

India's Low-Skilled Migration to the Middle East

S. Irudaya Rajan • Prem Saxena
Editors

India's Low-Skilled Migration to the Middle East

Policies, Politics and Challenges

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S. Irudaya Rajan
Centre for Development Studies
Ulloor Medical College
Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

Prem Saxena
Department of Population Studies
American University of Beirut
Beirut, Lebanon

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Migration has been one of the oldest survival strategies in human civilization. It is invariably a long-term phenomenon. The case of international migration is quite different and unique. In particular, unskilled and semi-skilled workers from Asia largely move to Middle Eastern countries and also to some South East Asian countries like Singapore and Malaysia. Initially, oil boom in the Gulf region attracted cheap male blue-collar workers, and later females migrated to this region to work as domestic workers and nurses in hospitals. But the large proportion of migrants in Middle Eastern countries are dominated by unskilled and semi-skilled workers from the Asian region. The main source countries in Asia are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal, also the Philippines and Indonesia send significant number of female domestic workers to this region as compared with other Asian countries.

The large-scale migration from Asia to the Middle Eastern countries is seen as both opportunities and challenges. Despite the prevalence of unfriendly labour working system in the Gulf, the migrants see earning money in this region as a major opportunity through which they can fulfil their left-behind family's monetary needs. On the other side, there are numerous challenges that persist like undocumented migration, *kafala* system, nationalization policy and demographic changes in the Arab countries. Therefore, from the labour-sending countries' perspective, they always observe and make necessary policy-level changes to protect and safeguard their citizens. At the same time, the destination countries also take measures to check the expatriates' flow, so that their country's socioeconomic and political characteristics are unaltered due to large presence of expatriates.

Given this background, the chapters in this book discuss various issues pertaining to the migration of unskilled and semi-skilled from Asia and the Middle East. For compiling this book, papers were selected from an international seminar on “Migration, Care Economy and Development”, organized at Centre for Development Studies (CDS) in honour of Professor K. C. Zachariah. In addition, we also invited papers from renowned and emerging scholars working in the area of migration to Middle Eastern countries from Asia.

This book consists of 16 chapters, the introduction emphasizes the flow of Asian workers to the Middle East with a special focus on India. Interestingly, the opening chapter covers emerging destination for female Asian workers in the Middle East. The chapters that follow deal with different topics like Arab countries’ demographic features, remittances, labour issues, forced migration and female migration to the Middle East. One of the major highlights of this book is that it includes chapters from almost all major labour-exporting states in India like Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. The book has authors from various disciplines and therefore a multidisciplinary approach can be seen in this book while looking at this migration corridor. Finally, the closing chapter summarizes the policy changes in the Gulf and its effect on the mobility of Asian workers.

We sincerely thank all the contributors to this book who have made significant contribution towards the understanding of labour migration to Middle East and also enriched the literature in the field of migration studies.

Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India
Beirut, Lebanon

S. Irudaya Rajan
Prem Saxena

CONTENTS

1	Migration to the Middle East: Issues and Prospects	1
	S. Irudaya Rajan and Prem Saxena	
2	Demographic Dividend in the Middle East Countries: An Empirical Assessment	29
	Prem Saxena	
3	Egyptian Labour Migration in the Arab Middle East	53
	Ibrahim Awad and Lina Lotayef	
4	Vagaries in the Management of Migrant Domestic Workers from the Philippines: A Case Study from Lebanon	77
	Ray Jureidini	
5	Migration in Saudi Arabia: Present and Prospects	99
	Rshood M. Khraif, Asharaf Abdul Salam, P. S. Nair, and Ibrahim Elsegaey	
6	Policies for Protection of Indian Migrant Workers in Middle East	125
	Seema Gaur	

7	Approaching Different Dimensions of Indian Labour Migration to the Gulf	165
	Serhat Yalçın	
8	Kerala Emigrants in the Gulf	189
	S. Irudaya Rajan and K. C. Zachariah	
9	Forced Migration of Muslims from Kerala to Gulf Countries	207
	A. T. Ajmal Khan	
10	Determinants of International Remittance: Evidence from Kerala, India	223
	Anu Abraham	
11	Tamil Nadu Migrants in the Gulf	247
	S. Irudaya Rajan and E. Sowthara Rajan	
12	Telugu Emigrants in the Gulf	275
	Trilok Chandan Goud and Ajaya Kumar Sahoo	
13	Labour Emigration from Rajasthan to Gulf	295
	Jeetendra D. Soni	
14	Emigration from Uttar Pradesh to the Middle East	319
	Mashkoor Ahmad	
15	Indian Women as Nurses and Domestic Workers in the Middle East: A Feminist Perspective	339
	Nilanjana Ray	
16	Emerging Policies in the Gulf and Its Impact on Asia	355
	S. Irudaya Rajan and H. Arokkiaraj	

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Anu Abraham SAMSOE, NMIMS (deemed to be University), Mumbai, India

Mashkoor Ahmad Department of Geography, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

A. T. Ajmal Khan School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India
Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi, India

H. Arokkiaraj Department of Social Work, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

Ibrahim Awad Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), The American University in Cairo (AUC), Cairo, Egypt

Ibrahim Elsegaey Center for Population Studies, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Seema Gaur Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, New Delhi, India

Trilok Chandan Goud Department of Sociology & Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India

Ray Jureidini Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Doha, Qatar

Rshood M. Khraif Center for Population Studies, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Lina Lotayef Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), The American University in Cairo (AUC), Cairo, Egypt

P. S. Nair International Centre for Gandhian Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, India

E. Sowthara Rajan National Institute of Technology, Trichy, India

Nilanjana Ray School of Gender Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad, India

Ajaya Kumar Sahoo Department of Sociology & Centre for Study of Indian Diaspora, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India

Asharaf Abdul Salam Center for Population Studies, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Jeetendra D. Soni Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Serhat Yalçin Faculty of Economics, Institute for Vocational Education, University of Kassel, Kassel, Germany

K. C. Zachariah Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

ABOUT THE EDITORS

S. Irudaya Rajan Professor at the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. With more than three decades of research experience at the CDS, Kerala, he has coordinated eight major migration surveys (1998, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2016 and 2018) in Kerala (with Professor K. C. Zachariah); conducted the migration surveys in Goa (2008), Punjab (2011) and Tamil Nadu (2015); and also gave technical support to the Gujarat Migration Survey (2010). He has coordinated numerous national and international research projects with organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN agencies, EU, International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the World Bank. He provided advisory support to state and national committees on migration governance and facilitated the formation of research networks and collaborations by organizing conferences, workshops and annual training programmes for young scholars. He is a member of the national expert group on developing migration policy, editor-in-chief of the international journal *Migration and Development*, series editor of the India Migration Report and South Asian Migration Report, and has served on the International Advisory Committee of the Global Forum on Migration and Development and Core Group on Gender Responsive Labour Migration Management of UN Women, New Delhi. He has published works prolifically on the link between migration, remittances and development; Gulf labour markets and temporary guest worker programs; gender, family, migration and social change; policy and legislation; and youth, education, employment and migration. His work has probed a number of theoretical

and methodological paradigms relating to migration, transnationalism, citizenship, demography and the complex social relations and structural forces that mediate these processes. His research foregrounds the mobility of populations as a ubiquitous, urgent topic and considers migrant subjectivity as dynamic, fluid, negotiated and contested—thereby warranting sustained policy and conceptual attention.

Prem Saxena He worked in premier educational institutions in India and overseas. His teaching career started as Assistant Professor of Statistics, from the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, in 1969. In 1972, he joined the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Deonar, Mumbai, and eventually became Professor and Head, Department of Mathematical Demography and Statistics at IIPS in 1987. His Middle East connections began soon after he joined the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 1993 as Full Professor and Chairman, Department of Population Studies. At AUB, he streamlined the newly started Graduate (MS) Programme in Population Studies and successfully ran it for 10 years. On return to his home, Saxena joined the Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai, India, as TISS Golden Jubilee Aba Garware Chair Professor of Social Sciences in 2006. He has successfully supervised about a dozen of students for PhD degree in Demography/Population Studies and Applied Statistics besides supervising a large number of MPhil and MS theses. In recognition of his work on “Ageing and Demographic Dividends” for Arab countries he was nominated as a member of the International Jury at the International Istanbul Initiative in Ageing (IIIA) congress held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2013.

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	Trajectories of potential support ratios for Arab countries, computed from UN population projections obtained under medium-fertility variant assumption, 2015–2100. (Source: Appendix Table 2.2)	34
Fig. 2.2	Trends and patterns of net migration in Arab countries, 1950–2050. (Source: Appendix Table 2.3)	38
Fig. 5.1	Internal migration in the Kingdom, 2017. (Source: General Authority of Statistic (Demographic Survey), 2017)	106
Fig. 5.2	Contribution of migration to population growth in Saudi Arabia, in comparison with other GCC. (Data Source: International Database, US Census Bureau. Accessed during 2012)	107
Fig. 5.3	Number of net migrants in Saudi Arabia over the two decades, in comparison with the other GCC states. (Data Source: International Database, US Census Bureau. Accessed during 2012)	109
Fig. 5.4	Distribution of population by broad age groups and sex, 1974, 1992, 2004, 2010 and 2017	113
Fig. 8.1	Kerala to Gulf migration per 100 HHs. (Source: Same as Table 8.1)	195
Fig. 11.1	Workers granted emigration clearance from Kerala and Tamil Nadu. (Source: Compiled by the authors from various MOIA annual reports, MOIA, New Delhi)	248
Fig. 13.1	Utilization of remittances by families of emigrants at origin. (Source: Table 13.3)	306

Fig. 14.1	Share of Uttar Pradesh in the total emigration from India, 2002–2012. (Source: Computations are based on Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, Government of India)	325
Fig. 14.2	Amount of money used for emigration from urban Bijnor district, 2011. (Source: Computations are based on primary data collected in the field survey conducted from February to May 2011)	331
Fig. 14.3	Arrangement of money used for emigration from urban Bijnor district, 2011. (Source: Computations are based on the primary data collected in the field survey conducted from February to May 2011)	334
Fig. 14.4	Emigrants from urban Bijnor district deceived/not deceived by agents/middlemen, 2011. (Source: Computations are based on the primary data collected in the field survey conducted from February to May 2011)	336

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	Population and percentage of nationals and foreign nationals in the GCC countries	3
Table 1.2	Nationality-wise migrant workers in garment sector, 2018	6
Table 1.3	Year-wise entry of TMWs in Israel, 2009–16	7
Table 1.4	Major origin country of TMWs in home care, 2011–16	8
Table 1.5	Grievances filed by Indian workers in Indian Missions in selected ME countries	9
Table 1.6	Grievances filed by Indian female domestic workers in Indian Missions	10
Table 1.7	Country-wise Indians returning to India	10
Table 1.8	Number of complaints related to illegal agent/agency	11
Table 1.9	Number of workers emigrated to the GCC countries from South Asia	12
Table 2.1	Timings of opening, closure and duration of demographic window of Arab countries under medium-fertility variant assumption, 2015–2100	35
Table 2.2	Potential support ratios of 22 Arab countries from 2015 to 2100	49
Table 2.3	Trends and patterns of net migration in Arab countries: 1950–2050	50
Table 3.1	Overall unemployment rates (%)	55
Table 3.2	Unemployment rates by education level	56
Table 3.3	Number of Egyptian migrants by country of destination 2009	59
Table 3.4	Work permits granted to Egyptians in Arab countries, by occupation, in the period 1985–2002 (%)	61

Table 3.5	Work permits granted to Egyptians in Arab countries, by occupation and year (%)	62
Table 3.6	Expatriate remittance estimates by country of origin 2010–2017	69
Table 3.7	Expatriate remittances as a percentage of GDP	70
Table 3.8	Uses of remittances	72
Table 5.1	Saudi population by residential status—2004 census	102
Table 5.2	Migrants of Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states by area of origin and destination	110
Table 5.3	Sex ratio of population by age group—various censuses	112
Table 5.4	Population size and persons per household—2010	115
Table 5.5	Percentage distribution of households by housing conditions—2010	116
Table 5.6	Urban population in the Kingdom by nationality	119
Table 8.1	Outflow of migrant workers from India to Gulf, 2005–2014	190
Table 8.2	Gender-wise emigrants in the Gulf region	193
Table 8.3	Migration from Kerala to the Gulf region by districts of Kerala	194
Table 8.4	Country of residence of emigrants, 1998–2014	197
Table 8.5	Kerala to Gulf emigrants by religion	198
Table 8.6	Marital status composition of emigrants from Kerala to Gulf region, 1998–2014	198
Table 8.7	Educational profile of Gulf emigrants from Kerala	199
Table 8.8	Remittances to Kerala by Gulf emigrants	201
Table 8.9	Macro economic impact of the Gulf remittance on Kerala economy, 1998–2014	203
Table 9.1	Reason for migration	212
Table 9.2	Kind of visa with which the person went to the Gulf countries	213
Table 9.3	Sources of finance for the migration expenses	216
Table 10.1	Characteristics of the emigrant	231
Table 10.2	Gender and marital status of the emigrants	232
Table 10.3	Characteristics of the emigrant's household	232
Table 10.4	Type of remittance received by the household in the previous year	233
Table 10.5	Percentage distribution of emigrants, remitters and total, mean and percentage distribution of remittance sent according to destination countries	234
Table 10.6	Percentage distribution of emigrants, remitters and total, mean and percentage distribution of remittance sent according to occupational category	235
Table 10.7	Percentage distribution of emigrants, remitters and total, mean and percentage distribution of remittance sent according to educational attainment	236

Table 10.8	Percentage distribution of emigrants, remitters and total, mean and percentage distribution of remittance sent according to socio-religious group	236
Table 10.9	Parameter estimates of the determinants of remittance-sending behaviour	238
Table 11.1	Religious composition of Tamil Nadu emigrants to GCC countries	251
Table 11.2	Distribution of Tamil Nadu emigrants to Gulf by sex and country	252
Table 11.3	Distribution of return migrants to Tamil Nadu from Gulf by sex and country	253
Table 11.4	Distributions of TN migrants by age and country in Gulf and non-Gulf countries	254
Table 11.5	Educational status of TN migrants to GCC countries	255
Table 11.6	Type of employment of TN migrants to GCC and non-GCC countries before and after migration	257
Table 11.7	Percentages of returned Gulf migrants from GCC countries expressing satisfaction on the wage problem	259
Table 11.8	Percentages of returned Gulf migrants from GCC and non-GCC countries expressing satisfaction on the salary received and what was promised	259
Table 11.9	Percentage of TN return migrants from Gulf countries by problems they reported to Indian embassy personnel by country of residence	261
Table 11.10	Percentages of return migrants by reason for their return to their home country by country of residence	263
Table 11.11	Percentage of Tamil Nadu migrants by skills acquired and by country of residence	265
Table 11.12	Remittances by TN migrants to GCC and non-GCC countries with large remittances by country	266
Table 11.13	Remittances of Tamil Nadu Gulf migrants—GCC and non-GCC	266
Table 11.14	Utilization of remittances by left behind families of TN migrants to Gulf countries by country of residence	267
Table 11.15	Economic activity of Tamil Nadu migrants before migrating to Gulf	269
Table 11.16	Economic activity of Tamil Nadu migrants in Gulf after migration	270
Table 11.17	Household remittances of Tamil Nadu migrants from Gulf	271
Table 12.1	Population of overseas Indians in Gulf countries, 2001–2017	277
Table 12.2	Telangana-state/selected country-wise number of workers granted emigration clearance/ECNR endorsement in India 2011–2016	281

Table 12.3	Andhra Pradesh-state/selected country-wise number of workers granted emigration clearance/ECNR Endorsement in India 2011–2016	281
Table 13.1	Areas of specialization of the selected emigrants	298
Table 13.2	Income category and kind of support	304
Table 13.3	Utilization of remittances on household income, amenities, quality of residence and education of children in the family	306
Table 13.4	Responses of emigrants about job-related issues after emigration	310
Table 14.1	Percentages of population of Uttar Pradesh, Bijnor district, and five selected towns of Bijnor district by religion	322
Table 14.2	Number of workers granted emigration clearance/ECNR endorsement from Uttar Pradesh and India annually from 2002 to 2012	324
Table 14.3	Percentages of male emigrants from urban Uttar Pradesh by their engagement in economic activity in host country, 2007–2008	326
Table 14.4	Amount of remittances (during last one year preceding the survey) sent by emigrants to their households in Uttar Pradesh, 2007–2008	329
Table 14.5	Amount of remittances (during last one year preceding the survey) sent by emigrants to their households in Bijnor districts, 2011	330
Table 14.6	Frequency of sending remittances by emigrants to their homes in Bijnor district, 2011	331
Table 16.1	Number of workers emigrated to GCC countries from South Asia	359
Table 16.2	Gauging the outcomes of Gulf nationalisation policies	362