Labour migration¹

South and South-West Asia includes some of the world’s migration extremes; India was the leading recipient of remittances in 2010, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, a destination location for many migrants from the subregion, rely on foreign labour to fill over 90 per cent of their private-sector jobs. Most of the ten countries examined in this report experience net out-migration, and the majority of them would like to see more of its skilled workers move abroad to enhance migrant protection and maximize remittances.

¹ Manolo Abella and Philip Martin
² The member States of the GCC are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.
The major trends, policies, conditions and migration issues facing these ten South and South-West Asian countries are summarized in table 1. The six countries with the largest number of out-migrants face similar challenges, such as:

- Encouraging more skilled and fewer low skilled and low skilled women migrant workers to move abroad, under the theory that more skilled workers earn higher wages and can better protect themselves.

- Increasing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with destination countries to improve working conditions and the treatment of migrants.

- Enhancing the development impacts of remittances and the return of migrants with skills acquired abroad.

- Reducing the cost of migration, minimizing recruitment fraud and abuses and extending labour-law protection to all workers, including domestic workers.

The host countries in the subregion face different challenges. Examples of these are the following:

- **Bhutan**—regulating the entry of construction workers from Nepal and India.

- **The Islamic Republic of Iran**—regularizing the status of Afghans working in the country.

- **Maldives**—allowing employers to recruit migrants to work in the tourism industry and fill health-care related and teaching positions while encouraging members of the national population to obtain the education needed to fill jobs now occupied by migrants.

- **Turkey**—gaining admission into the European Union (EU) while managing in- and transit-migration.

The governance of labour migration in the Indian subcontinent dates back to the Emigration Ordinance of the British colonial period. However, as demand for migrant workers in Western Asia picked up starting in the mid-1970s, Governments of Western Asian countries embarked on renewed efforts to regulate the recruitment of foreign workers in their countries. Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have since enacted laws and established institutions to better protect their citizens at home and abroad, and currently these four countries have in place the following:

- Restrictions on direct recruitment of nationals by foreign employers or their agents, including on advertising job offers;

- Licensing and regulating private fee-charging recruitment agents or ‘employment-promoters’ by requiring security bonds, setting maximum fees and imposing penalties for violations;

- Checks on departing migrants to enforce minimum standards for contracts of employment.

Examples of other country initiatives related to migration are: establishing state corporations to compete with private recruitment agencies (Pakistan and Bangladesh and in five states in India); setting up dedicated agencies to provide
Table 1.
Labour migration in 10 South and South-West Asian countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Trends</th>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>3-5 million Afghans abroad despite return of 4 million during 2002–2006; many professionals abroad</td>
<td>Influx of 15,000 foreigners to help rebuild (2008); work-permit system established</td>
<td>Many Afghans abroad are refugees; negotiations or bilateral agreements with Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iran (Islamic Republic of)</td>
<td>Regulation of Afghan recruiters; formalize labour migration to Iran (Islamic Republic of) by reducing costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Deployment falling from peak of 875,000 in 2008; remittances steady at $11 billion in 2009</td>
<td>Set maximum recruitment fees, but most low-skill migrants pay more; migrant protection system has acknowledged flaws</td>
<td>Most low-skill migrants leave in debt; may work illegally abroad or overstay to achieve savings targets</td>
<td>How to reduce recruitment costs; will new Expatriate Bank provide low-cost loans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>Less than 700,000 people in mountainous country; permits migrant construction workers from India and Nepal</td>
<td>Government-ceiling on migrants was 30,000 in 2009; some occupations closed to migrants</td>
<td>Government fines on employers and of unauthorized migrants</td>
<td>Difficulty preventing migrants from staying longer than the maximum six months allowed; hard to ensure that recruiters do not overcharge migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Trends</td>
<td>Policies</td>
<td>Conditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Diaspora of 25 million; $50 billion remittances in 2009; most migrants from south India to oil-exporting countries in Western Asia</td>
<td>Emigration Act of 1983 protects out-migrants by ensuring that recruiters do not overcharge them</td>
<td>Variable conditions in destination countries; complaints of high recruitment fees paid in India; contract substitution abroad</td>
<td>Government aiming to sign more agreements with destination countries; Overseas Workers Resource Centers in countries with Indian migrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran, Islamic Republic of</td>
<td>Some professionals migrate abroad while low-skilled migrants enter from Afghanistan</td>
<td>300,000 work permits issued to refugees in Iran in 2008; July 2010 proposals to regulate private recruiters</td>
<td>1.5 million Afghans registered and received work permits between July 24 to August 26, 2010</td>
<td>Regulating continued entry of Afghans; integrating Afghans who have settled in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>Net in-migration country 100,000 foreign workers; 30 per cent are unauthorized</td>
<td>Recruiters may not charge migrants fees; employers to pay</td>
<td>Mostly South Asian and Indonesian migrants who fill jobs on all rungs of the job ladder</td>
<td>Dealing with unauthorized migration; how does the presence of migrants affect incentives of locals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>Migration is a key source of family income; half of Nepalese families receive remittances</td>
<td>217,000 migrants mostly low-skilled and rural Nepalese left in 2008, some 96 per cent are male</td>
<td>80 per cent of Nepalese migrants leave with the help of recruiters; fees and promises remain important issues</td>
<td>How to regulate recruiters; protect female migrants under Foreign Employment Act of 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Diaspora of more than 4 million; half in GCC countries; 287,000 departures of migrants in 2007</td>
<td>Emigration Ordinance of 1979 lays out procedures to protect migrants and regulate recruiters</td>
<td>Half of Pakistani migrants leave with the help of recruiters, whose maximum charges are regulated</td>
<td>How to achieve government goal of encouraging more skilled workers to move to new destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Diaspora of 1.8 million; deployment of 252,000 in 2008; remittances of $3 billion</td>
<td>National Labour Migration Policy for Sri Lanka in 2008-2009 aims to protect migrants</td>
<td>Half of Sri Lankan migrants are women going abroad to be domestic helpers; mandatory pre-departure training to improve knowledge-base</td>
<td>Regulating sub-agents who find Sri Lankan workers to fill foreign jobs; signing agreements with foreign governments with minimum wages and protections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>From net out-migration to net in-migration country between 1960s and 1990s</td>
<td>What is the role for Government of Turkey in integration of Turks and their children in European countries; regulating entries and transit migration</td>
<td>Variable for Turks in Europe and foreigners passing through Turkey en route to Europe; some transit migrants remain in Turkey</td>
<td>Will Turkey join the EU? If yes, will Turks have freedom of movement rights?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** see text.

**Note:** The boundaries shown on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
insurance and welfare services to migrants and their families (Overseas Pakistanis Foundation and similar agencies in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal); and posting labour attachés or welfare officers in countries with migrants to provide on-site services.

There is no quick fix to improving the governance of labour migration. Some effective incremental steps could be including enforceable regulations and standards, upgrading the quality of personnel at government agencies and providing them with the resources to carry out their work effectively, regulate the recruitment industry with the aim to encourage cooperation, responsible behavior and accountability and taking note of feedback on the effects of regulatory efforts. Migration is inherently a multilateral concern, and desired outcomes are most likely to be achieved if countries of origin and destination meet regularly to discuss labour-migration issues and the best way to resolve them. Regular bilateral and regional meetings, with discussions guided by international principles and norms, offer the best hope for improving labour migration governance in South and South-West Asia.

Governance of labour migration

Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have established similar systems and structures for the governance of labour migration to GCC countries as well as to destinations in South-East Asia.

There is an increasing trend towards more regulation of migration, usually with the aim to protect migrants. However, countries of origin cannot necessarily control outflows and, even if they could, the result could be a top-down process, which does not adequately take into account the interests of social partners, such as unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as migrants. For example, governments committed to promoting foreign employment and protecting migrant workers may impede the freedom of movement of women or low-skilled migrants in ways that aggravate the vulnerability and abuse of these workers.

Bhutan and Maldives are primarily countries of destination, while the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey are destination, transit, and origin countries. The Islamic Republic of Iran has hosted more than a million Afghan refugees, many of whom were later granted visas to work in the country, while many Iranians have left the country for employment and other purposes. During the 1960s and 1970s, Turkish labour migration was organized through bilateral agreements with countries in the European Union, especially Germany.

Migration from Afghanistan has been mainly refugees to neighbouring countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, where they have been allowed to work. Only recently, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSAMD) adopted a policy to promote labour migration of Afghan workers abroad, to such locations as GCC countries.

Afghanistan

In 2011, up to six million Afghans were estimated to be living abroad (Arif and Shujaat forthcoming), despite the return of almost four million from neighbouring
countries, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, between 2002 and 2006 (Margesson 2007). Many of those still abroad are professionals and skilled workers, resulting in the recruitment of replacement workers. The Government of Afghanistan introduced a “work permit system” administered by the Department of Foreign Residents Employment within the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSAMD). An inter-ministerial committee was also established to approve the employment of needed foreign workers. By the end of 2008, it was reported that some 14,724 foreign nationals from 82 countries had been issued work permits.³

A recent MOLSAMD report notes that a ‘labour dispatch protocol’ had been signed with the Government of Qatar, and that negotiations with the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, are underway for bilateral agreements to cover the employment of Afghans in these countries. MOLSAMD has created a branch and established regulations to govern the activities of private employment agencies (overseas employment promoters) to streamline the sending of Afghan workers abroad (Koepke 2011, UNHCR 2009).

According to one report, formalizing labour migration to the Islamic Republic of Iran has been difficult because it has become more expensive for Afghan workers to obtain work permits. It costs twice as much to enter the Islamic Republic of Iran legally than through smugglers (Koepke 2011).

Bangladesh

Labour migration from Bangladesh is regulated under the Emigration Ordinance of 1982, which requires migrant workers to have valid contracts and work visas before leaving to fill overseas jobs. Section 8.1 allows the government to prohibit the out-migration of persons with particular skills “in the public interest,” and specifies that Bangladeshis leaving the country can be fined up to 5,000 Bangladeshi taka (TK) ($65) or imprisoned up to a year. Section 10 authorizes the government to license recruiters and to withdraw recruitment licences for violations of recruitment regulations, such as overcharging migrants (Section 23).⁴

Three major agencies deal with the 3 R’s, namely recruitment, remittances and returns:

• The umbrella Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment;

• the regulatory Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET);

• the government employment agency, Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services.

The Bangladesh Overseas Employment Policy, adopted in October 2006, promotes the out-migration of Bangladeshis and aims to protect them while abroad. The Wage Earners’ Welfare Fund was created in 1990 and, under regulations set in December 2002, is supported by fees from migrants (an initial assessment of 1,000 Bangladeshi taka (TK) ($15), interest on the bonds posted by recruiters


and a 10 per cent surcharge on fees charged by Bangladeshi missions abroad for passports and other services. The Fund supports desks staffed by BMET at Zia International Airport, which check and assist migrants leaving and returning to Bangladesh. It also pays for legal assistance given to overseas migrants and the return of remains of migrants who die abroad as well as provides support to the families of deceased migrants in Bangladesh and to returning migrants who were not paid by their foreign employers. The Fund is administered by a board consisting of Ministers of various government agencies and the recruiters’ association Bangladeshi Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA).

BMET, set up in 1976 under the Ministry of Labor, has 17 offices throughout the country. It is tasked with organizing employment promotion and skills training, promoting the employment of Bangladeshis abroad and encouraging overseas migrants to send remittances home. It also provides employment counseling to migrants, regulates private recruiters and conducts research on migration and development. Before leaving Bangladesh, migrants must first register their employment contracts with BMET. This procedure, which usually is carried out with assistance from recruiters, is one of the final steps before departure. In 2009, BMET reported that some three million Bangladeshis have been registered since the registration process began in June 2004. Registered job seekers receive a BMET-issued photo ID that includes personal information.

The Ministry of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment (MEWOE), established on 20 December 2001 following advocacy from NGOs, is tasked with formulating overseas employment policy and overseeing the operations of the Wage Earners’ Welfare Fund and shares responsibility with the Ministry of Labor over the supervision of recruitment and licensing of private recruiters, and the provision of services to migrants through labour attachés in Bangladeshi missions abroad. MEWOE encourages the Bangladeshi diaspora to invest in projects in their home communities and facilitates expatriate investments in Bangladesh. Since 2008, Bangladeshis abroad who remit foreign currency to Bangladesh have “special citizens’ privileges”.

Bhutan

The Labour and Employment Act in 2007 amended the rules and regulations for the recruitment of foreign workers earlier prescribed in the 1994 Chathrim for wage rates, recruitment agencies and workmen’s compensation. The 2007 law empowered the Government to set a ceiling on the number of foreign workers (30,000 in 2009) and prescribed a formula for how many foreign workers an enterprise may employ. The variables include whether the employer wants foreign workers for a government project, for the construction of an institution such as schools or commercial buildings or hotels, or for personal residential construction (a maximum 12 migrants in urban areas and five in rural areas). Foreign workers with skills not available locally may be admitted, but their duration of employment is limited to six months. Some 22 occupations are closed to foreign workers, including, among others, computer operators, accountants, travel guides, clerks and plumbers.

5 Government Act.
6 According to the formula the number allowed varies depending on the labour cost of the project, duration and the wage rate.
India

Labour migration from India is governed by the Emigration Act of 1983, which regulates Indian-based recruiters and established the protectors of emigrants (POE) offices. Intending migrants are required to obtain emigration clearance from one of the 13 POE offices throughout the country. However, 13 categories of persons are exempt from this requirement, including those with 10 or more years of schooling. Some researchers conclude that the POE process introduces another level of fees that migrants must pay while adding few protections (Rajan and others 2008).

India issues two types of passports—those that specify that the holder must receive an emigration check (ECR) by the POE and those that do not require the holder to obtain an emigration check (ENCR). Holders of ECR passports can nonetheless leave without a POE check for most countries, but need POE permission to travel to 17 countries, including GCC countries, Libya and Malaysia.

The Government of India acknowledges that its regulatory system may not fully protect migrant workers (Rajan and others 2008). As in other countries of origin, some Indian recruiters specialize in so-called ‘free visas’, often purchased from citizens in GCC countries. Migrants with ‘free visas’ may be employed by several employers, with varying wages and working conditions. NGOs report that some Indian migrants paid fees for work contracts that turned out to be different than what they expected, or received contracts that were not for genuine jobs.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), created in 2004, negotiates memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with major destinations of Indian migrants, including one with the United Arab Emirates signed in 2006. It also negotiates social security agreements, so far primarily with European countries, that can exempt Indian migrants from contributing to pension systems abroad or help them to obtain a refund of their contributions when they depart after a period of employment abroad. The MOIA in 2008 established Overseas Workers Resource Centers to help Indian migrants abroad and their families at home through a toll-free number. The MOIA also oversees the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). From its 42 Indian missions abroad, migrants can obtain emergency housing and medical services, receive legal help or travel home, and have remains returned to India in case of death abroad.7

Islamic Republic of Iran

The 1990 Labor Law mandated the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs “to issue, extend, and renew work permits to the refugees, subject to the written agreements of the ministries of interior and foreign affairs”. The first work permits for refugees were issued in late 2008, and during that time 300,000 were granted (Koepke 2011). In July 2010, the Bureau of Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA), which is under the Ministry of Interior, proposed a guardianship concept that would allow private recruitment companies to organize the entry and stay of foreigners in the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the same time the Government announced that unauthorized foreigners could work legally by registering, which prompted 1.5 million Afghans to register between 24 July and 26 August 2010 (Koepke 2011).

7 For more details see http://moia.gov.in/services.aspx?ID1=83&id=m2&iddp=81&mainid=73.
Nepal

A detailed Foreign Employment Act was enacted in October 2007, followed by regulations in 2008 that, among other things, allows for the granting of one-year renewable licences to recruiting agencies and established the Department of Foreign Employment to administer the law. Chapter 9 of the Foreign Employment Act makes recruiters liable for penalties of four to seven years imprisonment for making false promises to Nepalese going abroad or sending them abroad without proper documents. Aggrieved migrants can file complaints with the Foreign Employment Tribunal in Kathmandu, the location of the government migration agencies and most of the recruiters. The Foreign Employment Act calls for the establishment of a migrant workers welfare fund, labour desks at Nepalese airports to check the contracts of migrants leaving and labour attachés abroad to assist Nepalese migrants in countries with at least 5,000 migrants (Nepal has posted labour attachés for migrants in Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates).

The Foreign Employment Act included many safe migration provisions to protect women and was supported in its development by UNIFEM (now UN Women). Some recruiters expressed the fear that the strong provisions of the Act could make it more difficult to lawfully send Nepalese women abroad.

In 2009, the Government of Nepal had MOUs with Governments of four destination countries, namely Bahrain, Qatar, the Republic of Korea and the United Arab Emirates. Of these, Nepalese migrants are most eager to work in the Republic of Korea under the Employment Permit System, where they earn $1,000 a month or more working in agriculture, fisheries, construction, small-scale manufacturing and some services. In order to be considered for jobs in the Republic of Korea, Nepalese must pass a basic test of proficiency in Korean, which helps to explain the proliferation of Korean language schools in Nepal. The number of Nepalese who study Korean and take the Korean language test far exceeds the number of those selected to work in the Republic of Korea. For example, over 36,000 Nepalese took the Korean language test in August 2010, and 4,200 passed, but employers in the Republic of Korea selected only about 2,700 Nepalese to work in the country. Nepal has emerged from an internal conflict situation and policy makers view overseas employment as a safety valve for employment, especially for youth, and a source of foreign exchange. National development plans and ILO Decent Work Country Programmes (developed by the Ministry of Labour and social partners) have accorded priority to labour migration.

Pakistan

Pakistan was one of the first Asian countries to encourage workers to go abroad. The country’s Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) was set up in 1970 to coordinate offices previously responsible for the protection of emigrants and the welfare of seamen. The Bureau promotes safe and regular migration through the regional offices of the Protector of Emigrants. The Emigration Ordinance of 1979 established the procedures for:

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8 See www.epsnepal.gov.np.

9 The Offices of Protector of Emigrants are located in the Pakistani cities Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Quetta, Batkhela and Multan.
• registration of migrants;
• appointment and supervision of Community Welfare;
• training, orientation and counseling for awareness of migrant workers;
• application for and licensing of recruitment agencies;
• appointment of sub-agents by recruiting agents;
• recruiting agent's code of conduct;
• imposing a penalty for contravention of rules.

Pakistan also established a welfare fund and authorized the creation of a corps of community welfare attachés in countries with large numbers of Pakistani workers. All migrants must contribute to the welfare fund, which is managed by the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation. Since 1979, the fund has financed the development of migrant housing projects in seven cities, disaster relief activities and the provision of health care to schools and colleges in all provinces; it also provides funds to assist migrants returning with a disability. Community Welfare Attachés are posted in 16 countries, including, among others, Bahrain, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

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Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka established the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare in 2007, abolished it for approximately six months in 2010, and then re-established it in November 2010. Wickramasekara (2011, p. 231) notes that the Government of Sri Lanka as well as a number of other Governments of South Asian countries emphasize a desire for “safe and orderly migration”, that is, the absence of smuggling and trafficking and migration under government-set rules.

In 2008, the Government of Sri Lanka developed a migration policy with three major elements: better governance and regulation of migration; more effective protection of migrant workers; and enhanced development impacts of migration and remittances in Sri Lanka. Tripartite steering groups,¹⁰ chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare, developed recommendations in changes in governance, protection, and development policies, which were incorporated into the National Labour Migration Policy for Sri Lanka¹¹ and accepted by the Government in April 2009.¹²

The National Policy calls for migration to be mainstreamed into the country’s development policy, encouraging more skilled workers to migrate to new

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¹⁰ Tripartite steering groups consist of government officials and representatives from workers’ associations, such as trade unions and employers.
¹² The governance part of the National Policy outlines the institutional structure to manage labour migration and the legislative and regulatory framework. The protection part covers pre-departure, employment abroad, and return and re-integration. The development section outlines ways in which remittances and the return of skills can accelerate development.
One common feature of labour migration from South and South-West Asia is the large role played by private agencies in the recruitment process. While these agencies have facilitated labour migration, experience has shown that it has not been easy to regulate their activities, particularly with regard to the fees that they charge for their services.
destinations and providing better English-language training, and envisions improved training institutions that issue certificates for skills recognized in foreign labour markets. It also requests for a revised code of conduct for recruitment agencies and a model employment contract for migrant workers be drafted.

Many Sri Lankan women going abroad to work are from rural areas and their migration experience, which usually involves working as a domestic helper, is often their first wage work. The Government of Sri Lanka aims to reduce the share of female domestic workers among Sri Lankan migrants from 50 to 25 per cent and to better protect Sri Lankan workers abroad. Departing migrants receive booklets in Sinhalese or Tamil with information on the destination countries and labour attaché or welfare officer contact information. All migrant workers are required to complete a pre-departure orientation of 12 days before heading to most of the GCC countries and 30 days for Singapore. Since 2009, departing female domestic workers must also participate in an 18-day pre-departure English and literacy programme.

Recruitment of labour migrants

One common feature of labour migration from South and South-West Asia is the large role played by private agencies in the recruitment process. While these agencies have facilitated labour migration, experience has shown that it has not been easy to regulate their activities, particularly with regard to the fees that they charge for their services. In order to reduce the cost of recruitment, governments are constantly looking for more effective policy tools to influence their behaviour. The level of government regulation of private recruitment agencies varies by country of origin and destination. For example, the Republic of Korea has entered into bilateral agreements for government-to-government recruitment, excluding private intermediaries completely.

Bangladesh

According to government data, about 60 per cent of Bangladeshi migrants leave on their own accord, 39 per cent leave with the help of private recruitment agencies, and 1 per cent leave by way of Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services (BOESL) and other channels. However, most of the 60 per cent who leave “on their own” in fact depart with the help of private recruiting agents who are said to coach migrants to claim they are leaving on their own (Martin 2009).

There were 801 licensed recruiters by BAIRA in June 2009 (831 in summer 2010), but only 100 were reportedly active in deploying migrants. Most recruiters receive two-year licences after submitting a police report attesting to their crime-free record and recommendations from two members of BAIRA, and pay a 100,000 taka ($1,400) license fee and post a 1.5 million taka ($21,500) bond with the BMET (Ray and others 2007).

13 See www.bmet.org.bd.
14 The non-active BAIRA member recruiters reportedly assist Bangladeshis who have received foreign job offers through friends and relatives abroad, or who are returning to foreign employers, to complete required paper work in Bangladesh. These migrants are classified as going “on-their-own” in Bangladeshi migration data.
Some NGOs and migrant advocates contend that most recruiters do not provide any real service and that they are merely Dhaka-based intermediary businesses that depend on foreign recruiters to provide job offers and layers of sub-agents known as Dalals to find migrants to fill them. Critics also point out that many recruitment agencies are located in Gulshan, one of the most expensive parts of Dhaka, and that some licensed recruiters just sell, rent, or trade their recruiting licenses to others. On the other hand, BAIRA recruiters defend their business, saying it is vital to Bangladeshis seeking upward mobility, and is beneficial to the Bangladeshi economy.

Recruiters point to the relatively few complaints, less than 400 in 2008, to conclude that most migrants are satisfied. Critics assert that the nature of recruitment makes it hard for complaining migrants to win compensation, discouraging them from filing complaints. For example, Afsar (2009) reported that several migrants who were interviewed alleged that sub-agents and recruiters cheated them, but since they lacked receipts for the funds they said they paid, they were unable to be compensated. The Bangladesh 2005 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper asserts, “The recruitment industry will be regulated more effectively. The renewal of licenses of private recruiters can be made contingent on their performance,” (Bangladesh Planning Commission 2005, p.80).

BAIRA recruiters say their effectiveness is diminished by roadblocks to conducting business with countries of employment. For example, some have reportedly complained about the difficulty in obtaining visas to visit GCC countries, which restricts their ability to get information about potential employers and their recruitment partners in the host countries.

A report from Ray and others (2007) blame Bangladeshi government regulations for some recruitment problems. For example, it recommended that the Bangladeshi government allow recruiters to deal legally in foreign currency, which could reduce bank-related migration fees. In the Philippines, recruiting licences cannot be sold or lent, and recruiters who do not deploy at least 100 migrants a year can lose their licences. The most common reform proposals involve substituting technology for recruiters, that is, use computers to record foreign job offers and to register potential migrants, and make recruitment fees a share of expected foreign earnings instead of a fixed amount.

Several foreign governments have halted the recruitment of Bangladeshi migrants temporarily because of recruitment issues, such as forged skills certificates and high pre-departure debts that encourage migrants to take second jobs or stay abroad (Martin 2009). Without long-term relationships between Bangladeshi recruiters and particular foreign employers or recruiters, some may have an incentive to send unqualified or indebted Bangladeshis abroad. For example, a low-skilled Bangladeshi may offer to pay more for a work visa for a plumbing work contract promising $250 a month than for a visa for a labourer contract paying $175 a month. A Bangladeshi trained as a plumber may not accept the $250 wage, but the low-skilled worker who pays more gets the visa and goes abroad as a plumber. This is likely to leave the foreign employer dissatisfied because the worker he gets does not have plumbing skills.

The Bangladeshi recruitment system leaves many low-skilled migrants in debt as they depart (Martin 2009). Pre-departure migration costs are often twice the
official maximum charge, which was 84,000 taka ($1,220) in 2009, and the men who predominate among Bangladeshi migrants pay higher recruitment costs than migrant women. Many borrow some or all of this money from private moneylenders, sometimes at interest rates of 10 per cent a month. Under such conditions a $2,000 debt can double in a year.

BOESL is a government agency created in 1984 to provide migrants with a low-cost recruitment option. In 2009, BOESL had 38 employees and a budget of 20 million taka ($270,000) to publicize the availability of Bangladeshi workers in foreign countries through its own offices and in collaboration with local partners.

BOESL handles only about one per cent of Bangladeshis leaving for foreign jobs; most of the migrants it sends abroad are sent to the Republic of Korea. The Agency specializes in providing skilled and professional migrants for large civil engineering projects abroad, screening Bangladeshs interested in these foreign jobs, inviting foreign employers to Bangladesh to interview potential employees and helping Bangladeshis selected to fill foreign jobs to obtain the necessary documents and certificates. In most cases, foreign employers cover the pre-departure costs of BOESL-deployed workers, although migrants going to the Republic of Korea, most of whom are relatively low-skilled, must pay for Korean language training in order to have their names placed on the BOESL list from which employers from the Republic of Korea select migrants.

Between 1999 and 2006, when private recruiters sent Bangladeshi workers to the Republic of Korea, the maximum recruitment fee was 210,000 taka ($2,800). Under the Republic of Korea-Bangladesh labour migration MOU signed in 2006, only BOESL can recruit migrants to fill jobs under the Employment Permit System (EPS).

Bhutan

Bhutan employers must recruit foreign workers through licensed recruitment agencies and provide migrants and local workers with personal accident insurance and additional coverage for work-related disabilities and death. A copy of the insurance certificate must be given to the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources. Recruitment agencies may charge employers (not the foreign workers) up to 20 per cent of the monthly wage of the foreign worker, and are jointly liable with the employer for claims arising from the contract, including payment of wages, death and disability compensation and the expense of returning to home country.

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15 The 84,000 taka ($1,100) government-set maximum recruiting charge, effective in 2006, applies to migrants going to GCC countries and Malaysia. It was raised in stages from 8,000 taka ($105) in 1992 to 30,000 taka ($400), 50,000 taka ($660), 70,000 taka ($925), and 80,000 taka ($1,060). The maximum recruitment fee to send workers to Italy was set at 230,000 taka ($3,040) in 2002. Recruiters have generally charged migrants at least twice the official maximum recruitment charge (Islam 2009).
16 Karim-Rajput (2010) estimated the average cost of migration at 106,000 taka ($1415) for Bangladeshi women and 141,000 taka ($1880) for Bangladeshi men in 2010.
17 Rural moneylenders charge very high interest rates, often 60 to 100 per cent. Migrants with few assets sometimes find a local guarantor to co-sign the loan; the guarantor often receives 10 per cent of the value of the loan for each year that a guarantee is provided.
18 Six million taka, 30 per cent of the budget, represents BOESL salary costs.
Employer sanctions for hiring unauthorized workers are stiff, including imprisonment of three to five years and a monetary penalty of 108,000 to 180,000 Bhutan Ngultrum (Nu.) ($2320 to $3866). If an employer is found to have employed a foreign worker beyond the validity of the work permit, the employer will be liable for a penalty of Nu.3,000 ($64) plus a progressive fine of Nu.100 ($2.15) per day per worker from the date the work permit expired (Bhutan MoLHR 2008).

India

Indians with ECR passports use four major channels to migrate abroad to work, namely individuals can arrange foreign jobs through friends and relatives, foreign employers may recruit Indians in India, India-based firms with foreign projects can send their employees abroad and Indian recruiters can match Indians with foreign jobs. Many sub-agents also operate between migrants and recruiters, both in India and abroad. They are not regulated, and their qualifications and fees vary widely.

The 1983 Emigration Act (amended in 2009) regulates India-based recruiters by requiring them to obtain licences normally valid for three years. It also calls for the creation of three levels of bonds that recruiters must post based on the number of migrants they send abroad.\footnote{See http://poeonline.gov.in.} Registered recruitment agencies that send fewer than 300 workers abroad a year must post a bond of 300,000 rupees ($6,400), those that send 301 to 1,000 migrants a year must post a 500,000 rupee ($10,700) bond, and those that send more than 1,000 migrants must post a one million rupee bond. Amendments to the 1983 Emigration Act in 2009 require recruitment agencies to post a 2.5 million rupee ($54,000) bond good for 10 years, which serves as a guarantee against any future claims of workers for unpaid wages.

Maximum recruitment fees that registered recruitment agencies can charge migrants were 2,000 rupees ($43) for low-skilled workers in 2008, 3,000 rupees ($64) for semi-skilled workers and 5,000 rupees ($107) for skilled workers; amendments to the 1983 Emigration Act in 2009 substituted a maximum recruitment charge of 25,000 rupees ($537) or 45 days foreign wages, whichever is less. Media reports suggest that many Indian migrants pay far more. For example, an Indian gardener in Dubai reported paying $2,745 in 2008 to get a three-year contract offering $136 a month for a 48-hour week, suggesting that over half of his basic earnings would go to repay recruitment fees (Migration News 2009).

In 2005, a total of 4,300 recruitment agencies had obtained registration certificates but only 1,835 were operating (Rajan 2008). Recruiters pay service fees to POE that reflect the skill of the workers they send abroad. For instance, they pay 2,000 rupees ($47) to have the POE check the contract of low-skilled worker; 3,000 rupees ($64) for semi-skilled workers; and 5,000 rupees ($107) for skilled workers. In 2008, the Government of India began requiring foreign employers who do not use authorized recruitment agents to post a $2,500 bond for each Indian migrant they recruit, with the bond returned to the employer when the migrant returns to India. This is meant to provide some guarantee against failure of the foreign employer to live up to their end of the contract, but it also encourages foreign employers to use registered recruitment agencies.
About two-thirds of Indian migrant workers leave from South India (20 per cent each from the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu). A survey of Kerala migrants found that 80 per cent of them learned of foreign jobs from friends and relatives (Rajan and others 2008). Zachariah and Rajan (2010) found that the average cost of migration was 57,000 Indian rupees (INR) ($1,223), including $735 for the foreign work visa and $300 for air travel to the foreign destination. No migrants reported receiving bank or government assistance to cover recruitment costs. It also found that migrants who used recruitment agents had higher recruitment costs than migrants who used friends and relatives to go abroad. Commissions on fees charged to migrants appeared common and in some cases, recruiters collected a payment from approved medical centres for each migrant they refer for the mandatory health check.

About 60 per cent of the jobs in Western Asia held by Indian migrants in a survey paid $200 a month, making recruitment costs equivalent to 6 to 10 months’ earnings (Rajan and others 2008). Some Indian migrants reported much lower wages, often $100 a month, while 10 per cent earned $500 or more a month in GCC countries. Once they reach these countries, some Indian migrants say they are presented with new contracts offering lower wages, are assigned more tasks than expected, or do not receive promised benefits, such as time off and a return airfare. Indian recruiters say that the source of many of these problems lie in the GCC countries, blaming the need to buy work permits from GCC-based agents. They also allege that GCC-based recruiters keep transportation and other fees paid by employers, requiring them to charge migrants for costs for which the employer has already paid (Rajan and others 2008).

A number of activists would like the government to eliminate emigration-check-required passports, make it illegal for Indian recruiters to charge fees to Indian migrants and to negotiate minimum wages for Indian migrants abroad. There are efforts to transmit electronically the key provisions of contracts signed in India to the United Arab Emirates Department of Labor, which should help to resolve controversy over allegations of broken promises once migrants get to the United Arab Emirates.

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Nepal
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In fiscal year 2009, about 80 per cent of the 294,000 Nepalese who migrated abroad left the country with the help of recruiters while the rest were presumably directly hired by foreign employers. This 80/20 recruiter/individual contract ratio continued in the first month of the fiscal year 2010. Nepal News, August 23, 2010. www.nepalnews.com/main/index.php/business-a-economy/8583-outflow-of-nepali-migrant-workers-declines.html.
Nepal has a long tradition of migration abroad. However, there is a sharp contrast between the informal and low-cost migration of Nepalese to India and the much more formal and expensive migration of Nepalese to non-Indian destinations with the help of recruiters. Reports of abuse of Nepalese migrants abroad tend to blame Nepalese recruiters and recommend stricter regulation of recruiters rather than consider alternatives such as deregulation to reduce recruitment costs. An increasing number of Nepalese women appear to be going to GCC countries and Lebanon to work as domestic helpers, leaving from Indian airports with individual contracts.

The 650 members of NAFEA acknowledge problems in the recruitment system. Licensed recruiters are required to post a bond of 3 million Nepalese Rupees (NPR) ($40,000) and the Government establishes the maximum fee they can charge migrants. NAFEA says that potential migrants must spend NPR 10,000 ($134) to obtain a passport and make contact with recruiters and NPR 50,000 to 125,000 ($670 to $1,675) to obtain a foreign job, but the government-set maximum recruitment fee for migrants headed to GCC countries is NPR 70,000 ($938). Many migrants borrow money to pay recruitment fees, often at high interest rates. Also of note, migrants are required to participate in an orientation session about their foreign job before departure.

Pakistan

About half of Pakistani migrants find employment abroad through one of the private Overseas Employment Promoters, which numbered some 1,122 in 2007; most of the remaining migrants go directly or with the help of friends and relatives abroad. The Overseas Employment Promoters are licensed by the Ministry of Labour, Manpower and Overseas Pakistanis to recruit workers for up to three years abroad (renewable). Notably, Arif (2009) found that only 3 per cent of all those recruited to go overseas between 1971 and 2007 used the services of a state corporation established to undertake recruitment, the Overseas Employment Corporation. It also determined that this share has declined to only 1 per cent in recent years.

Under current regulations migrant workers recruited by overseas employment promoters (OEPs) should not incur expenses more than 7,150 Pakistani Rupees (PKR) ($82), based on a maximum service charge of PKR 4,450 ($51), a membership contribution of PKR 1,050 ($12) to join the Welfare Fund, insurance premium of PKR 650 ($7.40), registration fee of PKR 100 ($1.14), and for national identity card that costs Rs 900 ($10). Those hired directly do not pay a service charge. Each worker recruited through an OEP deposits PKR 4,450 ($51) with the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment; three days after a migrant’s departure, OEP may request a return of the deposit. However, studies indicate that migrant workers pay much more, with the average being PKR 80,000 ($915) (Arif 2009).

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23 This type of migration is facilitated by the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950, which allows Nepalese citizen to legally cross the border and take up work in India.
25 All workers must take out insurance with the State Life Insurance Company.
Sri Lanka

About 75 per cent of Sri Lankan migrants go abroad with the help of licensed recruiters. The country had 746 licensed recruiters in 2009, up from 626 in 2008, according to the government’s database of licensed recruiters. All recruiters must be licensed by the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment (SLBFE) and, until 2009, were required to belong to the Association of Licensed Employment Agencies (ALFEA); since 2009, membership in the ALFEA is voluntary, and membership has dropped from 650 to 350. Licensed agents must post a cash bond with the SLBFE and provide a bank guarantee of 750,000 Sri Lankan rupees (LKR) ($6,815) that the SLBFE can tap if there is a valid worker complaint against the recruiter.

The Government of Sri Lanka has extensive oversight on foreign jobs and the recruitment process. Foreign employers must have their job offers approved by the mission of Sri Lanka in that country, with the job offer-contract logged into the SLBFE database before recruiters in destination countries contact Sri Lankan-based recruiters to lawfully seek Sri Lankan workers to fill the jobs. Sri Lankan recruiters may place ads in newspapers to attract migrants, or use sub-agents to find workers in rural areas.

Once a Sri Lankan worker is selected by a foreign employer or recruiter, Sri Lanka-based recruiters normally help Sri Lankan workers to obtain passports and visas, arrange for medical exams, and schedule a pre-departure training course for first-time migrants required by SLBFE. The final steps in the process involve the recruiter usually taking the worker’s passport, the approved foreign job offer and the worker’s training or experience certificate to SLBFE, where the data are entered into a database that enables the mission of Sri Lanka in the country to check and ensure that there are not several workers being recruited to fill one job.

Village-based sub-agents often match Sri Lankan migrants with licensed recruiters. Sub-agents can charge high fees and make (verbal) promises that are not met, as when they charge domestic helpers $200 to $300 to guide them to a licensed recruiter. When migrants complain about fees or unmet promises, they have no proof that the licensed recruiter collected such fees or made these promises, making it difficult to resolve complaints. Between 1994 and 2006, SLBFE received 101,000 complaints from migrants and settled 74,000 of them, paying $660,000 (Del Rosario 2008).

In 2011, SLBFE began to require that sub-agents, classified as business promotion officers, register with the Bureau and notably that registered business promotion officers are prohibited from collecting fees from migrants. Furthermore, the Bureau requires licensed recruiters to include recruitment fees in their advertisements, and to get approval from it before running advertisements seeking Sri Lankan workers to fill foreign job offers. This effectively allows SLBFE to regulate advertised recruitment fees.

The Sri Lankan Foreign Employment Agency (SLFEA) is a self-supporting government agency established in 1996 to place Sri Lankan workers in foreign jobs.

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26 The largest recruiter in 2009 was Lord Manpower, which sent 10,600 migrants abroad, followed by Nafa Travels, 5,400 migrants, and Gulf Line, 3,100 migrants.

27 The SLBFE plans to launch a web based recruitment system in 2011 that will allow foreign employers and recruiters to view the qualifications of Sri Lankan workers registered with SLBFE.
According to information provided by SLFEA directly to the author, the Agency has placed about 1,000 workers a year in foreign jobs, charging foreign employers and Sri Lankan workers fees to support itself. Another alternative to private recruiters involves the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which recruited 500 Sri Lankan workers for a Brazilian company constructing an international airport in Tripoli, Libya. Many of the Sri Lankan migrants, who were to earn at least LKR 58,000 ($527) a month in Libya, were forced to return in spring 2011 due to internal conflict.

Most recruiters and SLFEA post the job orders they receive from foreign employers at SLBFE and transmit them to “independent” sub-agents in the villages from which most migrants originate (SLBFE 2010). However, SLBFE job order data on the number of foreign jobs available tend to get inflated. For example, if an order for 100 clerks is sent to four recruiters, each of whom post it at SLBFE, 400 foreign jobs for clerks would be posted, not 100. If only 80 of them are filled, some reports will claim that there are “shortages” of qualified Sri Lankan workers because of apparent difficulty in finding qualified workers to fill foreign jobs.\textsuperscript{28, 29}

\section*{Turkey}

Organized Turkish labour migration to Western European countries began with the agreement between Turkey and Germany in 1961 that allowed German employers to recruit Turkish guest workers; Turkey subsequently signed labour-recruitment agreements with Austria, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and Sweden. Governments of European countries that host labour migrants and the Government of Turkey made assumptions about how this labour migration would evolve that were not fulfilled. The Governments of Germany and other host countries assumed that Turkish and other guest workers would rotate in and out of their labour markets, and Turkey assumed that remittances and the return of workers with newly acquired skills would speed up economic and job growth. These assumptions underpinned the Ankara Association Agreement of 1963 and the Additional Protocol of 1973 that promised Turkey a steady reciprocal lowering of tariff and migration barriers.

These bilateral labour agreements regulated the procedures for recruiting migrants, which was only through government agencies on both sides. For example, the agreement between Turkey and Germany required potential migrants to register at the Turkish Employment Services in Turkey. Officials of German Employment Services and either employers from Germany or their representatives in Turkey had the final decision on the selection of migrant workers (Sari 2003).

\textsuperscript{28} The author obtained the information while on an advisory mission.

\textsuperscript{29} For example, fewer than 10 per cent of the 6,900 job orders for professionals, such as accountants and engineers, were filled in 2008, as were less than 10 per cent of the 11,300 job offers for mid-level managers and nurses. About 19 per cent of the 445,000 job orders for domestic workers were filled in 2008. Foreign employers may specify Christian or Muslim domestic workers, and a quarter of the jobs for Christian domestic workers were filled, but only three per cent of those for Muslims.
Bilateral Cooperation

The countries discussed in this report have had to rely first on national or unilateral measures when confronted with the challenges of managing migration. Most of the issues raised, from labour shortages in host countries to flawed recruitment procedures in countries of origin and destination, have been dealt with unilaterally, sometimes with the help of international organizations and NGOs. Several of the countries under study have developed national policies to improve the management of labour migration with the help of international organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) or IOM, and NGOs within the country successfully lobbied for changes in these policies. However, it is evident that since sovereignty does not extend across national borders the effective management of migration cannot depend on unilateral measures alone. The cooperation of host countries is essential to effectiveness, from combating fraud in recruitment to enforcing employment contracts.

While most Asian countries of origin have sought to enter into formal bilateral treaties with host governments, most agreements are memoranda of understanding (MOU) that do not require legislative action in the contracting countries to become effective. MOUs regarding migration are negotiated at the ministry level, usually by labour ministries, and specify who is responsible for implementation. They vary significantly in content, with the general MOUs expressing intention that labour migration will be mutually beneficial to MOUs that specify the obligations of each party. A MOU between India and Qatar, for example, specifies that employers should pay for the transport of the workers from the country of origin and their return (provided they fulfil their contract). It also includes the procedure to be followed for certifying work visas, the adoption and use of model employment contracts and the procedure for their registration, and the establishment of joint committees to oversee the operation of the agreement.

The agreements between the Republic of Korea and 15 Asian countries of origin, including, among others, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, are perhaps the best example of detailed MOUs, laying out a government-to-government recruitment system that guarantees the rights of migrant workers. Ministries of labour in countries of origin test and select workers, and their names are sent to the Human Resource Development Agency of Korea. ILO has been involved in promoting consultations and better coordination of policies and procedures. Bilateral cooperation among trade unions (as for example Nepal-Malaysia) can also make on-site assistance available to migrant workers, a complementary approach promoted by ILO.

This chapter examined labour migration trends and patterns, management structures, conditions of employment abroad, and migration challenges and opportunities for 10 Asian countries. Four of these countries, Bhutan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Maldives, and Turkey experience net in-migration or minimal levels of net out-migration. The other six, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, have clear net out-migration.

Host countries face a variety of issues, such as lack of skilled labour in Bhutan and the Maldives. Overseas migrants from the countries with net out-migration are mostly low-skilled men, but there is a significant variation, from entire families...
often leaving Afghanistan to the wide range of skills among migrants leaving India. Sri Lanka sends the highest share of women abroad, mostly to be domestic workers in GCC countries.

Labour migration can be mutually beneficial for employers and migrants as well as for most residents of countries of origin and countries of destination. Achieving mutual benefits requires well-managed migration that protects the rights of migrants by providing them with complete and accurate information about foreign jobs, regulates and reduces recruitment costs and minimizes irregular migration, ensures that migrants are treated equally while abroad and helps the return and reintegration of migrants.

The challenge most amenable to unilateral, bilateral, and multilateral cooperation in the near term may be reducing recruitment costs, which may be more than 25 per cent of what a migrant with a three-year, $200 a month contract can expect to earn. Cutting $2,000 recruitment costs in half could be far more beneficial to migrants than cutting remittance costs in half. A South Asian migrant earning $200 a month abroad earns $7,500 over three years. If remittances are two-thirds of earnings or $5,000, reducing remittance costs from 10 per cent to five per cent saves the migrant $250, as remittance fees drop from $500 to $250. However, cutting recruitment cost in half saves the migrant $1,000 and more if interest on loans—that are often taken—is considered.

The options to reduce recruitment costs include, among other things, educating migrants, regulating recruiters, promoting competition and ethical recruiter behavior and establishing government recruiting agencies. However, education, regulation and competition have so far not significantly reduced recruitment costs, especially in Asia, which has some of the fast-growing labour migration flows. Despite the benefits of migration to host countries, only a few of them provide significant resources to educate migrants, regulate recruitment effectively, and improve coordination between government agencies concerned with labour migration.

There are many reasons why it is easier to reduce remittance costs than recruitment costs. First, remittance transfers occur more often than recruitment transactions, making it easier to educate migrants. Second, remittance transactions are far more standardized than job-worker matches, which make them more transparent to participating migrants as well as to NGOs and enforcement staff. Third, remittances normally leave a paper trail, from an employer paying for work that was done to a migrant transferring some of his or her earnings to family and friends at home.

Remittance costs are on a declining trajectory because of migrant education, revised banking rules and competition, and technology such as mobile phones. On the other hand, recruitment costs are not on a similar declining trajectory for many reasons. Recruiters in some countries are well-connected politically, making it hard to prosecute them for violating recruitment regulations; in many cases, charges are dropped by workers after the recruiter provides a contract or makes a payment. In some cases, payments for recruitment are hard to discern because they are made early in the process or reflect what recruiters in one country pay to obtain job offers in another. In some countries, governments set unrealistically low maximum recruitment charges and tolerate overcharges.
Strategies to reduce recruitment costs start with establishing realistic regulations and efficient government agencies to implement them. It should be possible to use technology to link government databases and reduce the need for paper documentation from job-seekers, such as police clearances, birth certificates, skills certifications, previous employment records, and social security memberships. The continued reliance on paper documents provides opportunities for forgers and a market for facilitators and intermediaries.

Many governments have set maximum recruitment fees that are often violated with the full knowledge of regulators. Higher-than-maximum recruitment fees arise from the many layers of intermediation involved in foreign employment, including foreign recruiters or sponsors and secondary or tertiary agents at home who recruit workers as well as high profit margins. Cooperation among host governments is necessary to curb the practice of selling visas, but the practices of the local recruitment industry can be influenced by governments of countries with net out-migration by making information about foreign jobs available through mass media.

The cost of excessively high recruitment transactions can be much higher than their monetary value. When abusive recruitment practices are discovered, there are several reactions, including halting the recruitment of workers from particular countries or stopping the deployment of particular types of workers. Recruitment bans negatively affect the availability of needed workers, migrants’ expected earnings, and the recruitment industry. A recruitment ban is, however, likely to improve the working conditions of those already employed.

Government checks of job offers and migrant contracts are also helpful but provide no panacea. Such checks have costs that must be paid by migrants or from general tax revenues. Government staff in embassies abroad dealing with large volumes of both job offers and migrant departures, cannot identify all problematic offers and contracts.
References


