



Migration and Social Policy in Asia

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Abstract:

Regionally, Asia is a heterogeneous continent, comprising at least four distinctly different regions, each comprising more or less homogenous countries. This takes the scope of this paper away from treating migration in Asia with one broad brush, and towards highlighting its intra-sub-regional character. For analysing social policy in the region of Asia in the context of South-South migration therefore, the sub-region of South Asia has been focused upon because it presents a uniquely balanced case of accounting for half of all outward migration, the other half accounting for South-North migration: in fact, the sub-region presents a microcosm of complex social realities arising from an interaction between both South-South and South-North migration. Before addressing the implications of these complexities for social service provisioning and social policy, the paper hints at some quantitative as well as qualitative dimensions of South-South migration in this region.

Moving further towards analysis, the implications of these dimensions have been grouped into three distinct categories, namely, the remittance costs, safeguard nets, and post-return re-assimilation. These are elaborated in terms of explaining how the relatively smoother and lower-cost remittances between south countries of Asia would enhance the state's capability for better social service provisioning; what social safeguard nets are necessary for combating the negative effects of temporary migration and its corollary of return migration; and what social policy measures are available for re-integration of migrants and returnees in their home countries, communities and families. Policy initiatives in a number of select countries in Asia, namely, China in North Asia, the Philippines in Southeast Asia, and Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India in South Asia have been listed to highlight the "nuts and bolts" of social intervention for welfare.

Drawing from the Indian experience in particular, gender issues arising from fraudulent and failed marriages between migrant grooms residing abroad and unsuspecting brides residing in the origin country illustrate the primacy of social policy intervention. Similarly, the issue of sexual harassment and exploitation at workplace is highlighted. Among the other examples, social security measures, insurance against malpractices and uncertainties, provisioning for tracing one's roots in the country of origin as well as facilitation of higher education in the home country are cited.

The last section of the paper discusses the methodological approaches and tools appropriate for, from the viewpoint of social policy, undertaking meaningful empirical research on South-South migration and social policy in Asia. Two generic choices have been mentioned: a top-down engagement for economic growth through business and industry; and another, a bottom-up engagement for social development through education and health of the masses. The dichotomy between the principles of economic policy and social policy are spelled out in terms of the former being based on the bilateral trade-off of "give-and-take" or *quid pro quo*, and the latter on unilateral philanthropy or "charity" *without* the expectation of getting a direct return. What is recommended is a more holistic social policy aimed at establishing Asia's link with its diaspora for sustainable socio-psychological development in the region as a whole, alongside economic and political development. The need for the coming together of well-known regional economic groups

like Association of Southeast Asian Nations or ASEAN, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation or SAARC, and other alliances within Asia for creating a special common platform for social development is hinted at in this context. To arrive at the proverbial “win-win-win” situation through such South-South cooperation for all the three stakeholders – the Asian South countries of origin, the Asian migrants as a regional diaspora, and the Asian South countries of destination, the “diasporic resources” could be consciously turned to the advantage of the South. These may entail a trade-off between the alternative approaches of promoting trade and business in the short run, and significant reduction in two kinds of social poverty in the region – the “poverty of education” and the “poverty of health” – both very potent areas for social policy to make sustainable contribution to overall development in the long run.

The vulnerabilities in the South countries of Asia do arise from the unstable migration policies of the North countries worldwide. They affect both the migrants and their families at the micro level and the societies and countries of migrants at the macro level. These can be ameliorated a great deal through social development resulting from the interventions of social service provisioning and social policy, without which the economic policies of growth are bound to always remain lopsided. The first concrete steps towards bridging this gap would perhaps be that the South countries must show South-South cooperation based on evidence-based research and guided by the principle of solidarity.

1. Positioning Asia in South-South Migration

While trying to understand “South-South Migration” in Asia in the context of social policy considerations, one should be conscious of the fact that from migration point of view, Asia cannot be characterized homogenously. There are at least four distinctly different sub-regions within Asia: Central Asia (Formerly Russian) including Armenia, West Asia (Middle East) including Israel, South Asia (the Indian subcontinent), and East and Southeast Asia (China to PNG). Table 1(A and B) present list of countries in Asia, one evolving during 1960-1985, and the other over the period 1990-2005, particularly after the break up of the Soviet Union into many smaller countries of the Russian Federation in Central Asia.

Table 1A: List of Countries in Eastern and South-central Asia-1985 and 2005

Asia	1985	2005
Eastern Asia	China	China
	China, Hong Kong	China, Hong Kong
	China, Macao	China, Macao
	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
	Japan	Japan
	Mongolia	Mongolia
	Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea
South-central Asia	Afghanistan	Afghanistan
	Bangladesh	Bangladesh
	Bhutan	Bhutan
	India	India
	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
	Maldives	Kazakhstan
	Nepal	Kyrgyzstan
	Pakistan	Maldives
	Sri Lanka	Nepal
		Pakistan
		Sri Lanka
		Tajikistan
		Turkmenistan
		Uzbekistan

Source: United Nations 2006, World Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision Population Database, United

Asia	1985	2005
South-eastern Asia	Brunei Darussalam	Brunei Darussalam

Nations Population Division.

Table 1B: List of Countries in South-eastern and Western Asia-1985 and 2005

	Cambodia	Cambodia
	Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste	Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
	Indonesia	Indonesia
	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Lao People's Democratic Republic
	Malaysia	Malaysia
	Myanmar	Myanmar
	Philippines	Philippines
	Singapore	Singapore
	Thailand	Thailand
	Viet Nam	Viet Nam
Western Asia	Bahrain	Armenia
	Cyprus	Azerbaijan
	Iraq	Bahrain
	Israel	Cyprus
	Jordan	Georgia
	Kuwait	Iraq
	Lebanon	Israel
	Occupied Palestinian Territory	Jordan
	Oman	Kuwait
	Qatar	Lebanon
	Saudi Arabia	Occupied Palestinian Territory
	Syrian Arab Republic	Oman
	Turkey	Qatar
	United Arab Emirates	Saudi Arabia
	Yemen	Syrian Arab Republic
		Turkey
		United Arab Emirates
		Yemen

Source: United Nations 2006, *World Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision Population Database*, United Nations Population Division.

Most of Asia in the list would seem to be part of the South, barring a few late-developed countries like Japan and other late-comer Newly Industrializing (“Tiger”) Countries (NICs) like Hong Kong (now part of China), Republic of Korea, Taiwan Province of China – all in East Asia, and Singapore in Southeast Asia, which would actually qualify to belong to the North. Even the Middle East (or Western Asia) now comprises countries with very high per-capita income and developed-country-like standards of living. For analysing social policy in the region of Asia in the context of

South-South migration, however, one could perhaps find a rationale for not attempting to cover the whole of the Asian South. Of the three world-regions experiencing large South-South migration, South Asia is a unique region in the sense that it accounts for half of all outward migration, the other half accounting for South-North migration (Figure 2 and Table 2). A study of social policy in Asia could, therefore, be largely focused on South Asia, as we have done in this paper.

2. Main Issues of South-South Migration in Asia and their Implications

South-South migration in general is overwhelmingly intra-sub-regional within each continent. The share of migration to other developing sub-regions within a continent is likely to be negligible for all sub-regions, with the unique exception of South Asia. (Figure 2).

Table-2
Intraregional and Interregional Migration

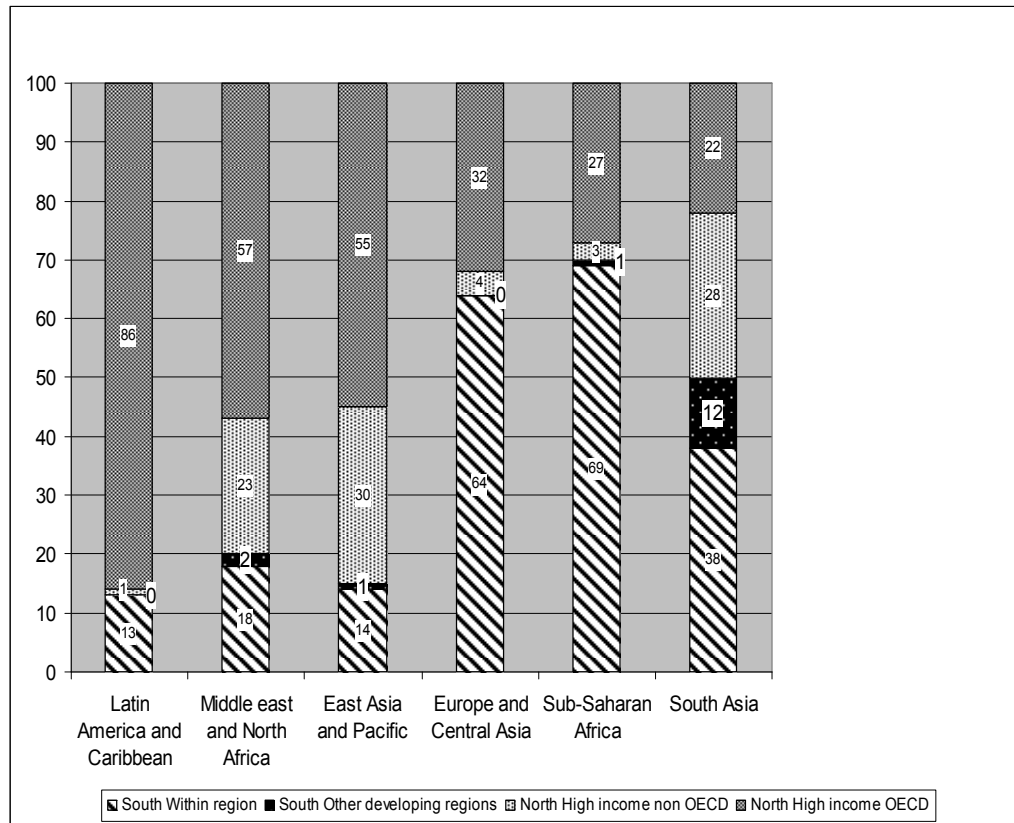
(in millions)	Migrants in									
Migrants from	Latin America & Caribbean	East Asia & Pacific	South Asia	Europe & Central Asia	Middle East & North Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	High-income OECD	High-income non-OECD	Total	South-North As percent of Total
Latin America & Caribbean	3.40	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	22.30	0.20	25.92	86.80
East Asia & Pacific	0.06	2.54	0.11	0.04	0.01	0.02	9.70	5.30	17.78	84.40
South Asia	0.01	0.29	7.60	0.02	2.11	0.09	4.50	5.60	20.22	49.90
Europe & Central Asia	0.07	0.01	0.00	27.81	0.01	0.00	13.70	1.90	43.50	35.90
Middle East & North Africa	0.06	0.00	0.00	0.08	2.12	0.08	6.70	2.80	11.84	80.30
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	10.02	4.00	0.50	14.56	30.70
High-income countries	1.84	0.32	0.05	1.03	0.64	0.27	28.70	1.10	33.95	0.00
Total	5.45	3.17	7.77	29.00	4.90	10.48	89.60	17.40	167.77	

Note: These data include only identified migrants: 60.7 million in the South and 106.9 million in the North, for which both source and destination are known. These exclude 4.7 million migrants in the South and 4.9 million in the North for whom the source country is unknown, as well as 12.7

million migrants in 37 countries in the South and 0.8 million migrants in 6 countries in the North with no information in the respective censuses.

Source: Rath and Shaw (2007), as from University of Sussex and World Bank data.

Figure 2: Intraregional and Interregional Migration



Note: The three destination regions above may not add up to 100. The residual is migration to other developing countries.

Source: Rath and Shaw (2007), as from DECPG bilateral migration matrix.

2.1 Intra-sub-regional Migration in Asia

In Asia, a lot of cross-border mobility of people to neighbouring countries within the South Asian region often assumes the character of internal migration, particularly in those cases where passports and/or visas are not required by law, say for example, between India and Nepal, or India and Bhutan, or Bhutan and Nepal. Also, there is sizeable illegal migration even where visa is required, for example, from Bangladesh to India, or perhaps between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Khadria 2005). Some of these

migrants have been too poor to go to distant lands, such as the many thousands of farmers from Nepal's valleys who cross over to northeast India regularly during planting and harvesting seasons; or the young women who were trafficked for sexual exploitation in the brothels of Mumbai.¹

Assuming that half of the refugees would have joined the work force, the Japan Institute of Labor (2002) estimates of year 2000 for intra-South-Asian migrant labour stock were as follows: In India, a stock of 580,000 from Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, (and Tibet), possibly Bhutan included; and in Pakistan, a stock of 1200,000 from Afghanistan, and Bangladesh (and Myanmar). Even then, the Asian migrant population working in the region represents a rather insignificant proportion of the aggregate regional workforce. It is estimated that at the beginning of the new century they numbered about 6.2 million, that is, roughly a million over the number of Asian workers in the Middle East, and just slightly more than the total number born in Asia living in Western Europe and North America (IOM 2003).

The migration flows within Asia and even to other continents of the world excepting for North America and Australia consist mainly of people recruited to perform unskilled and blue-collar work. Technical and skilled workers comprised a tiny proportion of the migrant flows from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The United Nations (2001) had projected that during the period 2000-2025 the population of Bangladesh and Nepal would grow from 137 million to 211 million and from 23 million to 49 million respectively. It said, "These increases, which in proportional terms are significantly greater than those projected for India, will tend to raise substantially the

¹ "Important movements such as those across Nepal-Indian border... have largely gone unrecorded and are seldom reckoned in studies of migration in the region" (IOM 2003, chapter 11).

volumes of future immigration both from Bangladesh and Nepal to India."² However, by and large, the in-migration data in destination countries in Asia are not well-structured. As for emigration data in origin countries, estimates are difficult in India because the law does not require college graduates (and non-graduates who have previously worked abroad) to submit their contracts to the Protector of Emigrants for approval prior to accepting employment abroad.

2.2 Leading Issues in Intra-Asian South-South Migration from and to South Asia

The uneven pace of industrialization in Asia (for example, in South Asia vis-à-vis Southeast Asia) has led to greater and more diversified cross-border movements, involving shifting migratory flows from the South Asian countries. Although many of the South Asian workers continue to trail the earlier migrants to the oil-rich countries in the Middle East region for all kinds of service and maintenance jobs, housing construction, store-keeping, and security, etc., the 1990s have seen more workers moving to better-paying jobs closer to home, notably to what may possibly be called the “Neo-Northern” countries in Southeast Asia. Besides Japan, therefore, the more attractive emerging destinations within Asia have been Hong Kong, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan. This apart, a large number of them also have gone to work in the plantations of Malaysia, or as domestic workers in Singapore, and in the building industry in South Korea. Sri Lankan women go to Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong as domestic workers. The number of Bangladeshi plantation workers in Malaysia has risen considerably, and of the Nepalese construction workers in the Republic of Korea. Interestingly thus, the most sought after destination countries were not necessarily only the high-income North-countryern like Japan, or the “Neo-Northern” countries like South

² United Nations (2001), as cited in Dyson, et al. (2004:128). See also United Nations (2003).

Korea, or Singapore, but the middle-income “South” countries like Malaysia or Thailand. In contrast, being more remote, compared to the distances from Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, Indian workers still largely have gone to the sub-region of West Asia – to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Gulf countries.

Most of the twentieth-century migration in Asia thus had a bottom-heavy structure dominated by the movement of unskilled and semi-skilled blue-collar workers. Only a thin layer of managers, professionals and technicians, mostly those employed by transnational corporations, topped the pyramid of migration flows within and out of the continent. The structure reflected the more rapid expansion of labour-intensive sectors like manufacturing and construction in the rapidly industrializing economies of Southeast Asian region, as well as the social changes that were taking place. The unmet demand for labour in the early stages of industrialization was for construction workers, assembly-line production workers, and the female migrant domestics who could replace women leaving the household work to pursue employment outside the home.³ It was only in the 1990s, when global competition in the development of computer software and IT equipment intensified, that the demand for migrant labour progressively began to be more varied in technical and educational composition.

2.3 Implications for Social Service Provisioning and Social Policy

There could be a host of implications for social service provisioning and social policy arising from South-South migration in Asia. Analytically, however, for policy purposes, these could be clubbed together as three distinct but leading categories, namely,

³ See Khadria (2007b, 2007c) and Majumdar (1980). For theoretical discourse on gender discrimination, see Khadria (2000).

what I would like to describe as, the Remittance Costs, Safeguard Nets, and Post-return Re-integration.

(a) Remittance Costs of the South-South Money Transfers

Remittances have drawn a lot of attention in the academic literature and debate as one of the positive fallout of international migration. In Asian countries, remittances have grown very rapidly (Waddington 2003). According to the IMF, remittances to South countries were \$65 billion in 1999 (Martin and Straubhaar 2002). India (along with the Philippines) received 65 per cent of inter-Asian remittances. Official remittances to the South countries more than doubled in the 1990s, though they had dropped for India in 1991 due to the Gulf war (Ahluwalia and Williamson 2003). In 2005, India topped the list with \$22 billion, and has retained the rank in 2006.

There are policy discourses with the objective of promoting remittances to the South countries in Asia. But not enough attention is being paid to the utilization of remittances for social provisioning in the countries of origin. Partly, the home countries' policies (or lack of policies) are also responsible for this in terms of the governments being complacent and non-discriminating about exploring and exploiting the socially productive investment avenues for the remittances in sustainable home-country projects.⁴

At the same time, high remittance costs are a major drain on the incomes of poor migrants. High costs and lack of access to convenient remittance services encourage migrants to use informal channels. There are important implications for social service provisioning in this on two counts: (i) When informal channels are used for sending

⁴ Four years ago, the Indian government, for example, faced with a huge accumulation of foreign exchange reserve (which has amounted to US\$ 125 billion in November 2004) allowed a US\$ 25,000 transfer of funds per annum by any single Indian citizen to anywhere in the world. This has been doubled in 2006 (See Reserve Bank of India 2007).

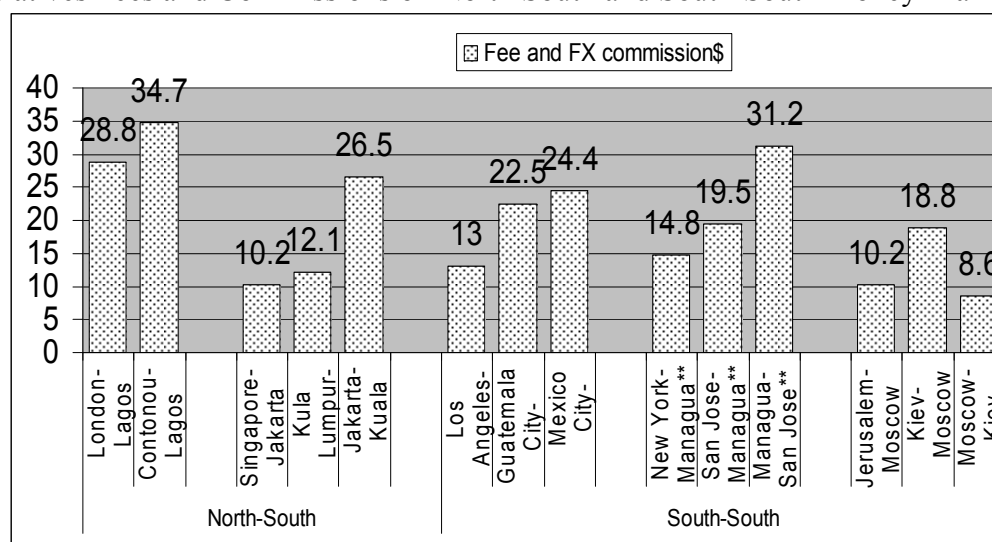
remittances, valuable foreign exchange does not flow into the home country's coffers; only local currency gets redistributed from the legal as well as illegal financial market sector to the household sector; and (ii) Even to the extent the more expensive formal channels are used by remitters, both the state and the household sectors are left with less than full potential amounts of money that can be pumped into social service provisioning by society and in enabling participation by the migrants respectively. Both these processes lead to erosion in the home society's capabilities for optimal derivation of results from social service provisioning.

However, before taking appropriate measures to reduce costs of sending/receiving remittances, it is also important to know their dimensions. Ironically, little is known about the costs of sending remittances from one South country to another. Rath and Shaw (2007) conducted a telephone-survey of the remittance service providers in selected South-South, South-North, and North-South remittance corridors and asked for the fee for sending \$200 and the foreign-exchange conversion charges at both ends. Their research indicates that fees tend to be higher for South-South remittances than for North-South remittances including in Asia (Figure 4)

Table4: North-South and South-South Remittance Fees (in US Dollars)

		Fee and FX commission\$
North-South	London-Lagos	28.8
	Contonou-Lagos	34.7
	Singapore-Jakarta	10.2
	Kula Lumpur-Jakarta	12.1
	Jakarta-Kuala Lumpur	26.5
South-South	Los Angeles-Mexico City*	13
	Guatemala City-Mexico City*	22.5
	Mexico City-Guatemala City*	24.4
	New York-Managua**	14.8
	San Jose-Managua**	19.5
	Managua-San Jose**	31.2
	Jerusalem-Moscow	10.2
	Kiev-Moscow	18.8
	Moscow-Kiev	8.6

Figure 4:
Comparatives Fees and Commissions on North South and South-South Money Tranfers



* These fees are the average of Western Union and other agencies.
 ** The fees and foreign-exchange (FX) commissions are from Western Union only.
 Source: Rath and Shaw (2007), from information collected through phone calls to agents on location

("mystery shopping") from August 15 to 25, 2006, by World Bank staff. Fees include FX commissions at source and destination.

Rath and Shaw conclude that it is often impossible to send remittances from one developing country to another through formal channels because of restrictions on outward remittances in the source country. Some countries (for example, Bangladesh and India in Asia) require migrants to obtain authorization before the central bank will process international remittances beyond the prescribed limits. In many countries, inward remittances also have to be reported to the authorities. Often, remittance fees vary significantly in the same bilateral corridor depending on the direction of the flow. For example, the cost of remitting \$200 from Kuala Lumpur to Jakarta was found to be about 6 per cent, whereas that cost from Jakarta to Kuala Lumpur was more than double at 13 per cent (Figure 4).

Reducing costs is as important a policy imperative for South-South remittances as for North-South remittances. The same strategies suggested for North-South remittances also pertain to South-South remittances: lifting exchange controls on small outward remittances, and fostering competition in the remittance market by encouraging banks, microfinance institutions, credit unions, and post office saving banks to offer remittance services and to share existing payment platforms and networks.

(b) The Safeguard Nets for Temporary Contract Migration in Asia

Given that most of the South-South migration in Asia comprises unskilled and semi-skilled contract workers, it has been largely temporary by definition. Recent publications (OECD 2004) also testify to the fact that while growth of permanent settler admissions in the developed countries from Asia have grown slowly, temporary worker entrants have grown more rapidly in the initial years of the twenty-first century. This has its own social implications. The first such implication is that return migration is in-built

into the process. Vice versa, the policy of promoting return migration of workers is also a policy of promoting temporary migration (involving 5-7 years' stay) over their permanent immigration.

Although the volume of immigrants in the labour market of a destination country rises, when the individual human faces that comprise it keep changing, the element of conflict in society may remain at a low level of equilibrium. An explicitly stated policy of return migration, involving only temporary stay rights for foreigners would thus allay the fears, in the minds of the native citizens, of being competed out by them. If so, it could naturally be a welcome preference for the strife-prone destination countries. Socio-psychologically speaking, this, like a "safety valve", suits the interest of those North and South host countries where racial xenophobia against the foreigners' presence in the labour market is often a political headache for the state, say for example the sporadic recent reactions in the Middle East, and in Malaysia.⁵ It can lead to a persistent social strife if ignored or allowed to continue for long.

On the other hand, the social implications of temporary migration on the migrants and their family members in the origin countries could be welfare reducing. The developing countries of origin in South Asia, particularly India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, have been overwhelmed by the bandwagon of promoting return migration, which is apparently aimed at benefiting them in all. These origin countries have been totally complacent about the interests of the developed destination countries underlying these key trends. At the same time, they have also not been sensitive within themselves to the effects of return migration policy on the individual workers and their families as to whether there could be unexpected violations of human rights and undesired outcomes on

⁵ See Khadria and Leclerc (2006).

the humanitarian fronts. For example, a natural corollary of any individual's decision of return migration, when inherent in the decision of onward migration itself, would be about the joining or not joining of the spouse and the children abroad. When return is imminent, it is likely that in most cases only the primary worker would move and the immediate family, comprising the spouse and the children, would stay put in the country of origin for most of the time. Their dilemma arises because of the constraints of the job of the spouse in the home country: Whether to resign when leave is not commensurate with the partner's engagement abroad? It also arises because of the schooling of the children in the home country: Whether to withdraw them from school when admission/readmission is difficult in the country of origin? Under the circumstances, temporary migration might entail a compulsory separation among the members of the family, making the family "nomadic" in character, so to say, and making the return of the worker too a type of "forced migration," although all the decisions within the concerned migrant's family seem to remain "voluntary". The challenge before social policy in neutralizing these negative effects is that these are not limited to labour migration but to high-skill migration as well.

(c) Post-return Social Re-integration in the Country of Origin in Asia

According to the IOM, in recent years, return migration has acquired the thrust of policy by many governments. Return migration here means the act of going back from a country of destination to the country of origin, and the policies vary in inducing different categories of return, for example, voluntary, forced, assisted, or spontaneous, among others. This is an issue, which despite being largely uncharted so far, would perhaps be

important enough to be included explicitly in the agenda of social policy responses towards neutralizing the adverse effects of international migration on the migrants. Apparently, the returning migrant and the family of the migrant are left in the lurch in this whole process of return migration, there being no follow-up efforts for their re-integration in the home country.

There are a few attempts at addressing this issue, as in, for example, India by the recently established Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA). India has institutionalized state capacity to respond to the crises, which lead to the repatriation of its citizens at the time of need. These more proactive social policies were developed following the repatriation of several thousand returnees from the United Arab Emirates to Kerala during the Gulf War in early 1990s. At the provincial government level, the Kerala state government set up in 1996 a separate department to look at the problems of non-resident Keralites, their welfare (health, housing, education etc) and investment facilities for them. At the national level, the Report of the High-level Committee on Indian Diaspora led to the Indian government's conscious efforts in building cultural, political and economic links with the PIOs (Persons of Indian Origin) and the NRIs (Non Resident Indians) (ICWA 2001). As a follow-up, the government also declared the annual celebration of a “Bharatiya Pravasi Divas” (Indian Expatriates Day) on 9 January from 2003 onwards – commemorating the day on which the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, had returned from South Africa to India. Some examples of policies addressing re-integration are listed in the next section.

3. Social Service Provisioning in Asia: Examples from Select Countries

It is in the above backdrop that emerging priority concern of governments in almost all labour-sending countries of Asia is to ensure the well-being of migrant workers and to secure the basic provisions. Countries of origin have two main policy options for achieving this:

- Regulatory measures for labour migration, and
- Provisioning of supportive social services for migrant workers and their families.

Although these are not entirely mutually exclusive domains of policy intervention, broad distinctions of areas of operation could be delineated. Countries of origin do have a range of policy strategies which extend the scope and improve the efficiency of their regulatory mechanisms, including, for example, regulation of recruitment; developing and enforcing minimum standards in employment contracts; information dissemination to migrants; assistance in the country of destination and promoting inter-state cooperation; etc. However, the supportive social service provisioning for implementing these have not been so explicitly discussed. Keeping this discrepancy in view, the following section lists some of the initiatives taken by some countries in Asia in the domain of social policy for the migrants – the Philippines in Southeast Asia, China in North Asia, and others in South Asia.⁶

PHILIPPINES

- Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) provides the services of a Welfare Officer who provides the Filipino migrant workers and their families all

⁶ Most of the information for countries other than India is compiled from (IOM 2004), courtesy of Shridhar Bhagavatula. For India, the information has been compiled from the MOIA sources.

the assistance they may need in the enforcement of contractual obligations by agencies or entities.

- The pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) is a mandatory one-day briefing given to workers by entities duly accredited by the OWWA. PDOS also issues standard pre-departure reminders regarding the documents workers must have on departure; their rights and obligations under the employment contract; what to expect upon arrival and where to go in times of need; travel tips: how to remit their savings; health care and occupational safety; the risks and rewards of working abroad and reminders about their obligations to themselves; their families, communities and the country.
- All Filipino workers going abroad must be covered by a welfare fund administered by the OWWA.
- Many NGOs offer a variety of services for overseas Filipino worker (OFW) family groups and are co-advocates in the campaign for the effective re-integration of migrant workers.
- Philippine banks and financial institutions are offering some attractive investment and saving instruments, such as high interest bearing deposits that yield excellent benefits for the OFW families.
- Livelihood skills and business development training are now being offered by the Technology and Livelihood Resource Centre (TLRC) and the Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA).

- OWWA offers livelihood loans to OFW families up to Php100,000, re-entry loans with a ceiling of Php20,000 and a maximum of Php50,000 for group assistance loans.
- Housing Loans for OFW are being offered to active POP members who have remitted at least 12 monthly membership contributions, provided they are insurable.

CHINA

- China provides pre-departure orientation and each migrant worker must get a certificate of training, including training in skills and relevant law before they are allowed to work abroad.
- Promulgated by Decree No. 15 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of the People's Republic of China, which came into effect on July 1, 2002, agencies dealing with overseas employment could, *inter alia*,
 - Assist overseas workers with formalities and documents such as passports, visas, and materials for notarizations, medical examination and vaccination.
 - Pay contributions to social insurance schemes as indicated by overseas workers.
 - Provide legal assistance to overseas workers in the form of mediation, arbitration of law-suits to protect their legitimate rights and interests.

BANGLADESH:

- The Bangladesh Missions in the host countries perform the following duties:
 - Receive and hear the complaints of migrant workers;

- Take up the matter with the employers;
- Provide legal assistance;
- Arrange repatriation of stranded migrant workers; and
- Repatriation of remains of workers who have died abroad.
- Bangladesh also operates a welfare fund for providing legal support and initial sustenance.

PAKISTAN

- Orientation and Briefing Centres function in Protector of Emigrants (PE) Offices, in Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Peshawar. All migrant workers register with the PE. Offices are given pre-departure briefing about their countries of employment. They are also informed about the customs, local conditions and relevant laws in the country of destination.
- Community Welfare Attachés are posted in the manpower importing countries. They maintain liaison with the Pakistani workers and provide them with the necessary help to solve problems in coordination with the host authorities.
- Under the Emigration Ordinance of 1979, a welfare fund has been created. It is being managed by the Overseas Pakistani Foundation (OPF) for the welfare of migrant workers and their dependants in Pakistan. Education, training, housing and medical facilities, and other services are organized for the families of Overseas Pakistanis by the OPF.
- The Government has taken measures to improve the skills and attitudes of the workers in demand abroad in accordance with international norms and standards.

- The majority of the emigrants remit their saving through the official channel. The Government of Pakistan has banking arrangements in some of the manpower importing countries.

SRI LANKA

- Provides separate training for housemaids who travel to Middle Eastern countries and non-Middle Eastern countries.
- Training to workers who travel to Korea.
- Labour Welfare Officers have been appointed in 12 countries. The said officers look after the welfare of migrant workers while working in the host countries. The welfare fund is financed through a fee of \$25 levied on employers abroad when an employment contract is signed. That money is solely used towards welfare activities for the migrant workers.
- Vocational Training Institutes train prospective migrant workers. The Ministry of Employment and Labour coordinates with the Ministry of Vocational Training and other relevant Government institutions to train skilled manpower to meet foreign employment demands.
- The migrant workers are permitted to operate foreign currency accounts called Non-resident Foreign Currency Accounts. They are entitled to an enhanced duty-free allowance to enable them to purchase goods duty-free.

INDIA

In the year 2004, the Government of India established a new ministry called the *Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA)*, which acts as a nodal agency to deal with issues related to Indian migrants abroad. However, apart from MOIA, the Ministries of

Home Affairs, Commerce, External Affairs and the Department of Science and Technology also interact with the Indian migrants in various capacities.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, since its inception, is working towards two basic objectives:

- To take note of the problems of the Indian migrant communities in various countries and to initiate measure to overcome those problems; and
- To involve the Indian migrants abroad for India's larger development purposes.

Towards these goals, the Indian government has floated a number of schemes:

Tracing the Roots Scheme:

A large section of the persons of Indian origin (PIOs) whose forefathers had migrated in the nineteenth century as indentured labourers to the Caribbean, Pacific and Indian Ocean regions have persistently evinced a keen interest in tracing their roots in India. MOIA, in cooperation with some concerned state governments, like in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar – states that contributed to the bulk of labour migration during the “indentured labour period” - and a few NGOs, is actively moving the scheme of tracing the roots.

PIO University:

There has been consistent demand, especially from the Gulf region, for seeking assistance from the Government of India in facilitating education of their children in Indian educational institutions. On the basis of these considerations, an exclusive university for the People of Indian Origin is under consideration. It is proposed to be established under the Central Government, and as “PIO University”. One underlying objective is that it would open the doors of re-assimilation for migrants returning to India.

Gender issue in fraudulent NRI marriages:

Several instances have been brought to the notice of the Government of India through the media as well as by the parents of the victims regarding failed and fraudulent marriages between overseas Indian grooms and Indian girls. The problems of women married to and deserted by overseas Indian husbands reveal social evils like dowry and harassment due to lack of modernization among rural brides in responding to the western way of life abroad.

Since marriage is a state government subject in India, some states have responded to the call. It has been reiterated that a separate Cell should be created by state governments to ensure free legal and social counselling for a prospective bride as well as her parents before the marriage. Besides, individuals and families are advised to check the documents of overseas Indian grooms, like the voter registration card, social security number, employment record, tax returns and other relevant information pertaining to the three preceding years. It is intended that this information would enable them to find out the genuineness of financial and marital status of the proposed grooms. It has also been suggested that the bridegroom may be asked by the Marriage Registration Officer and visa authorities to attach an affidavit stating his current marital status. This information should be attached with the application for registration of marriage.

Indian diplomatic Mission abroad, whenever they receive the complaints of torture or desertion of Indian wives by their NRI-husbands, render all possible assistance with a view to bringing about an amicable settlement.

The National Commission for Women (NCW) in New Delhi has also prepared a report on the problems of NRIs' marriages and a proposed Draft Convention. The report commissioned by them made the following recommendations:

- (i) Registration of marriage to be made compulsory.
- (ii) Bilateral agreements for protection of such marriages must be concluded between India and such other countries where Indian migrants are present in large numbers.
- (iii) If the NRI husband has not become a citizen of the host country, the concerned Indian laws should apply irrespective of the place of the filing of the petition for dissolution of the marriage.
- (iv) Government-monitored conciliation process of settlement of matrimonial disputes be initiated.
- (v) Suppression of information regarding marital status by NRI grooms to be dealt with under criminal law and steps taken through extradition treaties wherever operational.

Other measures suggested include:

- (i) Seeking the help of authorities at the work places of the husband,
- (ii) Attaching property, if any, in India,
- (iii) Initiating legal action against the fraudulent spouse for compensation in India.
- (iv) If Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) has been given to the husband, the same to be withdrawn.

Protection against sexual exploitation in the workplace:

It is found that the Overseas Indian Workers (OIWs) often face exploitation, abuse and ignorance, in spite of the fact that they are appreciated for their sincerity, hard work and non-interference abroad. The Gulf Countries like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain are the major destination countries for Indian workers with

semi-skilled and un-skilled categories. Indian housemaids are particularly in great demand in the Gulf countries but the local labour laws in many of the Gulf countries do not cover them. It leads to sexual exploitation of young women. Considering these problems, MOIA is pursuing a proactive policy for providing legal protection against sexual exploitation in workplace and socio-psychological rehabilitation of the victims.

Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana:

The PBBY is a compulsory insurance scheme for the emigrants going abroad for employment. It was first announced in the year 2003 and in 2006 it is been upgraded to provide broader coverage to the emigrant workers. The emigrants now get a minimum insurance cover of Rs.5 hundred thousand (instead of Rs. 2 hundred thousand previously prescribed) and the policy is for the entire period of employment contract. An additional cover of Rs.25,000 for the legal expenses incurred by the emigrants in connection with their employment has also been included. However, this scheme is applicable for those Indians who emigrate through “Emigration Check Required” (ECR) under Emigration Act, 1983. Till October 2006, 1.15 million insurance policies were issued under this scheme by various Insurance Companies registered under the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority (IRDA).

Social Security Agreements:

Social security is a broad term for the range of financial benefits available to virtually all workers. The Social Security system provides three distinct types of benefits for workers and their families: (i) lifetime retirement benefits for retirees who have worked at least ten years, their spouses, and their children; (ii) disability insurance for workers, their spouses, and their children; and (iii) survivors' insurance for the families of

deceased workers. Social Security guarantees the working and retired persons and their families' economic stability that keeps them out of poverty. Most of the social security benefits are derived from the taxes collected from the workers. In most of the destination countries, the immigrants are required to pay social security taxes, irrespective of the length of stay. Hence they end up paying social security taxes both at home and the host countries.

The bilateral social security agreements could save the immigrants from double taxation. The USA has signed social security agreements with as many as 21 countries, latest addition being Japan. India with its large number of emigrants has also taken the need for social security agreements seriously. It became an important instrument to protect the interests of Indian professionals by securing exemption from social security contribution in case of short-term contracts, and exportability of benefits in case of relocation. India has signed a bilateral agreement on social security with Belgium in November 2006. The agreement provides for the following benefits to Indians working in Belgium:

- Those working on a short-term contract of up to sixty months will be exempted from social security contributions under the Belgian law provided they continue to make social security payments in India.
- Those who live and work in Belgium for periods longer than sixty months and contribute under the Belgian law will be entitled to the export of the social security benefits should they relocate to India or a third country on completion of their contract or on retirement.

- These benefits will also be available to Indian employees sent by a company to Belgium from a third country.
- Self-employed Indians in Belgium contributing to the Belgian social security system will be entitled to the export of social security benefits should they choose to relocate to India or a third country.
- Periods of employment in both the countries will be considered in order to determine the admissibility and the quantum of pension.
- Indian companies will become more competitive in Belgium since exemption from social security contribution in respect of their employees substantially reduces cost.

The MOIA has initiated the process for negotiating similar agreements with the Netherlands and France. Later on, such agreements are planned to be initiated with most of the European countries, USA and Canada. However, the Gulf countries have no compulsory social security system mandated by law. There is, therefore, neither a demand nor a proposal to sign similar agreements with the Gulf countries. But the measures and activities are essential to create the social safeguard nets to stabilize and reverse the ill effects of migration.

Keeping these examples in mind, and the present day rise of Asia, in particular of India and China, migration has to be intricately situated in the domain of social policy for the provisioning of social welfare enhancing and redistributive mechanisms for the betterment of society at large and the migrants and their families in particular.

4. Methodological Approaches and Tools for Further Empirical Research on South-South Migration and Social Policy in Asia

Having explored a migration-social policy nexus to maximize welfare-positive outcomes for members of the participating countries and the migrants, the next important question would be what methodological approach(es) are most appropriate for empirical research on the subject. I would mention two generic choices: (1) Top-down diasporic cooperation through business and industry; and (2) Bottom-up diasporic cooperation through education and health of the masses. The top-down approach would have social costs like possible marginalization and exclusion of the low-income countries as well as migrants, because inherently such an approach would be based more on the *quid pro quo* principle of economic policies. The bottom-up approach, on the contrary, being primarily based on the social policy principle of charitable philanthropy *sans* the *quid pro quo* principle of give-and-take in economic policies, would be more inclusive, although having longer gestation period.

What is perhaps required, *through* and *for* South-South cooperation, is a more holistic social policy aimed at establishing Asia's link with an Asian Diaspora for sustainable socio-psychological development in the region as a whole, alongside economic and political development.⁷ This could begin through the coming together of regional economic groups like ASEAN, SAARC, and other alliances within Asia for creating a special common platform for social development.

Methodologically speaking, to arrive at the proverbial “win-win-win” situation in intra-regional relations through South-South cooperation for all the three stakeholders – the Asian South countries of origin, the Asian migrants as a regional diaspora, and the host destination countries of the high-income North as well as the medium-income South

⁷ See also GTZ (2004).

within Asia, two specific conditions must be met: (a) A “necessary condition” of dominant or significant Pan-Asian geo-economic presence of Asian migrants; and (b) a “sufficient condition” of the origin countries in Asia deriving *sustainable* benefits from that Pan-Asian geo-economic presence of their migrants. In terms of the large demand for unskilled workers from each other within the region, and growing demand for skilled workers too, and the migrants establishing excellent records of accomplishment in other countries of destination, it can be said with some degree of confidence that the first condition has more or less been fulfilled. To satisfy the sufficient condition though, that the poor Asian countries of origin derive significant gains from the Pan-Asian geo-economic presence of their migrants, the “diasporic resources” must be turned to their advantage, say, by minimizing remittance costs between countries of Asia, providing safeguard nets for temporary migrants, and promoting post-return social assimilation of migrants in the countries of origin. These may entail South-South cooperation on a trade-off between the alternative approaches of promoting trade and business on the one hand and, on the other, substantial reduction of two kinds of social poverty in the region – what I have elsewhere called the “poverty of education” and the “poverty of health”⁸ – two areas where state intervention with migration has so far failed societies in countries of origin to make any significant contribution to economic and social development.⁹ Large masses of the illiterate and uneducated population, incapacitated further by their poor health status are the root causes of Asia having some of the lowest levels of average social capital, and therefore lowest average labour productivity in the world - a paradox

⁸ See Khadria (1999, 2006a, 2006b).

⁹ Whichever approach is chosen, engagement of diaspora resources would depend on the capability of the diaspora members to actually participate in such endeavours. One example for South-North migration is the length of stay (See Chiswick 1978). In other words, capabilities for social engagement of the diaspora would be the indices of access to the enabling determinants - “the capabilities” à la Amartya Sen (1999).

when members of the Indian or Chinese or Filipino diasporas from the region, on the average, make up the “Triple-M” (model minority migrants) communities in the North countries of destination outside Asia, like the USA.¹⁰ The Asian and other South-country diaspora networks and associations abroad could, therefore, play the social catalyst’s role – be it economically, politically or socially - in raising the average productivity of mass Asian workers in their respective origin countries by thinking health and education in the region as the priority areas of diaspora engagement, rather than focusing on immediate “profit-making” ventures in industry and business.

Perhaps, given the speed of globalization, low-income countries of Asia, like India, do not have an either-or choice anymore. They must address the kind of paradox that Mkandawire highlighted in the context of India while visiting New Delhi recently: “For years there was this debate on how democracy had not provided poor the space to use their numbers to change this [situation of high poverty]. ...While India is being perceived as an important actor on the world scene, the low school enrolment ratio raises a paradox as to how some low-income growth and less democratic countries have more number of kids going to school than in India.” (Mkandawire, quoted in *Hindu* 2008). The new century thus marks a paradigm shift through globalization to which, I believe, the universe of policy discourse within Asia must adjust and from which it must benefit (Khadria 2001).

That the temporary migration route, operationalized by the “open and shut” migration policies of the North countries in the Western world - the greatly varying

¹⁰ For example, it is indeed paradoxical that the average per-hour contribution of each employed worker within India to production of India’s GDP has been among the lowest in the world - a mere 37 cents as compared to the United States’ 37 dollars, that is, one-one hundredth of the latter. This is naturally ironic, because the same average Indian contributes very high average share to the GDP of the host country (Khadria 2002). See also World Bank, annual issues of *World Development Report*.

consular practices - has been full of vulnerabilities for migrants at the micro level must be conveyed emphatically through new empirical research. At the macro level, these policies that are behind the ever changing quotas and criteria for work visas lead to instabilities of the “cobweb disequilibrium” variety in their education and labour markets¹¹ (Khadria 2003b, 2007d). One way of taking the first concrete step toward upholding a demand for guaranteed removal of these two key elements from practice would perhaps be that the South countries must not only think but actually show South-South cooperation, a research-and-evidence-based solidarity, not merely an emotionally charged unity, on migration for social development.

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¹¹ For historical examples from India, see Khadria (2007a), and those from a variety of other countries, see Green and Weil (2007).

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