Thank you for agreeing to be an expert reviewer of one or more of the Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme (HIMAP) Comprehensive Assessment of the Hindu Kush Himalaya report chapters. The external review period is now open for the second order drafts of the chapters. This external review phase will run from 16 June to 28 July 2017, with 28 July 2017 being the cut-off date for submitting reviews. The function of expert reviewers is to comment on the accuracy and completeness of the content and the overall scientific, technical and socio-economic balance of the chapter drafts. Every reviewer will be acknowledged in the chapter they reviewed.

Comments will only be considered if they are submitted before the end of the external review phase, using the official Excel review template for the chapter that you are reviewing. Please use a separate Excel review file for each chapter you are reviewing. Your completed review needs to be uploaded to the Open Review Forum page on the HIMAP website (www.hi-map.org) before 28 July 2017. Also see this website to download the chapters and review forms and for more information.

We would like to remind you that by undertaking this review you commit to respect the terms of this external review phase – specifically to not quote, cite, copy or disseminate (including in blogs or to the media) the draft HIMAP chapters; to only provide comments using the provided templates; to comment only in English and to comment only on substance (not grammar and spelling).

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is coordinating the HIMAP Comprehensive Assessment of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (see www.hi-map.org), with the engagement of over 300 researchers, practitioners, experts, and decision makers from the region and around the world. The publication of the assessment report is planned towards the end of 2017. A comprehensive assessment that goes beyond climate change, the Assessment Report, consisting of 15 chapters, contains a wide-ranging, innovative evaluation of the current state of knowledge of the region and of various drivers of change and their impacts, and a set of policy messages.

Review is an essential part of the HIMAP process to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the scientific, technical and socio-economic content and the overall balance of the HIMAP chapters. The review process of the HIMAP Assessment Chapters consists of external peer review by experts and government representatives, and open peer review, of the 2nd order drafts of the chapters. All written review comments will be provided to the chapter teams anonymously and the Review Editor of each chapter will ensure that all comments are taken into account by the author teams and adequately addressed. A record of all review comments and how they were addressed will be published online on completion of the HIMAP assessment.

Three major principles underpin the HIMAP review process. Firstly, the best possible scientific and technical advice should be included so that HIMAP Assessment Report represent the latest scientific, technical and socio-economic findings and is as comprehensive as possible. Secondly, a wide circulation process assuring representation of independent experts not involved in the preparation of the assessment report will aim to involve as many expert reviewers as possible in the HIMAP process. Thirdly, the review process will be neutral, open and transparent. Thank you for your review.
CHAPTER 15: MIGRATION IN THE HKH REGION: GOVERNANCE, DRIVERS, AND CONSEQUENCES

Coordinating Lead Authors: Tasneem Siddiqui¹, Ram B Bhagat², Soumyadeep Banerjee³

Lead Authors: Chengfang Liu⁴, Bandita Sijapati⁵, Rashid Memon⁶, Pema Thinley⁷, Ghulam Muhammad Arif⁸, Orzala Ahmed Neymat⁹

Review Editor: TBD

Reviewers: TBD

Affiliations:
1. University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh
2. International Institute of Population Sciences, Mumbai, India
3. International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu, Nepal
4. Peking University, Beijing, China
5. World Bank, Colombo, Sri Lanka
6. Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan
7. Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, Thimphu, Bhutan
8. Independent expert, Islamabad, Pakistan
9. Kabul, Afghanistan
Table of Contents

Chapter 15: Migration in the HKH Region: Governance, Drivers, and Consequences ................................................................. 1

Migration in the HKH: A potential development boon with clear priorities for policy makers .................................................. 5

15.1 Migration patterns in the HKH ........................................................................................................................................... 5
   15.1.1 Afghanistan ...................................................................................................................................................... 6
   15.1.2 Bangladesh ..................................................................................................................................................... 6
   15.1.3 Bhutan ......................................................................................................................................................... 7
   15.1.4 China ........................................................................................................................................................ 7
   15.1.5 India ......................................................................................................................................................... 8
   15.1.6 Pakistan ................................................................................................................................................... 9
   15.1.7 Nepal ....................................................................................................................................................... 10

15.2 Determinants of migration .............................................................................................................................................. 11
   15.2.1 Economic .................................................................................................................................................. 11
   15.2.2 Social ...................................................................................................................................................... 12
   15.2.3 Demographic ........................................................................................................................................ 12
   15.2.4 Political .................................................................................................................................................. 13
   15.2.5 Environmental ........................................................................................................................................ 13

15.3 Individual characteristics ............................................................................................................................................... 14

15.4 Intervening obstacles and facilitators .......................................................................................................................... 15

15.5 Migration as a driver of change........................................................................................................................................ 16
   15.5.1 Migration as a driver of economic change ................................................................................................. 16
   15.5.2 Migration as a driver of social change ....................................................................................................... 17
   15.5.3 Role of migration in facing environmental shocks .................................................................................. 19
   15.5.5 Migration and political change ................................................................................................................... 20
   15.5.6 Migration consequences are determined by personal and household characteristics .................. 20
   15.5.7 Intervening obstacles and facilitators of migration outcomes ................................................................. 21

15.6 Migration governance: Policies, Institutions, and programmes ....................................................................................... 22

References............................................................................................................................................................................. 28
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 polices, 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.

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

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

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

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

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

Earlier, international migration governance was based on regulation and control (well established). They have sought to manage recruitment, introduced restriction on movements of certain categories
of workers (such as unskilled women). Some of the HKH countries have criminalised irregular and undocumented migration. Nonetheless, protection mechanism in both origin and the destination countries remained weak. In recent times some of the HKH governments have introduced new migration policies, framed new laws, created a separate ministry, etc. (Established but incomplete).

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

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

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

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

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

A challenge to analysing migration’s effects across the HKH is that certain countries in the region, such as Nepal and Afghanistan, are mostly mountainous, whereas others are not. For example, only a small part of Bangladesh (the Chittagong Hill Tracts) belongs to the Himalaya mountain system. Whereas Nepal’s experience—as a country—of short-term international contractual migration can generally be
applied to its mountain areas, Bangladesh does not allow for such generalization: its national data may 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.
MIGRATION IN THE HKH: A POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BOON WITH CLEAR PRIORITIES FOR POLICY MAKERS

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

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

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

15.1 MIGRATION PATTERNS IN THE HKH

This section provides a brief country-specific overview of the diverse patterns of migration and remittance flow in the HKH. All HKH countries, except Afghanistan and Bhutan, show an increasing stock of emigrants (see Figure 1). The economic ramification of international contractual migration from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan has been well-documented. The mobility experience of Afghanistan is associated with the protracted conflicts that have led to internal displacement, refugee...
flows, and international migration. The highest increase in remittance inflow has been in Myanmar followed by India, China, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan (World Bank, 2014).

15.1.1 Afghanistan

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

15.1.2 Bangladesh

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

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

Bangladesh is a major remittance receiving country. Among the developing countries, its position usually hovers around 7 to 8. The flow of remittance has dropped substantially in 2016. That year Bangladesh received USD 136 billion. The figure was almost 11 percent less than in the previous year.
(USD 15.31 billion) (Bangladesh Bank, 2017). This decline has also been experienced by India and Nepal. Drop in oil prices, low economic growth in the Gulf region and the lowering of the value of Euro and Pound Sterling have been identified as major reasons (World Bank, 2016a). Saudi Arabia is still the most important source of remittance for Bangladesh, followed by the UAE, US and Malaysia.

15.1 Bhutan

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

15.1.4 China

China’s rapid development and urbanization has induced large numbers of rural residents to migrate from their homes in the countryside to urban areas (Hu et al., 2008; Wen and Lin, 2012; MHRSS, 2013). Between 1983 and 2015, the proportion of rural workers who migrated increased from less than 1 percent to over 20 percent.\(^1\) Nationally representative household survey data reveal an increasing trend of rural to urban migration. Wang et al. (2011) have shown that the proportion of wage earning migrants increased from 4.2 percent to 25 percent between 1982 and 2008, defined as those wage earners who did not live in the household while working. Li et al. (2013) have also found that the proportion of rural labour with any off-farm employment, either wage earning or self-employed, has increased from 28 percent to 61 percent between 1995 and 2011. According to Gong et al. (2008), migrants to rural areas in China sent about USD 50 billion remittances in 2005. The growth of rural labour markets is important beyond its role in providing rural labour with a means to raise income (Todaro, 1976). China’s modernization efforts rely on labour markets, which facilitate the transformation from a largely rural population into an urban population. Without well-functioning labour markets, it will be difficult to shift from agriculture to industry or service sectors as the primary mode of production.

\(^{1}\) Estimated by authors from the datasets of the National Bureau of Statistics of China.
15.1.5 India

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

Emigration from the Indian Himalayan region is lower compared to that from the plains. The emigration is largely influenced by a higher socio-economic status, a network of emigrants and emigration infrastructure (Bhagat, Keshri and Ali, 2013). On the other hand, inter-state migration from the Himalayan region is higher than from the plains. About one-third of out-migrants from the Himalayan region had moved to seek employment. Among the drivers of migration in the mountains, the economic driver is the most important, followed by marriage and education. However, the data has some obvious limitations. For example, if entire households have migrated, this has not been captured, and the survey underestimates both internal and international out-migration.
India is the world’s largest remittance recipient. It received USD 70 billion as per the latest data available from the World Bank in 2014.\(^2\) The survey-based estimates show that household remittances sent by internal migrants in 2007-2008 were twice those sent by international migrants for the same period (NSSO, 2010). Further, in the Indian Himalayan region a relatively higher proportion of households (12 percent) received remittances compared to the non-Himalayan part of the country (9 percent), according to NSSO 64\(^{th}\) conducted in 2007-2008. Studies on India have concluded that remittances have a poverty-reducing effect and shown that remittances are associated with higher household expenditure on health and education. Remittance also helps increase school attendance and ensure food security, as higher proportions of households from the lower socio-economic strata depend on remittance to meet the costs of food and education (Deshingkar and Sandi, 2012; Smita, 2008; Chellaraj and Mohapatra, 2014).

### 15.1.6 Pakistan

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

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

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

---


\(^3\) Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Surveys various rounds

\(^4\) [http://beoe.gov.pk/reports-and-statistics](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.

\(^5\) ibid
distinguish between the types of remittances: foreign remittances are considered to be a transitory income and lead to a substantial increase in household assets while domestic remittances are mainly used for non-durable consumption.

15.1.7 Nepal

In recent years, migration from Nepal has reached unprecedented levels with a surge in the number of people seeking employment abroad. As reported in the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) 2010/11, 53 percent of households in Nepal have at least one absentee living within or outside the country (GoN 2012, p.135). As per the 2011 census, this indicates more than two-fold increase in the number of Nepalis living away from the country from 2001 to 2011 (GoN, 2012). The figures for labour migrants are equally significant with a total of 2,723,587 labour permits issued by the Department of Labour and Employment from 2008/2009 through 2014-2015 (GoN, 2016). While men account for approximately 96 percent of the labour permits issued between 2008 and 2015, the number of females seeking employment has increased by 2.5 times over the same period (GoN, 2016, p.7-8). In terms of age, youths constitute the largest proportion of people leaving the country for employment. According to data available at the Department of Foreign Employment, 47 percent of migrants are from the age group 26–35 followed by age group 36–45 (25.85 percent). There is no significant variation in the age categories of male and female migrants (GoN, 2016).

In terms of destination, the data available from DoFE does not include migrant workers going to India since labour permits are not required for India, and to the Republic of Korea since workers go through the government-to-government agreement (GoN, 2016). However, if one were to include these countries, the 2011 census figures indicate that the percentage of Nepalis going to India is equal to those headed towards the Gulf (approximately 38 percent) followed by the ASEAN countries (13 percent) (GoN, 2015). Primary destinations include Malaysia and the Gulf countries, which account for 85 percent of the labour permits issued during the same period (GoN, 2016). There is however a slight variation in the destination countries for women and men with a higher percentage of men going to Malaysia, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, where the demand for construction workers is higher, while the proportion of females is higher for countries like the UAE and Kuwait, where women mostly go as domestic workers (GoN, 2016).

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

---

6 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.
percent), followed by repayment of loan (7 percent); capital formation and investment in business comprises a minimal share (GoN, 2012). It is also argued that the shortage of labour due to emigration might compel agricultural households to keep land barren, reduce agricultural productivity and ultimately lead to acute food shortages (Bhatta, 2013).

### 15.2 Determinants of Migration

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

#### 15.2.1 Economic

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

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

---


---

Do Not Cite, Quote, or Distribute
urban areas. Economic opportunities within the region also shape the flow of migrants within the region and neighbouring lowlands (Liang and Ma, 2004; Nepal, 2007; Brusle, 2008). In Bhutan, internal migration mostly takes place from the rest of the country to Thimphu, Paro and Chukha, which are the economic hubs of the country (MoAF, 2013; Ura, 2013). In Afghanistan, Kabul receives the largest number of migrants followed by Jalalabad, Herat, Kandahar and Mazar (Opel 2005) and a majority of the migrants are men in the 15–45 age-group. Respondents of two CHT districts of Bangladesh identified all kinds of economic reasons ranging from low wage in the area of origin and better income opportunities at the destination to desire for economic betterment and coming out of poverty (Siddiqui et al., 2014).

15.2.2 Social

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

15.2.3 Demographic

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

Urban centres are attractive to potential migrants because of access to employment opportunities, access to urban amenities and services such as education, health, electricity and water, and opportunities for participating in the market. According to the MoA (2006), rural to urban migration is a significant contributor to the urbanization process in Bhutan as 72 percent of all urban dwellers could
be classified as migrants from rural areas. Increased urbanization has been a significant cause of rural to urban migration in the Indian Himalayas (Mohanty and Bhagat, 2015; Lusome and Bhagat, 2013).

15.2.4 Political

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

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

15.2.5 Environmental

There is a relative lack of specific empirical evidence on the role of environmental drivers of migration 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
In Nepal, Massey et al. (2007) found that each additional year of schooling raised the odds of long distance migration by a highly significant 5 percent. Migration has a cost and requires certain resources (financial and social) to meet or mitigate these costs. Therefore, migration may not be feasible for all households. Some households may not choose migration if other comparatively more feasible options are available to them. In China, Du et al. (2004) found that the likelihood of migration increased with low endowment levels. The socially dominant castes have better access to education, financial means and social networks. In Nepal, Bhandari (2004) reported that, even at the lower level of relative deprivation, individuals with relatively better socio-economic conditions are more likely to move. Since the establishment of the current political setting in 2001, patterns of international migration from Afghanistan have changed in terms of gender and age group. For instance, most migrants from Afghanistan to the United Kingdom in 2001 were young men in their 20s and 30s. In 2006 the number of unaccompanied minors increased. Although the majority of Afghan migrants are still young males, the number of female migrants – who are married to Afghan residents in other countries – has increased since 2008.9

15.4 INTERVENING OBSTACLES AND FACILITATORS

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

---

9 Samuel Hall, Complexities and challenges in afghan migration, April 2013
Afghans also confront challenges that are specific to their status as refugees. For Afghan living in refugee camps, access to labour markets and free movement are restricted, and this leads to stymying of opportunities for employment, and access to basic services (citation). The study on migration decisions of CHT population covered non-migrant households as well. The respondents cited economic, social, environmental and demographic reasons for not sending family members to work away from home. However, 37 percent of these households wanted to send family members for work but could not. They did not have information on work opportunities outside the village. They also did not know anyone at the destination. They lived in remote areas without good roads or communication facilities. Some of them mentioned lack of skill as well as inability to bear the cost of migration as obstacles to migration (Siddiqui et al., 2014).

15.5 MIGRATION AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE

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

15.5.1 Migration as a driver of economic change

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

A number of studies suggest that remittances play a crucial role in rural economic development (Hugo, 2002). Remittances can provide flows of capital into small farms in the peripheral rural areas (Ratha, 2005). Siddiqui and Mahmood (2015) found that short-term international migrants contributed more to agricultural development than internal migrants by using improved seeds, adequate fertilizer, regular irrigation and insecticides. This group also made investment in irrigation pump, power tiller, tractor, paddy separators and portable rice processing machines. However, compared to female
migrants, male migrants invested more in agricultural development. Remittances can also create considerable multiplier effects in the local economies of origin areas and countries. In India, for example, remittances sent by short-term international migrants from Kerala and the diaspora of Punjab boosted agricultural growth at the local level. Greater production in agriculture generated local demands for certain products such as water pumps, high quality seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides (Srivastava et al., 2011). A study by RMMRU (2011) showed that returnee migrants and families of current migrants in Bangladesh invested a portion of their remittances in small and medium enterprises that employed 5 to 200 workers. In Afghanistan, financial and social remittances are invaluable to the families of migrants. For instance, 73 percent of interviewees in a UNAMA study (2008) stated that they shared the new skills they learnt abroad with their families upon return. Furthermore, these remittances are more dependable and less volatile than other flows from abroad such as direct investment or official development projects.

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

In a study conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in 2015, about 49.2 percent of rural households reported farm labour shortage as a result of out-migration. Interestingly, an analysis of the National Labour Force Survey from 2010 to 2012 reveals a very different scenario, suggesting that rural employment expanded by 3.6 percent annually. However, the expansion is due to increased employment of people over 45 years of age; it is also important to note that rural agricultural employment of age group 15–24 declined by 24.7 percent per annum. It is evident that the elderly and women are now engaged in agriculture. Given the composition of farm labour, they are not able to optimally utilize the resources. This has direct impact on agricultural production and poses a risk to the national goal of food security and food self-sufficiency. Available data also indicate that Bhutan continues to import most of its food from other countries. A study by (citation) in Afghanistan reported that only 1 percent of respondents had invested remittances in livestock or land in their home villages.

15.5.2 Migration as a driver of social change

Ratha et al. (2011) highlighted that international migration contributes to the formation of human capital. Various studies showed that a disproportionately higher portion of remittances from international migration is spent on education and health than on everyday consumption (Adams, 2005; Adams et al., 2008, Nagarajan 2009, Ratha et al. 2011, World Bank 2006). Evidence from rural Pakistan,
India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh suggest that short-term international migration is associated with increased school enrolment (Bhadra, 2007; Mansuri, 2006; SMC, 2004). Again, it is difficult to compare the impact of internal and international migration on education. Srivastava (2011) and Srivastava and Dasgupta (2010) showed that in India children accompanying seasonal and circular internal migrants do not attend school, as school systems generally do not allow children to be absent for prolonged periods. In Sri Lanka, internal migrants who live in slum areas face problems accessing schools for their children (Fernando 2005, Hugo 2002). However, these studies do not indicate if children of non-migrant families face the same problems in the same settlements.

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

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

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

Migration provides income to the elderly but also creates a vacuum for care (Hoang, 2011). Fathers who were 50 years and above were major receivers of remittances, followed by brothers, wives and mothers (Siddiqui and Abrar, 2003). Hugo (2002) suggests that in Indonesia, ties between the elderly and their adult migrant children have been weakened by international migration. In these instances, migration creates a vacuum for the much-needed care of the elderly. In Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, female
migration has increased the workload of elderly women (INSTRAW/IOM, 2000). In particular, having
to look after their grandchildren is an extremely demanding task for these elderly women. However, it
also strengthens extended family bonds (INSTRAW/IOM, 2000; Siddiqui, 2001).

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

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

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

15.5.3 Role of migration in facing environmental shocks

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

Due to climate shocks and hazards, loss of homestead, traditional livelihoods, agricultural land,
unplanned urbanization, etc. are the major problems identified as negative outcomes of climate
change related population movement (Siddiqui et al. forthcoming), however, has shown that not all
types of climate-related migration produce negative consequences. Rather, on many occasions,
affected households autonomously adopt migration as an adaptation tool. When some of the villages were submerged in the river and some others became uninhabitable due to drought or water logging, the villagers created new settlements in other locations. Again some of the households of partially affected villages adapted to climate shocks by relocating to nearby villages or to towns or cities. Therefore the authors concluded that households that could maintain the economic and social condition at the pre-climate shock level are examples of successful adaptation. Those who resettled themselves temporarily on roadsides or embankments definitely serve as examples of maladaptation; in other words, migration in these cases worked as drivers of negative change. Further, the research found that short-term international contract migration of one or a few members of a family in fact helped some of the climate change affected households to adapt in situ through transfer of remittances.

15.5.5 Migration and political change

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

15.5.6 Migration consequences are determined by personal and household characteristics

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

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

Migration outcome is also influenced by pre-migration wealth and skill level. Rich households have more choices with respect to migration destination. Those who migrate to developed western countries
belong to the richest economic quartile or to the highly skilled category. Majority of those who migrate to the Gulf region, other Arab countries and Southeast Asia to do unskilled work are not from rich or middle-income households but they are mostly from households above the poverty level. Poorer people are likely to opt for rural-to-rural and rural-to-urban, seasonal and temporary internal migration with lower salaries and wages and thus low remittances.

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

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

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

### 15.5.7 Intervening obstacles and facilitators of migration outcomes

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

Cost has direct impact on the outcome of migration. Those who pay high costs are likely to gain less economic benefits. As the cost of migration was low in the 1980s and 1990s, short-term contract migration produced positive economic and social results for the majority of migrant-sending households. Studies have shown that over the years the cost of migration has become exorbitantly high and it is near impossible to reap sustainable economic benefit from migration. Visa trading in destination countries, existence of tiers of intermediaries in both the countries of origin and destination, lack of accountability of recruiting agencies, lack of efficient governance system, and lack of information on safe migration among potential migrants have contributed to the soaring cost of migration. Among migrants from the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, Bangladeshi migrants bear the
Migration outcome is also determined by the migration governance system. Migration governance is extremely complicated as it involves more than one country. Contract migration between origin and destination countries are mostly facilitated by bilateral arrangements. In reality the destination countries set the terms and conditions, which may not respect decent work and the human rights of the workers. This has major ramifications for migration outcomes. Origin countries of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region have taken steps to improve migration governance. These include framing of emigration laws, establishment of separate ministries, setting up of labour offices in destination, developing welfare programmes for migrants, etc. However, only a few countries could make reasonable progress in implementing such programmes and policies. In South Asia, Sri Lanka is at the forefront in this respect. Poor governance leads to fraudulent schemes, unprotected working conditions, non-payment of salary, and physical, verbal and sexual abuse. Therefore inability to govern produces lower migration outcome.

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

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

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

15.6 MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS, AND PROGRAMMES

Migration will continue to increase; migration governance in the region is hence critical. Migration could lead to conflict between the host population and the migrants over ethnic and religious matters, resource ownership, and provision of public goods and services. Migration governance comprises a
variety of national, regional and international policies and frameworks. There are a number of national polices and regional and international instruments that govern migration from and within the HKH countries. The range and coverage of these policies significantly vary across countries. In countries where international migration is perceived as a significant issue (e.g., Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan), there are comprehensive policies and regulations as well as nodal ministries for international migration. Over time, many labour-sending have increasingly recognized labour migration as an avenue for development; work that pays decent wages in destination countries can bring substantial foreign exchange earning into the origin country. Thus far, this has been done in two ways. First, by supporting workers with reduced costs of migration and channels for remitting money – for example, the Probashi Kalyan Bankin Bangladesh, established in 2011, operates as a specialized bank for the benefit and welfare of migrant workers. The entire operational activities of the bank can be divided into three main areas:

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

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

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

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

---

\(^{10}\) ‘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]

\(^{11}\) ‘Pravasi Bharatiya Divas’, Available at [http://www.pbd-india.com/about.html; accessed 6 August 2014]
more on regulating illegal movements, including cross-border trafficking – for example, the Bangladesh-India Agreement for Mutual Legal Assistance in criminal issues and Transfer of Sentenced Persons of 2010 and the Bangladesh-India Agreement for Combating Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crimes, and Illegal Drug Trafficking of 2010.

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

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

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

While there are no explicit policies regulating internal migration, Gazdar (2003) makes an interesting case connecting urban planning and regulation with internal migration. Gazdar’s comment arises in the context of what the author calls the ‘settle first, regularize later’ policy in Pakistan: When workers
migrate to urban centres, they require access to housing and public goods, the provisioning of which is the hallmark of good urban planning. In Pakistan, however, most workers at the lower end of the income distribution initially live in unregulated settlements. Only much later is the residents’ private property recognized and the settlement considered eligible for various public services (hence settle first, regularize later).

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

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

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

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

Broadly, international migration policies in the region seek to regulate labour migration, focusing on the management of recruitment processes. These policies encourage systematic and legal labour migration processes that comply with government regulations and discourage illegal and
undocumented migration by enforcing the government’s regulatory framework. Provisions for protecting workers or ensuring decent work are minimal, except perhaps in the case of Bangladesh, which has provisions most aligned with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990). While most of these policies seek to safeguard the interest of workers and ensure their welfare, the focus is largely on providing information, supporting secure employment abroad and mechanisms for compensating workers for harms experienced abroad.

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

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

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

Recently, on 9 June 2015, the Government of Nepal (GoN) issued a notice indicating that the process of labour migration from Nepal will be free of cost, or incur the minimum cost possible (MoLE, 2015a). As indicated in the published notice, the employer will be responsible for bearing the cost of the visa, ticket, and all other related expenses, with minimum fees charged to the migrant worker. The recruitment agencies (hereafter RAs) would be permitted to charge a maximum of NPR 10,000 (USD 100) as a service and promotional fee only when the employing company overseas provides in writing that they will not bear the travel and recruitment costs of the concerned worker(s). Accordingly, the ‘free-visa, free-ticket’ or the ‘zero-cost migration’, as the scheme has come to be known, requires the
prospective migrant to pay only for services such as pre-departure orientation training, medical check-ups, the government-mandated workers' welfare fund, and insurance. The policy will be applied to workers going to seven countries, namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Malaysia.

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

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

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

12 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.

13 CEDAW Committee, *Concluding Observations*, para 22c.
REFERENCES


Banerjee, Soumyadeep; Gerlitz, Jean Yves; and Hoermann, Brigitte (2011) Labour migration as a response strategy to water hazards in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. Kathmandu: ICIMOD.


Chen Guifu and Shigeyuki Hanori (2009), 'Solution to the dilemma of the migrant labour shortage and the rural labour surplus in China', *China and World Economy* 17(4): 53-71.


Hunzai, Gerlitz and Hoermann, 2011.


IUCN (2005) Project proposal on baseline study regarding the socio-economic condition including socio-economic survey of 10 selected villages in Shishi valley of Chitral with special focus on chilghoza pine and its contribution to livelihoods; situation of disadvantaged groups including women and their involvement in Chilghoza business; mapping of resource base (conditions and practices). Islamabad: IUCN.


Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. MoAF, 2013 Migration in Bhutan (Its Extent, Causes and effects), Thimphu


MFA, Recruitment Fees and Migrants’ Rights Violations Policy (Open working Group on Labour migration and recruitment), Brief#1, MFA, Manila.


Siddiqui T., Transcending boundaries: Female labour migration from Bangladesh, UPL publisher, Dhaka 2001.


Siddiqui, T., Bhuiyan, R., Black, R., Islam, T., Knivetton, D., Martin, M. Situating migration in the autonomous and planned adaptation practices in Bangladesh in Rajan and Bhagat (eds) climate change and migration in south asia, forthcoming, Routledge.

Siddiqui, T. and Mahmood, R., 2015 Impact of migration on poverty and local development in Bangladesh, SDC and RMMRU.


