange earning into the origin country. Thus far, this has been done in two  
846 ways. First, by supporting workers with reduced costs of migration and channels for remitting money  
847 – for example, the Probashi Kalyan Bankin Bangladesh, established in 2011, operates as a specialized  
848 bank for the benefit and welfare of migrant workers. The entire operational activities of the bank can  
849 be divided into three main areas:

- 850 (i) Assistance to outbound workers with Migration Loan;
- 851 (ii) Rehabilitation of the retrenched workers through Rehabilitation Loan; and
- 852 (iii) Repatriation of remittance earned by wage earners.

853

854 The main clientele of the Bank include people going abroad for work and returnees who want to start  
855 up/establish something within Bangladesh. Under the “Migration Loan” the Bank has been providing  
856 migrant workers collateral-free low-interest loans in order to protect them from moneylenders. This  
857 has helped reduce the costs of migration significantly (PKB 2014). As of December 2012, the bank had  
858 disbursed loans to more than 1200 people (ILO, 2014). Second, the major migrant-sending countries  
859 have also introduced measures to support the reintegration of returnees and/or to engage the diaspora  
860 in national development processes. This is particularly evident in India, which has introduced a  
861 number of measures to engage the diaspora in the development process. Some of these include:

- 862 • Establishment of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in 2004 to coordinate activities aimed  
863 at reaching out to the Indian diaspora and to build and foster networks with overseas Indians  
864 in order to “tap the investible diasporic community in terms of knowledge and resources.”
- 865 • Establishment of the Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), a not-for-profit public-  
866 private initiative of the MOIA and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Currently, OIFC’s  
867 activities include responding to queries on various issues faced/raised by the Indian diaspora,  
868 management of online business networking portal, and Market Place forums in India and  
869 overseas.<sup>10</sup>
- 870 • Since 2003, the Government of India has been hosting an annual diaspora conference, the  
871 Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, on 9 January. The event is designed to serve as a platform for  
872 interaction between overseas Indians, the Indian government, and interested segments of the  
873 Indian society, such as businesspeople and cultural and charity organizations.<sup>11</sup>

874

875 Human mobility in the region is characterized not only by international migration but also by internal  
876 and cross-border migration. For historical reasons, cross-border migration remains a sensitive issue.  
877 The Nepal-India Peace and Friendship Treaty 1950 and the open border between Nepal and India are  
878 perhaps an exception. In almost every other place, regulations on cross-border movement are focused

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC)’ ,Available at:  
<http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?ID1=205&id=m2&idp=205&mainid=196>; accessed: 03 August 2014)

<sup>11</sup> ‘Pravasi Bharatiya Divas’, Available at <http://www.pbd-india.com/about.html>; accessed 6 August 2014

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879 more on regulating illegal movements, including cross-border trafficking – for example, the  
880 Bangladesh-India Agreement for Mutual Legal Assistance in criminal issues and Transfer of Sentenced  
881 Persons of 2010 and the Bangladesh-India Agreement for Combating Terrorism, Transnational  
882 Organized Crimes, and Illegal Drug Trafficking of 2010.

883 With regard to internal migration, policy provisions vary significantly. For instance, the Constitution  
884 of India provides for “freedom of movement” as well as “freedom of employment” anywhere in India.  
885 Additionally, there is also a specific law, the Inter State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment  
886 and Conditions of Service) Act (1979) and Rules (1980) that is meant to guide internal labour migrants.  
887 However, in India, a negative attitude and hostility towards internal migrants persists, sustained by  
888 the ‘*sons of the soil*’ ideology despite the fact that the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to move  
889 as a fundamental principle under Article 19 (Weiner, 1978). A group of internal migrants who are  
890 illiterate, low skilled, temporary and seasonal migrants are more vulnerable to various kinds of  
891 exclusion and denial of their rights in urban areas. These categories of migrants are excluded from  
892 social security programmes such as public distribution of food, access to education and healthcare and,  
893 most importantly, entitlement to housing at the place of destination because they lack proof of identity  
894 and residency. Social security programmes are place-bound and the implementation of such  
895 programmes fall under the purview of the state governments. Inter-state migrants face more hardships  
896 as social security programmes are not portable (Bhagat, 2012).

897 Some of the Acts regulating internal labour migration, such as the Inter-state Migrant Workmen  
898 Regulation Act, 1979 (ISMWRA), which deals with contractor-led movements of inter-state migrant  
899 labour, are not enforced properly. While a segment of the migrant worker population moves with  
900 contractors, many also find work independently through the network of family, friends and kin and so  
901 do not fall under the purview of the ISMWRA. Further, many schemes and programmes for workers in  
902 the informal sector are also applicable to migrant workers but require registration and, in some cases,  
903 identity cards. One very significant programme for migrant workers comes under the Building and  
904 Other Construction Workers Act, 1996. Under this Act, funds are collected through construction tax  
905 for the welfare of construction workers. Substantial funds have been collected by the Construction  
906 Welfare Boards in many states, but implementation of the programme is very poor due to the lack of  
907 registration of workers (Bhagat, 2014).

908 According to the Constitution of China, citizens have the right as well as the duty to work, so the right  
909 to work is a fundamental civil right in China. Due to the household registration (Hukou) system in  
910 China, citizens’ freedom of movement within China is somewhat restricted. However, there are a  
911 number of laws and regulations applicable to the migrant workforce, such as the Labour Law (1995),  
912 Labor Contract Law (2008) and Regulations on Work-Related Injury Insurances (2011). Moreover, the  
913 Interim Regulations on Residence Permits adopted by the State Council in 2015 contain a set of specific  
914 regulations that provide migrant workers access to basic public services and facilities in the city they  
915 migrate to. In fact, China has been experiencing an enormous movement of migrant workers from rural  
916 to urban areas for the past three decades. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics show that the  
917 number of people who have left their rural residence to work in urban areas was about 277.5 million in  
918 2015 (NBS, 2016).

919 While there are no explicit policies regulating internal migration, Gazdar (2003) makes an interesting  
920 case connecting urban planning and regulation with internal migration. Gazdar’s comment arises in  
921 the context of what the author calls the ‘settle first, regularize later’ policy in Pakistan: When workers

922 migrate to urban centres, they require access to housing and public goods, the provisioning of which  
923 is the hallmark of good urban planning. In Pakistan, however, most workers at the lower end of the  
924 income distribution initially live in unregulated settlements. Only much later is the residents' private  
925 property recognized and the settlement considered eligible for various public services (hence settle  
926 first, regularize later).

927 One implication of such a policy for internal migrants is that the policy space may appear liberal. Given  
928 the political connotations of internal migration in Pakistan, policy alternatives could most certainly  
929 be more restrictive. Such alternatives could include insistence on the fulfilment of legal requirements  
930 in settlement and building regulations, which would lead to higher rents and therefore rationing of  
931 migrants on economic grounds. This apparently laissez faire policy does need to be qualified, however,  
932 by several instances of de-settlement, as in the case of the irregular Afghan migrants in the 1980s in  
933 Karachi and the more recent de-settlements of lower class neighbourhoods to make way for large  
934 development projects in Karachi and Lahore (the settlements being populated in large part by  
935 migrants, particularly in Karachi).

936 One commonality in public policies on internal migration is the strong sedentary bias, which limits the  
937 benefits for migrants and their families. Policies should aim to create conducive conditions that allow  
938 people to choose to stay or move, and if they move, can fully benefit from the process. It should be  
939 noted that international migration governance is regulative and control oriented. However, social  
940 protection measures or the right to decent work granted to international migrant workers should also  
941 be made available to vulnerable internal migrants such as domestic workers, construction workers,  
942 hawkers and security guards.

943 Besides these laws, governments within the region have time and again introduced regulations and  
944 directives to regulate migratory processes, including placing bans on movement of certain categories  
945 of workers (e.g., female workers), as well as introduced policies such as the 'free visa, free ticket' policy  
946 in Nepal to reduce the cost of migration.

947 Important to the governance of migration are a variety of regional and international instruments  
948 relating to migration, though the extent to which countries in the region have acceded to these vary  
949 significantly. For instance, in the HKH region, only Bangladesh has ratified the International  
950 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families  
951 (1990), which is recognized as the most comprehensive treaty pertaining to the rights of migrant  
952 workers and their families. Similarly, none of the countries in the region have ratified the ILO  
953 Conventions that are deemed to have significant bearing on migrants, including the Domestic Workers'  
954 Convention (2011) (C189), Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention (1975) (or C143),  
955 and the Private Employment Agencies Convention (1997) (or C181). Of late, major sending countries  
956 in the region (e.g., Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan) have joined regional  
957 consultative forums such as the Colombo Process and Abu Dhabi Dialogue. Further, most countries in  
958 the region have ratified the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination on Women (CEDAW), which  
959 includes specific provisions on women migrant workers, especially as part of General Recommendation  
960 No. 26.

961 Broadly, international migration policies in the region seek to regulate labour migration, focusing on  
962 the management of recruitment processes. These policies encourage systematic and legal labour  
963 migration processes that comply with government regulations and discourage illegal and

964 undocumented migration by enforcing the government’s regulatory framework. Provisions for  
965 protecting workers or ensuring decent work are minimal, except perhaps in the case of Bangladesh,  
966 which has provisions most aligned with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights  
967 of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990). While most of these policies seek to  
968 safeguard the interest of workers and ensure their welfare, the focus is largely on providing  
969 information, supporting secure employment abroad and mechanisms for compensating workers for  
970 harms experienced abroad.

971 To supplement the national regulations, countries in the region have also entered into bilateral  
972 agreements with the major destination countries. Broadly, these bilateral instruments focus on mutual  
973 intent to enhance employment opportunities in the destination countries; measures that host  
974 countries will take for the protection and welfare of workers in the organized sector; regulation of the  
975 recruitment process in both the countries; and establishment of a joint working group to ensure the  
976 implementation of the MOU and bilaterally resolve any labour concerns. Barring a few, most of these  
977 bilateral instruments again focus on managing the recruitment and employment processes, with few,  
978 if any, provisions for protecting the workers or ensuring decent work for the migrants during their  
979 sojourn abroad.

980 Other measures adopted for managing the labour migration processes include the BAIRA Code of  
981 Conduct in Bangladesh formulated in September 2010 to promote a high standard of practice in the  
982 international recruitment and employment of Bangladeshi workers; the practice of providing labour  
983 permits or emigration clearances by BMET in Bangladesh, Protector of Emigrants (POE) in India and  
984 DoFE in Nepal; and the one-stop shops in the form of labour villages established in Nepal; setting up  
985 of the labour desk at the international airports of Nepal and Bangladesh to verify employment  
986 documents and labour permits of workers, and accordingly support risk-free movements.

987 Afghanistan has witnessed a massive flow of population. On the one hand large segments of the  
988 population have left the country or become displaced within the country due to deterioration of the  
989 security situation and lack of employment. On the other hand huge numbers of Afghan refugees have  
990 been forced to return from the neighbouring countries (e.g., Pakistan and Iran) or other countries in  
991 the west. This has added to the complexity of migration governance and politics. The government’s  
992 predominant approach so far has been to treat migration and refugee flow as a major challenge while  
993 overlooking the opportunities that migrants bring in from outside. The politics of the migration  
994 discourse has also added another layer of complexity to this issue, and as a result the country still lacks  
995 a comprehensive strategy for dealing with the increasing rural-urban migration, returnee  
996 management, and developing plans and programmes to integrate Afghans who have been forcibly  
997 deported from abroad. Evidently, each one of these categories of migrants requires an in-depth study  
998 that could provide a basis for a strong, responsive and comprehensive strategy.

999 Recently, on 9 June 2015, the Government of Nepal (GoN) issued a notice indicating that the process  
1000 of labour migration from Nepal will be free of cost, or incur the minimum cost possible (MoLE, 2015a).  
1001 As indicated in the published notice, the employer will be responsible for bearing the cost of the visa,  
1002 ticket, and all other related expenses, with minimum fees charged to the migrant worker. The  
1003 recruitment agencies (hereafter RAs) would be permitted to charge a maximum of NPR 10,000 (USD  
1004 100) as a service and promotional fee only when the employing company overseas provides in writing  
1005 that they will not bear the travel and recruitment costs of the concerned worker(s). Accordingly, the  
1006 ‘free-visa, free-ticket’ or the ‘zero-cost migration’, as the scheme has come to be known, requires the

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1007 prospective migrant to pay only for services such as pre-departure orientation training, medical check-  
1008 ups, the government-mandated workers' welfare fund, and insurance. The policy will be applied to  
1009 workers going to seven countries, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab  
1010 Emirates, and Malaysia.

1011 In recent years there have been some significant developments in anti-trafficking legislation. The  
1012 definition of trafficking is no longer limited to commercial sexual exploitation; it has been broadened  
1013 to encompass labour trafficking, slavery, bonded labour, organ trade, and drug trafficking.  
1014 Concomitant measures against traffickers have also been put in place. While implementation gaps  
1015 remain, the laws in Bangladesh and Nepal have also empowered the governments to set up a special  
1016 fund to provide support to victims of trafficking. In addition to these legal provisions, the government  
1017 of Bangladesh has taken a number of important steps, sometimes in conjunction with civil society  
1018 organizations, to address some of the gaps in implementation. For example, the government drafted a  
1019 National Plan of Action for 2012-2014 and created an inter-ministerial anti-trafficking committee  
1020 chaired by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and formed a counter-trafficking coordination committee  
1021 together with the Ministry of Home Affairs and civil society groups.<sup>12</sup> Gender-sensitive programmes or  
1022 initiatives specified in the Action Plan include: support for the implementation of the new anti-  
1023 trafficking law, increasing awareness about trafficking of women and children, and improving  
1024 monitoring and oversight of the entire migrant labour recruitment process.<sup>13</sup>

1025 Besides anti-trafficking regulations, another measure that the governments have introduced time and  
1026 again relate to restricting mobility, especially of women, on the grounds of protecting them. For  
1027 example, until 2003, Bangladesh had placed a ban for sending domestic female workers (Siddiqui 2008).  
1028 Similarly, the Government of Nepal in August 2012 had placed a ban barring women less than 30 years  
1029 of age from migrating as domestic help, which was lifted in 2016 but on the grounds that certain  
1030 conditions, such as minimum wage for domestic workers, be met.

1031 Another common measure adopted by major sending countries in the region to protect workers  
1032 involves setting up welfare funds. In Bangladesh and Nepal, workers are required to contribute to such  
1033 welfare fund but in India, this entails a security deposit of USD 2500 per worker from the foreign  
1034 employer who is hiring an Indian worker. Specifically, the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2006 is a  
1035 compulsory insurance scheme for all migrant workers who have obtained a clearance from the POE.  
1036 Under this scheme, the migrant workers are insured for a minimum coverage of INR 0.3 million for the  
1037 entire period of the employment contract. Some of the salient features of the scheme include: (i) cost  
1038 of transporting the dead body, in case of any such eventuality; (ii) transportation costs for workers who  
1039 are stranded or experience substantive changes in the employment contract; (iii) travel support to  
1040 migrant workers who fall sick or are declared medically unfit to work; and (iv) medical coverage of a  
1041 minimum of INR 50,000.

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<sup>12</sup> The five primary goals of the National Plan of Action are: 1) prevention of human trafficking; 2) protection of trafficking victims/survivors; 3) prosecution of human trafficking offences; 4) development of partnership, participation, coordination and cross-country mutual legal assistance; 5) and development of monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanism.

<sup>13</sup> CEDAW Committee, *Concluding Observations*, para 22c.

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