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South Asian Regional Collaboration on Protection of Migrant Rights

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Labour migration is an integral part of current global development. Evidences are emerging from Asia, Africa and Latin America that migration contributes to reduction of poverty and social and economic development (Ratha *et al.* 2011). South Asia has experienced remarkable social and economic advancement since the 1980s. Among others, short-term labour migrants and diaspora population of South Asia played an important role in achieving such development. Among the developing countries India receives the highest remittances. In 2009 it also received additional USD 31 billion as savings deposit of its diaspora.¹ Bangladesh and Pakistan also belong to top ten remittance receiving countries. One-third to one-half of overall reduction of headcount poverty from 42 per cent to 31 per cent in Nepal in 2004 has been attributed to labour migration to the Gulf.

While migration has significantly contributed to the economies of South Asia they pose enormous challenges for those who migrate as well as to individual countries. Many of the challenges require multilateral intervention but South Asian countries have so far attempted to resolve those nationally and bilaterally. This paper identifies some of the important challenges of short-term contract migration where South Asia can pursue common solutions under the auspices of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The paper is based on secondary sources.

The paper is divided in five sections. The second section presents the global context of migration and sets South Asia in that scenario. The third section highlights the challenges that South Asian countries face in governing labour migration. The fourth section presents basic features of migration governance of South Asian countries and their participation in global initiatives of migration governance. The same section analyses lack of use of SAARC in the multilateral forums. The concluding section identifies some major areas in labour migration which can be immediately placed before the SAARC Secretariat to be pursued regionally in global forums.

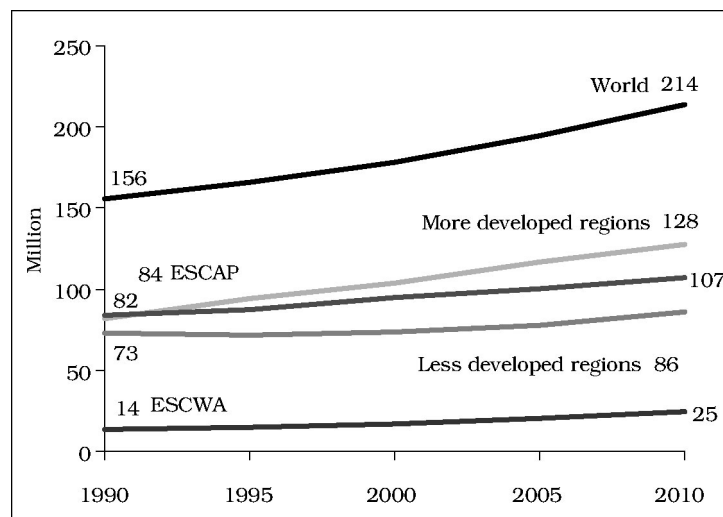
Labour Migration: Global and South Asian Trends

Global Trends

Growth

Over the last 30 years, the number of international migrants has more than doubled. In 1980, 99 million people were living outside their country of origin. In 2005 it became 195 million (UNDESA 2008). In 2010, the figure reached 214 million people (Figure 1). Timothy and Sasikumar (2012) observed that with only 0.2 percentage point increased in the share of global population, the stock of international migrants seems to be relatively stable.

Figure 1: Growth of International Migrants

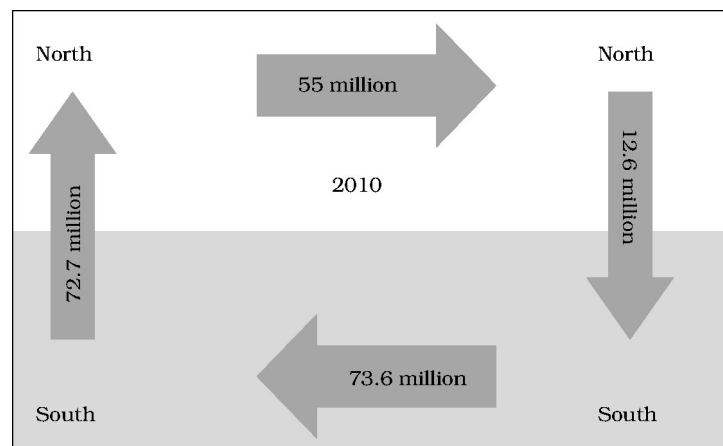


Source: <http://www.unescap.org/sdd/meetings/beirut-June2011/Henning-ESCWA-migration-bet-ESCAP-ESCWA-r%20regions.pdf>

¹This contributed 8 per cent of the country's domestic savings and 2 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP)

The regional spread of international migrant stock shows that in 2010, Europe hosted almost 70 million international migrants, one-third of the global total. Asia (61 million) followed by North America (50 million) were in the second and third positions in terms of international migration stock. An important phenomenon of global migration is that South-South migration is almost as common as South-North migration (Figure 2). In 2011, about 73.6 million international migrants who were born in the South were residing in the South.²

Figure 2: International Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination: 2011



Source: <http://www.unescap.org/sdd/meetings/beirut-June2011/Henning-ESCWA-migration-bet-ESCAP-ESCWA-regions.pdf>

Female Migration

As Table 1 and Figure 3 show women constituted just under half (49 per cent) of all international migrants in 2010 (UNDESA 2011). Significant share of women in international migration has been noted since 1960s (Zlotnik 2003). The stock of international female migrants is estimated to be 105 million in 2010.

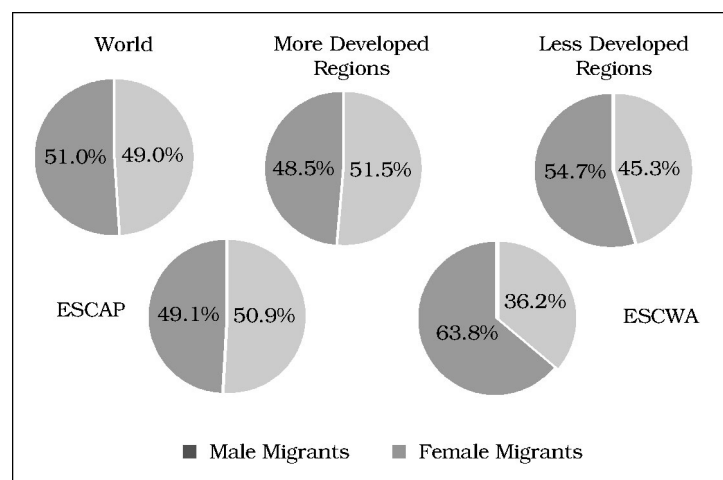
In 2010, female migration from Europe and Oceania constituted the highest percentage (52.4), and Asia represented the lowest percentage (44.6). Nonetheless, over the last decade, growth rate of female migrants compared to male, is higher in Asia. Since the 1980s Asian women constituted the majority of migrant workers in countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

Table 1: Women Migrants as Percentage of International Migrants

| Region | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Africa | 46.2 | 47.1 | 46.7 | 46.7 | 46.8 |
| Asia | 45.4 | 45.3 | 45.7 | 45.0 | 44.6 |
| Europe | 52.7 | 52.4 | 52.8 | 52.5 | 52.3 |
| Latin America & the Caribbean | 49.7 | 49.9 | 50.0 | 50.1 | 50.1 |
| North America | 51.1 | 50.8 | 50.5 | 50.4 | 50.1 |
| Oceania | 49.1 | 49.7 | 50.2 | 50.7 | 51.2 |
| World | 49.1 | 49.3 | 49.4 | 49.2 | 49.0 |

²The term 'North' refers to the more developed regions, and the term 'South' refers to developing countries. The

Figure 3: International Female Migrant Stocks

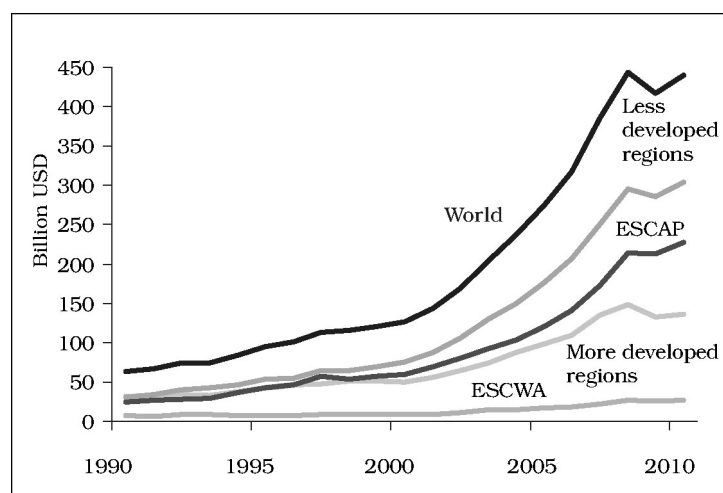


Source: <http://www.unescap.org/sdd/meetings/beirut-June2011/Henning-ESCWA-migration-bet-ESCAP-ESCWA-regions.pdf>

Remittances

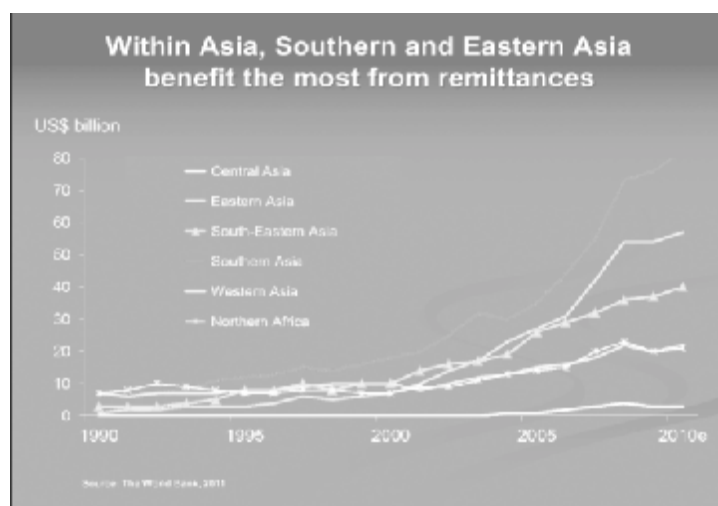
In 2010, estimated USD 440 billion remittances were sent by the migrants to different parts of the world. Of the total flow, estimated USD 325 billion remittances were received by developing countries in that year. It is estimated that in 2011 it has reached to USD 372 billion. This is an increase of 12.1 per cent over 2010. Worldwide remittance flows, including those to high-income countries, reached USD 501 billion in 2011, and is expected to increase to USD 615 billion by 2014.

Figure 4: Global Remittance Flows in Various Regions



Source: Henning (2011).

Figure 5: Remittance Flows in the Asian Region



Source: Henning (2011).

In 2011, India received highest amount of remittance among the developing countries (USD 64 billion). China received USD 62 billion and the Philippines USD 23 billion. Other large Asian recipients include Egypt, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Lebanon. In many Asian countries remittances are equivalent to a significant portion of GDP. Saudi Arab is the second largest remittance source country.

The South Asian Scenario

Number of Migrants

South Asia includes some of the major labour-sending countries of the world. These are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan has also gradually joined in the market.

It is difficult to compare annual short-term contract labour migration flow of South Asian countries as these countries do not follow similar data maintenance system. For example, India only records information of low skilled workers migration to 17 countries. Again, workers who studied more than grade 10 do not require clearance from the government agencies. This means information on a large number of migrants is missing from the Indian dataset. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka record information of all migrants who go abroad as short-term contract workers. Information on international migration from Afghanistan, Bhutan and Maldives are almost non-existent.

Since early 1970s, 3.5 million Indian workers have migrated for work to 17 Gulf countries. In 2010 around 0.64 million workers received emigration clearance (Thimothy and Sasikumar 2012). The total stock of Bangladeshi labour migrants from 1976 to 2011 stands at about 7.7 million. In 2011, about 0.57 million workers emigrated for work from Bangladesh. The total stock of Pakistani labour migrants in 2007 was around 4.67 million.³ In 2009, 0.25 million workers went abroad from Sri Lanka with overseas job. In 2010 the total migration stock of the country stood at 3 million (Thimothy and Sasikumar 2012). In 2009, 0.25 million workers went on overseas job from Nepal (NIDS 2010).

Number of Female Migrants

In general female migration from South Asia is low compared to total flow from each country. Sri Lanka is the only exception. In 2006, 52 per cent of Sri Lankan migrants were women. At one point of time 90 per cent of its migrant workers used to be women. In 2009 only 4.7 per cent of Nepali migrants were women. In 2006 and 2005 0.04 per cent and 0.05 per cent of Pakistani and Indian migrants recorded were women. Up to 1990s less than 1 per cent Bangladeshi overseas workers were women. In 2011, it became 5.38 per cent.

Countries of Destination

44 per cent of Indian workers migrated to Saudi Arab, followed by 20 per cent to the UAE. In 2011, 49.77 percent Bangladeshi workers went to United Arab Emirates (UAE) and 23.8 per cent went to Oman. In the past, Saudi Arabia was the destination of 60-70 per cent of the Bangladeshi workers. In 2011, it dropped to a meager 2.65 per cent. In 2007 48.6 per cent of the total labour migrants of Pakistan went to the UAE, followed by Saudi Arab (29.5 per cent). The majority of male migrants from Nepal go to Qatar followed by Saudi Arab.

It is interesting to observe that labour markets of these countries do not remain static. South Asian countries compete and undercut each other for accessing the short-term labour markets. India and Pakistan used to be the forerunners as labour-senders to the Gulf. Later Bangladesh entered the market by offering lower wages. In the early 1980s, when Sri Lanka wanted to enter it was difficult for it to capture the male migrant markets. Therefore, strategically it chose the female labour market. Nepal only entered the market since the late 1990s. It drastically undercut the Bangladeshi workers by offering even lower wage. The receiving countries also like to rotate its labour intake among the source countries for their own benefit.

Sectors of Employment

During early 1970s all categories of workers, professional, skilled and lowly skilled migrated to the Middle East. Over the years demand for highly skilled workers reduced due to development of indigenous workforce and national policy for employing own citizens. Now most migrants are semi-skilled and lowly skilled.

Semi-skilled and lowly skilled workers find jobs in construction, manufacturing, maintenance, agriculture and services sectors. There are of course country-specific variations. In Malaysia they work in plantations. Along with a few in professional category, South Asian women mostly participate in garments manufacturing industries and domestic work.

Remittances

India, Bangladesh, Pakistan belong to top 10 remittances receiving countries among the developing ones. For Bangladesh it is the highest foreign exchange earning sector. According to World Bank, remittance contributed 6 per cent reduction of poverty in Bangladesh (World Bank 2006). In Nepal it reduced headcount poverty by 11 per cent in 2004. In Sri Lanka, children of remittance receiving families have higher birth weight.

Challenges of Labour Migration

Workers from different South Asian countries are not treated equally in the countries of destination. Therefore, there exist country-specific challenges. Yet one finds a host of common problems which are faced by migrants in the destination countries. In this section some common problems are identified which the South Asian workers face. High cost of migration, exploitation during recruitment, contract substitution, poor wage, long working hours, non-payment of wage and overtime, lack of provision for holidays, and restrictions on movements, abuses at the workplace, lack of social protection and collective bargaining are important areas in this respect.

High Costs of Migration

In recent multilateral forums, high cost of migration has been identified by some origin and destination countries as one of the major hindrances in ensuring protection to migrant workers (GFMD 2011; Abu Dhabi Process 2008; Colombo Process 2011). Cost of migration is indeed very high for South Asian countries as well. Table 2 gives a comparative statement of cost of migration from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. It shows that in almost all the cases actual costs incurred by migrants are two to three times higher than what is prescribed by respective governments. Migration from Sri Lanka to the Middle East is the only exception. The highest cost of migration is reported from Bangladesh. To provide a deeper understanding of complexities of migration cost, a case study of Bangladesh is presented in the subsequent discussion.

Table 2: Country-wise Migration Cost for Low-Skilled Migrants

| Country | Destination | Cost in USD (Government) | Cost in USD (Actual) |
|------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| India | Middle East | 646.024 | 1180.66-1737.43 |
| Pakistan | Middle East | 523.895 | 931.37 |
| | Malaysia | 523.895 | 2328.42 |
| Bangladesh | Middle East | 1142.080 | 2991.16-3263.09 |
| | Malaysia | 1142.080 | 2447.31-2991.16 |
| | Singapore | 1142.080 | 3535.01 |
| Nepal | Middle East | 973.574 | 1398.60 |
| | Malaysia | 1118.880 | 1146.85-1260.15 |
| Sri Lanka | Middle East | 775.405 | 729.368-775.405 |
| | Malaysia | 775.405 | 1094.05 |

Source: RMMRU (2008).

Cost of Migration: The Bangladesh Case

Afsar's research (2009) based on 60 interviews of returnee workers showed that the average cost of male migration was USD 1,980, and for female it was USD 857. Household remittance survey 2009 of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicates that migrants on an average spent USD 2,738 when they migrate to the Middle East. IOM study also indicates that cost of migration varied from country to country. To go to Saudi Arab and UAE migrants spent USD 2,740 on an average. For Kuwait, Qatar and Oman it was USD 2,397, whereas cost for Bahrain was USD 3,082. RMMRU's survey of 10,000 Bangladeshis workers repatriated from Libya (2011) found that 74 per cent of them paid between USD 2,740 to USD 4,110 as migration cost.

According to Siddiqui (2011) the cost of male migration for Saudi Arabia reached its highest peak in 2011 and ranges from USD 4,000-5,400. Migration cost for UAE, Oman and Libya again ranges from USD 2,700-3,400. In case of Bahrain and Qatar it is around USD 2,700.⁴ Compared to male migration, cost for female migration is much less. According to a government functionary, in case of UAE the cost for women migrants varies from USD 270-950, in case of Lebanon it varies from USD 400-1,000.

The cost also varies on the basis of type of visa available to individual migrant. Currently Bangladeshi workers migrate to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states by obtaining four types of visa. These are *Aqama* or work permit, free visa, *Umra* visa in case of Saudi Arab and visit visa, particularly in case of UAE. The average cost of migration on free visa stood at USD 2,264. Fixed job contract visa costs at USD 1,407 and *Umra* visa costs a migrant USD 1,262.

Cost of migration varies significantly on the basis of skill category. Unskilled workers pay more compared to skilled workers. According to the Bangladesh Association for International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) a skilled migrant pays 30 per cent less compared to an unskilled worker.

Exploitation of *Kafil* System

Since the 1950s labour migration is managed in Gulf countries under the *Kafala* system. Individual countries have some variations of this system. Nonetheless in this system demand for bringing any overseas workers has to be placed before the concerned ministry by the employers who are known as *Kafils* (sponsors). The *Kafala* system arrived from the Beduin principles of hospitality that sets obligation in the treatment and protection of foreign guest (Khan and Harroff-Tavel 2011). *Kafils* are supposed to assume full economic and legal responsibility for the employee during the contract period. They are meant to pay the placement fee, if any, to government, air ticket of the workers, commission to the recruiting

⁴Saudi Arab is a sought after destination as there is prospect of employment for a longer period. Although not all of them, but a section of the migrant can stay back and renew their contract once the initial contract is over. If the employer is willing a migrant can stay with the employer for his/her whole work life; of course through

agency if they avail their service, and cost of medical check up. But large numbers of *Kafils* have transformed the system into an avenue to earn money. In Saudi Arab, an Arab citizen can employ eight persons in his house as driver, gardener, cook, etc. Sub-agents of South Asian recruiting agencies and migrants of South Asia buy or manage such visa from Arab citizens, then sell them back home. As per the system a worker cannot change his/her *Kafil*.

Visa Trading in Destination Countries

In most of the Gulf countries the Ministries of Labour, issues employment permit. Work visas issued by the governments on many occasions end up in the markets. The recruiting agencies/large-scale brokers of the destination countries book those job visas with partial payment of placement fees. Once the booking is made, based on the paper signed between the authorities and recruiting agents, the latter usually sells the visas at a higher price to the next tier of intermediaries in the destination countries. The recruiting agent or the broker immediately makes huge profit and from that he makes full payment to the authority. The second tier of intermediary who could be a local of other nationality, then sells those visas to the highest bidding recruiting agencies in the country of origin. There is evidence of third and fourth tiers of intermediaries. They also buy some of the visas from the market. They sell these visas to individual workers, i.e. relatives, neighbours, friends, etc. Some of the migrants have turned themselves into recruiters for extra income. All the tiers make some profit from visa selling. At the end, these costs have to be borne by migrants.

Shah (2008) provides some evidences on the practice of visa trading in some of the GCC countries. She quoted the Saudi Minister of Labour, who acknowledged that 70 per cent of the visas issued by the government are sold in the black market and his government was determined to crack down on this. The Bahraini Minister of Labour and Social Affairs regretted that the practice of visa trading has plagued the Bahraini job market for the last 20 years. As early as 1997 the Kuwait Human Development Report identified the presence of visa trading as one of the factors that promoted the influx of foreign workers in Kuwait and advocated for curbing the practice.

Exploitation in the Process of Recruitment

In all the South Asian countries elaborate formal systems of labour recruitment exist. This involves concerned ministry, line agency, public and private recruiting agents. The recruiting agents are supposed to collect job offers from the countries of destination and submit attested Demand Letter, Power of Attorney and Contract Paper to their concerned ministries for selection of workers. The concerned government authority then issues permission for the recruiting agents to select worker. However, almost all recruiting agencies are based in the cities. In this situation they recruit from rural areas through a host of agents and sub-agents. In Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh thousands of intermediaries have emerged in different migration-prone areas. These informal agents perform three most important functions of labour recruitment, i.e. provide information on migration opportunities, recruit workers and conduct financial transactions. The operation of recruitment at the grassroots is generally conducted verbally and payments are made without receipt. This has created a situation where both recruiting agents and/or their sub-agents can commit fraud and evade responsibility. In this process a good number of those who wish to migrate are cheated, and lose much of their assets while processing migration for overseas employment.

Contract Substitution in Destination

Contract substitution is another right curtailing measure practiced by some employers. In this case the workers are made to sign a second contract with reduced wage, living and working conditions once they reach the country of destination. On some occasions, workers are given a different job than that stipulated in the contract. In Malaysia some of the workers end up working on plantations while their original contracts were to work in factories. In Saudi Arab workers are often hired as cooks and security guards, and are then sent to work as agricultural labourer. Because of extreme hardships, a good number flee these jobs to seek other types of employment. As they desert jobs for which they had obtained visas, they become undocumented workers, vulnerable to other forms of exploitation including jail and deportation.

Work Condition

Although there exist country-wise wage differentials, there is a trend of paying less than minimum wage to the workers of all South Asian countries. Women are paid less than men in similar type of work in the garments sectors of UAE, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain. In Sri Lanka, 20 per cent complaints received by conciliation division of Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) is related to non-payment of wages (Dias and Jayasundere 2004). The Nepali workers in Hong Kong working in manufacturing receive only 60 per cent of their salary (HKD 2,000) stipulated by the law (Dhital 2004). Studies on Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon and UAE show that average working hours of domestic workers per week is over 100 hours which is more than double of standard 40-48 hours per week (ILO 2004). ILO highlights that 50 per cent domestic workers in Kuwait, Bahrain and UAE alleged physical, verbal or sexual abuses (ILO 2004).

Visa Tied with Job

To reduce the scope of job change, the employers withhold all forms of documentation such as job contract, travel documents and passports from the migrant workers. In their negotiations with the origin countries, the receiving countries ensure that the occupational mobility of the labourers is minimal. Under such circumstances the workers' power to negotiate in the labour market becomes restricted. Workers who do not have documents in his or her possession have major problems to seek legal redress when conditions of contracts are not honoured by employers.

Restrictions on Movements

Lack of possession of documents also curtails workers' rights to move freely in the places of employment. Particularly in Malaysia, workers are harassed routinely by the law enforcement agencies. They are under pressure to produce identification documents whenever demanded. Movement of domestic workers in Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon and UAE is strictly controlled. These included lack of access to telephone, receiving and sending correspondence, and social isolation from other domestic workers or friends.

Lack of Social Protection and Absence of Social Dialogue

Unskilled and semi-skilled workers have little possibility of benefitting from social protection measures in the country of residence, as these measures are not covered by their contracts. Efforts to ensure the enforcement of these measures in the country of destination pose a major challenge for the countries of origin.

Social dialogue is a process of interaction between employer and employee for the purpose of resolving disputes and differences. Trade union is one such organisation. Except Saudi Arab, other destination countries of migrant workers in the Middle East, Southeast and East Asia allow trade union activities. But migrant workers are not allowed to be member of trade unions, and hence, formal mechanism for negotiation is fully absent for both men and women migrant workers.

National and Global Initiatives: South Asian Experience

National Initiatives

Major labour-sending South Asian countries have undertaken various measures at the state level to protect their workers. Legal reforms, institutional capacity building, ensuring protection in destination through labour attachés, awareness campaign are some important steps in this regard.

Legal framework pursued by most of South Asian countries to regulate the migration sector is similar. India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan reformed their emigration laws once in the 1980s, and again after 2005. Almost all the major labour-sending countries framed comprehensive national policies on migration, established separate ministries to govern migration. Each country initiated several institutional measures to protect their workers. Pre-departure skill and awareness trainings, online registration, introduction of Biometric finger printing, immigration clearance through issuance of smart card, insurance, pension scheme, migration finance loan, establishment of wage earners' welfare fund through subscription of migrant workers, establishment of Migrants Bank are some innovative initiatives. In South Asia, civil society also plays an important role in establishing rights of migrants. Awareness campaign, legal aid, policy advocacy are some of the major areas of civil society intervention.⁵

International Initiatives

Since the inception of International Labour Organization (ILO), international migrant workers constituted one of its important stakeholders. It framed Conventions (Number 97 and 143) pertaining to the migrant workers and developed a Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration (2005). UN General Assembly adopted Convention on protection of rights of all migrant workers and their family members in 1990. In December 2003 upon encouragement of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, a core group of states established the Global Commission on International Migration to formulate global response to international migration issue. Based on in-depth research, high level dialogue and consultations of the commission, in 2005 the UN Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) was initiated. Since 2006 this Forum has organised five global dialogues on international labour migration. More than 160 destination and origin countries, including civil society representatives participate in these events. Important issues such as irregular migration, cost of labour migration, incorporation of migration into national development strategies, institutional capacity building for migration governance are some of the issues discussed in this forum.

The Global Migration Group (GMG) was initially established in 2003 as Geneva Migration Group. Now it has 16 inter-agency heads as members. Its aim is to promote the wider application of all relevant international and regional instruments and norms relating to migration, and to encourage the adoption of more coherent, comprehensive and better coordinated approaches on the issue of international migration. Colombo Process is established in 2003 and managed by IOM. It is a regional consultative process of countries of origin to share experience and promote dialogue with destination countries. Till today it has organised three consultative meetings. In January 2008, UAE convened another forum known as the Abu Dhabi Dialogue. Aim of this process is to develop partnership and framework for a comprehensive approach to manage the entire cycle of temporary contractual mobility that fosters mutual interest of countries of origin and destination.

Sub-Regional Cooperation: Role of SAARC

South Asian countries participate actively in all the above forums but unfortunately as individual countries. These countries are yet to develop any common agenda under the regional framework of SAARC. SAARC Social Charter does not recognise labour as a distinctive group and makes no commitment to respect international standards.

ASEAN, the Southeast Asian regional economic entity has issued a declaration on promotion and protection of rights of migrant workers. There are considerable tensions among South Asian countries regarding cross-border population movements. This acts as hindrance in the process of development of a South Asian discourse on migration. In 2007 South Asia Centre

⁵Establishment of community-based institution - the Migrants Rights Protection Committees at the grassroots by a Bangladeshi civil society body Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) has been termed by the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) as one of the global best practice in linking

for Policy Studies (SACEPS) proposed the establishment of SAARC task force on migration which could review patterns of migration (Khatri 2007).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper demonstrates that short-term contract migration from South Asia is an important livelihood strategy particularly of skilled, semi-skilled and lowly skilled workers. It also makes significant contribution to the national economies of these countries. South Asian countries face similar problems in migration governance. Each of the countries has attempted to address the problems in their own way. They also participate in different global forums on migration. However, they are yet to organise themselves as labour origin countries with common interest under SAARC. The author firmly believes that all the South Asian countries will gain if they can develop collective bargaining mechanism under SAARC. SAARC can initiate dialogue for development of common stands among its member countries by selecting few important issues. In the following some issues have been suggested.

- Under the SAARC initiative South Asian countries can jointly enhance their knowledge in areas of labour market trends, skills profiles, policies on migration and developmental outcome of remittance.
- South Asian countries can share experiences in migration governance, and take lessons from each other's innovation in different areas of migration governance.
- In order to reduce high cost under the auspices of SAARC South Asian countries can develop a common stand and collectively inform the governments of GCC countries about the ill effect of visa trading and how the placement fees, air fare and medical test charges are being transferred to the shoulders of poor migrants by the intermediaries of GCC and origin countries.
- SAARC in collaboration with other origin and destination countries can commission in-depth empirical study to develop clear understanding of operation of intermediaries in both ends.
- South Asian countries also need to collaborate with each other and attempt to bring an agreement on common minimum standards of wage, overtime, holiday, accommodation and health.
- SAARC may be used as the platform of South Asian countries to work together to encourage practice of multilateral negotiations with the destination countries instead of bilateral ones on issues such as cost, entitlements and wage.
- The civil society of South Asia in collaboration with global civil society forum such as Migrants Forum in Asia and Migrants Rights International can mount a global campaign against the system of visa trading. They can campaign for re-establishing the previous system of payment of plane fare and placement fees by the employers.
- SAARC can consider commissioning collaborative research of scholars of GCC states and South Asian countries to develop recommendations which hold the interests of both origin and destination countries as well as those of the migrants and the employers.
- National data on migration is collated differently by state agencies of various SAARC countries. A common data generating format can be developed under SAARC initiative to obtain consistency and standardisation in migration data.

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