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For Asian Development Bank

Asian Development Bank

VERSO
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MANAGING MIGRATION IN ASIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trends and Key Data

1. The Asia-Pacific region ("the region") is one of the key migration corridors. As per the latest International Organization for Migration (IOM) data, in 2017 Asia housed an estimated 83.6 million migrants,[1] almost 1.8% of its total population. The bulk of these (63.3 million migrants) came from within Asia and had simply moved from one country to another.[2] The region was also an important region of origin. Asia (including the Middle East) was estimated to be the region of origin for 105.7 million of the world's 257.7 million migrants.[3]

2. Most migration is for economic reasons (looking for better work opportunities). Of these, migration for work, or labor migration, is the dominant form. Data from the International Labour Organization's (ILO) statistics and databases, ILOSTAT, on inflows of working age non-citizens shows that in 2017 and 2018 alone, over 6 million workers from 21 Asian countries left to work across the world, from Australia to other countries in Asia, to Europe and the Middle East.[4] Flows to Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand) amounted to just under 500,000 persons in the same year.[5] Flows of migrants to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries averaged about 1.5 million a year from 2004 to 2014.[6] Migrants from the People's Republic of China (PRC) dominated this category, closely followed by Indian citizens.

3. Forced migration is also important. There are 2.7 million Afghan refugees (resident mainly in Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, in Iran), and about 1.1 million persons who left Myanmar and have entered Bangladesh and some countries in Southeast Asia.[7] According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 2.2 million people in Asia and the Pacific did not hold the nationality of any country in 2019 and are thus considered stateless.

4. Key factors influencing migration in Asia include networks and linguistic links, demographics (mainly accounting for migration to OECD countries), income, and labor market gaps and conflict.

Impacts of Migration

5. Migration affects source and destination countries. Key impacts occur in the form of flows of remittances, impacts on economic growth, and impacts on society.

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1 Migrants are defined as persons born in one country, and currently living in another

2 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). (2017). International Migration Report 2017. See Table 1.2.

3 UN DESA. (2017). International Migration Report 2017. See Table 1.2.

4 ILOSTAT. https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/. Table on Inflow of working-age non-citizens by sex and country of citizenship. Updated October 20 2020. Accessed October 25 2020.

5 Asian Development Bank, OECD, and ILO. (2018). *Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology*. See Table 1.3.

6 ADB Institute (ADBI), OECD, and ILO. (2018). *Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology*. See Table 1.4. The data is for the top 15 Asian countries of origin for migration to the OECD.

7 UNHCR (2019). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019.* Page 3.

6. Remittance flows are large and important for many countries in Asia. In terms of remittance inflows, India with inflows of $83 billion in 2019 and the PRC with inflows of $68 billion led in the region. Documented remittances do not tell the whole story. In spite of increased controls on informal systems of money transfer, particularly post 9/11, such channels have by no means been eliminated. remittances constitute the key motivation for migration—particularly individual migration sans families, where migrants choose to relocate to ensure a steady stream of income to their families back home. The effects of remittances are apparent at multiple levels. They impact household consumption levels, school dropout rates, and child labor incidence, and have positive macroeconomic impacts if routed through banking channels.

7. Migration helps mitigate labor shortages. In general, low-skilled migrants provide a pool of cheap labor, often to countries whose nationals are either overqualified for certain jobs or where the local population is not large enough to sustain a labor-intensive economy. Highly skilled migrants on the other hand are often sought after to plug key skill gaps. However, migration may discourage local populations from acquiring certain skills or may artificially depress wages as explained above.

8. Unlike economic migration, forced migration is almost always a crisis scenario and, if left unattended by the international community, can result in a serious strain on the host country's resources. The support required by victims of forced migration depends on whether the crisis is over fairly soon, and they can move back to their source country, or whether their situation becomes a protracted one. By UNHCR estimates, 77% of the world's refugees were in protracted situations as of the end of 2019. In Asia, they include mainly Afghans in Pakistan and Iran. In protracted situations, the experience of refugees varies based on whether the host government considers integrating them into the local economy and society or whether it wants to preserve their status as "temporary" residents who will return to their place of origin.

9. The experience of migrants is highly dependent on the immigration regimes of the host country, and the terms and conditions under which they live and work in a foreign country. Migration regimes in Gulf countries are highly restrictive, and do not allow foreign workers to make long-term plans for settlement. The integration of the European Union has led to a situation where, in 2008, more than half of the migrants living in different countries in Europe were from other European countries and only 10% were from less developed countries. The United States (US), on the other hand, is relatively open to skilled labor migration from Asia. Attitudes of host country nationals can also vary significantly across destination countries.

Case Study

10. Our research includes a case study on economic migration from Myanmar to Thailand.

Economic Migration: Myanmar–Thailand

11. In 2017, the number of migrants from Myanmar estimated to be resident in Thailand was a little over 1.8 million.[8] Migrants from Myanmar constitute about half of all migrants in Thailand. Pull and push factors are at play in the context of this

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[8] UN DESA, Population Division. (2017). Workbook: UN Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination, 2017. Table 1: Total Migrant Stock by Origin and Major Area.

migration. Thailand is an economy that has the potential to move into a higher growth trajectory and needs labor to support it. As Thailand's population acquires skills, opportunities open up in agriculture and in unskilled jobs in services. In Thailand, 90% of migrants work in low-skilled elementary occupations, while only 7% of the local labor force works in these occupations.[9] At the same time, Thailand is facing a demographic challenge in the form of an aging population. The population growth rate is very low (0.3%), and the median age, at about 37 years, is significantly higher than that of Myanmar at 26 years. The Government of Thailand issued new legislation in 2017, the Royal Ordinance on Foreign Worker Management. The new law prescribed substantial penalties for those working without proper documentation, as well as for employers providing work to undocumented foreigners. Less than a year later, in March 2018, the law was amended and some of the more severe provisions toned down. Nevertheless, Thailand is moving toward a more formal system of recruitment and stay. Legal migrants, with the exception of domestic workers, are supposed to be covered under social insurance schemes such as provident funds etc. in Thailand.[10] They are also eligible for workplace injury benefits. Benefits such as pensions are exportable in theory but no framework has been specified for ensuring that this is operationalized. Health benefits in Thailand are open to all migrants regardless of the status of their documentation.

Supporting Migration for Development

12. As countries develop and economies diversify, more and more people are likely to move across borders to take advantage of new opportunities. Governments need to work together to ensure that this migration is conducted in a safe and orderly fashion and that potential migrants are not pushed to consider illegal options that may endanger their lives. In many ways, overseeing migration protocols across borders affords excellent opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation for wider economic development. Multilateral development banks (MDBs) can support governments in this critical agenda in many different ways.

13. Regional cooperation for supporting migration flows. These include developing regional systems for supporting labor mobility through recognition of qualifications through mutual recognition arrangements and qualifications reference frameworks. In Asia-Pacific, ASEAN has made some progress on recognition of qualifications, which could provide a reference for other subregional and pan-Asia agreements. Portability of social benefits is also important. Limiting access to benefits for migrants and the lack of portability of the same constitute an important disincentive to migration, particularly for skilled migrants. Asia and the Pacific does not have examples of such comprehensive regional systems, but some subregional forums, such as the CLMTV (Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic [Lao PDR], Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam) group on labor cooperation have been in talks to devise appropriate systems. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) can support implementation of agreements where these are in place, and development of agreement where these are not.

14. Improving labor market information flows. Migration entails costs at the best of times but these costs can be significantly compounded if migrants do not have access to information on labor markets in destination countries. In the age of information technology, there are a variety of options to do this, from the job listings for five Asian

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9 Testaverde, Mauro et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. Page 52.

10 Testaverde, Mauro et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. See Table 8.2.

countries that are provided on JobStreet.com to the Republic of Korea's Employment Permit System (EPS), where work quotas for low-skilled migrants are set annually for each sector of the economy and by country of origin. Two relatively successful and well-known initiatives in the Pacific region are Australia and New Zealand's seasonal worker programs. ADB can help by promoting learning from these experiences and supporting their replication in other countries across the region.

15. Using livelihood strategies for migrants. ADB already works with governments in a variety of ways to promote growth, job creation, and preservation of livelihoods. These may be particularly relevant for refugees. MDBs can also assist and work with governments and other partners to create an enabling environment to support migrants' welfare and income-generating opportunities through elements such as freedom of movement; access to quality health, education, and social protection; vocational training; certification; financial and legal services; and adequate housing. ADB can also assist in providing technical expertise to review government approaches and suggest amendments in light of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), given the impacts of the pandemic on public health and livelihoods.

16. Promoting financial sector improvements for migration. Redirecting remittances to flow through regular banking channels as opposed to informal transfer systems is an important way to help countries achieve a degree of exchange rate stability and helps to maintain foreign exchange reserves. ADB has worked with governments to combat money laundering and to promote remittances for development finance by streamlining banking systems. Similarly, private investors have for some time been interested in bonds that fund enterprises that deliver environmental, social, and governance benefits. This renewed interest may be explored by ADB to assess if diaspora bonds can be promoted as a part of COVID-19 recovery efforts.

17. Filling knowledge gaps. Moving forward, there is a potential role for MDBs in improving collection of stratified data on migration and making it widely available. Specifically, MDBs should work in collaboration with the UN and IOM to identify the key indicators that are important to track migrant stocks and flows and to understand the role of migrants in the economy and in society. Thereafter, MDBs can consider allocating resources to support comprehensive data collection, storage, presentation, and analysis. They should also consider delineating a multicountry research program that addresses key questions of concern on migration in the region. Development agencies already work with governments on employment generation and livelihood strategies. These may be extended to displaced populations and host communities. MDBs can also help countries manage remittances better and route these through banking channels. Private investors have for some time been interested in bonds that fund enterprises that deliver environmental, social, and governance benefits. MDBs may explore the question of whether diaspora bonds can be promoted as a vehicle for successful migrants to invest in their home countries.

18. Policy dialogue and partnerships for better migration. MDBs also have a role to play on the policy level, working with national governments to prepare migration policies. Given how COVID-19 has wreaked havoc in the world economy and potentially left migrants particularly vulnerable, these interventions can be particularly valuable in the short term. ADB should consider working with think tanks and governments in Asia to identify gaps in migration management in individual member states, as well as in subregional multilateral organizations, and provide technical assistance to analyze data and develop policy, while learning from the experiences of others in the region. At the very least, successful initiatives in the region must continue to be documented and their details disseminated to member states.

I. TRENDS AND DRIVERS OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION IN ASIA-PACIFIC

19. Migration has been a feature of the human experience since antiquity and was largely unrestricted until the 20th century. For much of recent history, particularly from the 17th century through to the early 20th century, states were concerned with building up populations as a means to acquire or maintain economic and military power. As such, migration into the territory of a nation state was generally seen as an advantage. This began to change gradually after the Industrial Revolution, when advances in technology fundamentally changed production processes and forms of warfare. These technological advances, and the proliferation of “new” nation states post World War II, most of which continue to face development challenges, have birthed a new world order in which restrictions on mobility are the norm. Nevertheless, people continue to move for one reason or the other; the difference is that this movement is now closely regulated.

20. Migration can take many forms; it can be temporary or permanent, domestic, or international, voluntary or forced, with families or as individuals etc. There are a number of reasons why people may choose to or be forced to leave their homes. They could be escaping persecution, war, natural disasters, and/or pestilence, or they could simply be in search of better economic opportunities. Almost all modern nation states are either origin or destination points for migrants or serve as transit regions. Migration is therefore a global phenomenon and needs to be understood as such.

21. The movement of large numbers of people across borders began to be recognized as an issue in international law after the upheaval of World War II, but the focus then was to regulate the movement of and legislate on the rights of refugees. More recently, there has been a shift toward understanding migration, particularly international migration, in its myriad forms and analyzing the effects of this global movement of people across borders. Recognizing that the Asia-Pacific region is one of the key migration corridors in the world, ADB is carrying out this study to assess existing features of migration in the region and delineate a potential role for the Bank in supporting and regulating it.

22. This chapter is organized as follows. We begin with data on regional migration, disaggregated by type of migrant (refugee, asylum seeker, economic migrant, or others) and look at the main forms of migration in Asia. We also discuss the key drivers of migration as defined in the literature, typically categorized as push and pull factors. Lastly, we discuss the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of key migrant groups.

Box 1.1: Glossary of Migration

The term "migrant" has not been defined per se in international law.[11] The IOM employs a broad definition of the term as "a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons."[12]

Migrants and refugees. While the terms "migrants" and "refugees" are often used interchangeably in the media, refugees are defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention as persons who have escaped persecution in their country of nationality and fear going back.[13] A key principle of international law when it comes to treatment of refugees is "non-refoulement" or prohibition of expulsion.[14] No such protection applies to migrants. UNHCR's preferred term for groups of people who are on the move, but whose exact status is unclear, is "refugees and migrants."[15] This terminology covers refugees and asylum seekers, as well as different categories of migrants, including victims of human trafficking. The UNHCR is the agency mainly responsible for Refugee Status Determination, but individual states often also enact legislation or notify policy on the criteria they would apply to confer refugee status.

Asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are defined by UNHCR as people who have requested sanctuary but whose requests have not yet been processed.[16] An asylum seeker may or may not be recognized as a refugee. Typically, states have their own criteria for deciding whether or not to grant asylum to individuals or groups of people. Asylum seekers bear responsibility for substantiating the claim that they qualify for protection.

Forced migration or displacement. Forced migration or displacement can refer to any kind of involuntary movement, including displacement due to conflict, natural disasters, famine, large infrastructure projects etc. Often the distinction is blurred, as environmental stresses can fuel conflict and the other way round. As of the end of 2019, 79.5 million people were considered to be living in a state of involuntary displacement.[17] Of these, 26 million are formally classified as refugees and almost 46 million are internally displaced persons,[18] while 4.2 million are asylum seekers.

Irregular or undocumented migrants. Also referred to in some countries as illegal aliens, the term refers to migrants who do not have the required documentation to travel, or to live and work in their country of residence.

Stateless persons. People who are not considered as nationals by any state under the operation of its law.

Immigrants: People who have come to live in a particular country but are or were citizens of another country before.

Emigrants. People who leave their country of origin for another destination and intend to stay in that destination country for at least 1 year.

23. For the purposes of this paper, we will follow the UNHCR recommended protocol of referring to groups of people crossing borders as migrants and refugees,

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11 Migrant workers, who constitute a subset of migrants in general, are covered in the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. This convention defines the term "migrant worker" as "a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national" (see Article 2 of the Convention). https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cmw.aspx

12 See definition on IOM website: https://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant. Accessed 23 October 2020.

13 See Article 1 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. https://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf. Accessed 23 October 2020.

14 See Article 33 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

15 See UNHCR. (2016). Refugee or Migrant? Word Choice Matters. March. https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2018/02/UNHCR_Refugee_or_Migrant_EN.pdf. Accessed 24 October 2020.

16 See https://www.unhcr.org/asylum-seekers.html.

17 UNHCR. (2019). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*. Page 2.

18 UNHCR statistics only account for people internally displaced by conflict. This figure does not include numbers displaced due to environmental or natural disasters.

or simply migrants (where we are clear that the people being discussed do not have refugee status).

A. Migration and the International Community

24. As stated in Box 1.1, the term migrant is not defined in international law. Nevertheless, the international community has taken account of migration as a phenomenon and come together to ensure that the basic human rights of people on the move are not violated. Some key initiatives in this regard are as follows:

25. MDB Coordination Platform. In April 2018, seven MDBs launched an initiative to enhance collaboration on forced displacement and economic migration.[19] The MDB Coordination Platform on Economic Migration and Forced Displacement, as it has come to be known, aims to (i) develop a common framework for MDB engagement in these issues; (ii) encourage exchange of knowledge and data; (iii) ensure strategic coordination with national governments, the UN, and other partners; and (iv) deploy better-targeted instruments and products.[20] In December 2019, members of the platform once again pledged to coordinate more effectively with key stakeholders and provide rapid financing through dedicated financial instruments to support refugees and victims of forced displacement.[21]

26. Global Compact on Migration. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a resolution in September 2016—the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants—reaffirming that the human rights of refugees and migrants, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, must be fully protected.[22] This was followed by the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in December 2018, which resolved to improve cooperation on international migration.[23] The compact, which has been developed by the IOM and is nonbinding, aims to reduce risks that migrants face, and, while acknowledging the concerns of destination states, encourages the international community to recognize that there is a need to create conducive conditions to enable migrants to enrich the societies they live in through their skills and economic and social capabilities. At the same time, the compact recognizes the need to mitigate the circumstances—environmental, economic, and political—that can lead to forced displacement.

27. Global Compact for Refugees. Concomitant with the adoption of the Global Compact on Migration, the UNGA also adopted the Global Compact on Refugees, developed under the auspices of the UNHCR. The four key objectives of the compact are to (i) ease pressure on host countries and provide assistance for the support of refugee populations, (ii) enhance refugee self-reliance, (iii) expand access to third-country solutions, and (iv) support origin countries to create conditions that allow for the safe and orderly return of refugees.[24] Thus, while the Global Compact on Migration

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19 The seven participating MDBs include are African Development Bank, ADB, World Bank Group, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), and Islamic Development Bank. The platform also has some strategic partners, including the European Commission and UNHCR.

20 See World Bank Press Release. (2018). MDBs launch new platform to coordinate support for economic migration and forced displacement. 20 April.

21 See joint statement at the Global Refugee Forum, Geneva, December 2019. https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/multilateral-development-banks-pledge-step-support-forcibly-displaced-populations-global-refugee-forum-33318.

22 UNGA. (2016). New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. 71st Session. 3 October.

23 UNGA. (2019). Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. 73rd Session. 11 January.

24 See https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/refugees-compact for listing of the four objectives.

stresses the need to reduce the risks that people face on the move, whether through forced migration or voluntary migration, the Compact for Refugees is more specific in that it seeks to ensure that the basic rights of refugee populations, including the right to life, right to education and health, and right to earn a livelihood, are upheld.

28. The need for the two global compacts on refugees and on migration was triggered mainly by the arrival of over a million refugees in Europe from 2014–2015 onward and the resulting social upheaval in some of the destination countries. The text of the Compact on Migration has been formally adopted by 164 countries,[25] while that of the Compact on Refugees has been adopted by 181 countries, including all countries of Asia. The Compact on Migration has generated more debate in the international community and has been met with skepticism in the US and some European nations whose governments expressed the fear that it will prevent countries from forcefully dealing with illegal immigration. The US did not even participate in the negotiation of the agreement and has, so far, refused to consider signing it. The Government of Australia also expressed reservations on the basis that signing the compact would prevent Australia from implementing policies to deter asylum seekers.[26] A number of Eastern European countries also declined to sign the compact for the same reasons. In countries such as Germany, which have recently hosted a number of refugees from the Middle East and Afghanistan, the Compact on Migration generated a lot of debate in parliament, with representatives of some parties outright rejecting it and others expressing reservations over the fact that it did not distinguish between asylum seekers and economic migrants.[27] Nevertheless, the German parliament voted to sign the compact. The UN has reiterated that the document is a statement of intent and does not override the immigration policies of individual states. Nevertheless, formal adoption of the global compact remains a contentious issue for some states. In contrast, the Global Compact on Refugees has faced less opposition. Only the US and Hungary have asserted that they will not sign it, both citing concerns of breach of sovereignty.

B. Regional Trends

29. Asia is home to mixed migration flows, including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, and those who have been forcibly displaced due to conflict or natural disaster. The table below summarizes the key data for the world, and for Asia as a whole, as well as for the subregions of the continent.[28]

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[25] No Asian country voted against the compact or abstained from voting. However Afghanistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were absent when the vote took place.

[26] See discussion on reactions from the Brookings Institute: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2018/12/12/the-global-compact-on-migration-dead-on-arrival/

[27] See statement of members of the Bundestag's home affairs committee: https://www.dw.com/en/german-conservatives-against-un-migration-pact/a-46168381

[28] The Middle East, or West Asia as it is called in some of the literature, is not discussed in detail in this paper as countries from this region are not members of ADB.

Table 1.1: Key Indicators on Migration

Indicator (most recent year)	*World*	*Asia (including the Middle East)*	*Central Asia*	*East Asia*	*South Asia*	*Southeast Asia*
International migrant stocks in 2019 (million)	271.6	83.6	5.5	8.1	14.1	10.2
Migrant stocks as share of total population in 2019 (%)	3.5	1.8	7.6	0.7	0.5	1.5
Share of female migrants in stocks in 2019 (%)	47.9	41.5	51.8	52.4	48.5	46.8
Inflows of foreign population in 2017	7.8 million	1.4 million	NA	927.7 thousand	NA	NA
Work migrant inflows in 2017 (000)	504.8	53.6	NA	53.6	NA	NA
Family migrant inflows in 2017	1,700,000	49,300	NA	43,100	NA	NA
Migrant deaths in 2018	4700	329	NA	NA	NA	NA
Identified victims of human trafficking in 2015	4300	870	NA	54	NA	471
Refugees in host country in 2019	20.4 million	9.9 million	4.7 thousand	308.1 thousand	3.5 million	237.7 thousand
Remittances received in 2019 (Billion USD)	714.2	NA*	NA	NA	NA	NA
Persons under UNHCR's statelessness mandate in 2019	4.2 million	2.7 million	120,214	884	872,434	1,294,497

Source: IOM Migration Data Portal. https://migrationdataportal.org/
Data on migrant stocks as share of national population from UN DESA Population Division. Workbook UN-Migrantstock-total-2019. Table 3.
Data on persons under statelessness mandate from UNHCR (2019). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*. Calculated from Annex Table 1 grouping countries with stateless persons as follows: Central Asia (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan); Southeast Asia (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, Myanmar); South Asia (Bangladesh and India); East Asia (Japan and the Republic of Korea).
Notes:
International migrant stocks: All foreign-born residents in a country regardless of when they entered the country.
Identified victims of human trafficking: Those identified by governments.
* Data is not available for Asia as a whole, but remittances received in India, the PRC, and the Philippines alone amounted to USD186.7 billion in 2019, as per the IOM database.

30. Migrant stocks. As the table notes clarify, “migrant stocks” in any country are the total number of foreign-born persons who reside in that country, regardless of when and how they entered. In Asia as a whole, there were an estimated 83.6 million migrants, i.e., persons born in one country and currently living in another as per latest IOM data. Thus, of the total population of the entire continent of Asia (estimated at about 4.6 billion in 2019), 1.8% were migrants. This is a relatively low proportion; the same data source also showed that the total migrant stock in Europe in 2019 amounted to 82.3 million. Thus, in Europe, given a total population for the continent of about 740 million, 11% of all residents were migrants. The US is the country with the largest migrant stock in the world, and it houses 50.7 million persons who were not born within its borders.[29] Within Asia's subregions, South Asia housed the largest number of migrants at 14.1 million, but this constituted only 0.5% of the total population of the

[29] All figures on migrant stocks from IOM database. Figures on populations of continents from UN data as reported in https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/.

region, as shown in the table above. Of the subregions of Asia, Central Asia housed the largest number of migrants as a proportion of the population. This is a function of the pre-independence era when, as part of the former Soviet Union, people moved freely across the region.

31. Data from UN DESA gives a more detailed breakdown of in-migration in Asia. Total number in-migration in Asia—or people currently living in Asian countries who were born in another country—was estimated at 79.6 million in 2017.[30] The same source also shows that the bulk of this in-migration is within Asia; 63.3 million migrants had simply moved from one country in Asia to another. In comparison, the number of immigrants (people born outside their countries of residence) living in Europe was estimated at 77.9 million, and in North America, 57.7 million. Given that the total populations in these regions are less than a quarter of the population of Asia, it is obvious that Asia is not a key immigration destination for the world as a whole, although there is significant relocation and migration within the continent itself. As of 2017, there were an estimated 7.1 million migrants of European origin in Asia and only 4.4 million migrants of African origin.[31] The remainder of migrants into Asia was made up of migrants of unknown origin (3.7 million) and small numbers from the Americas.

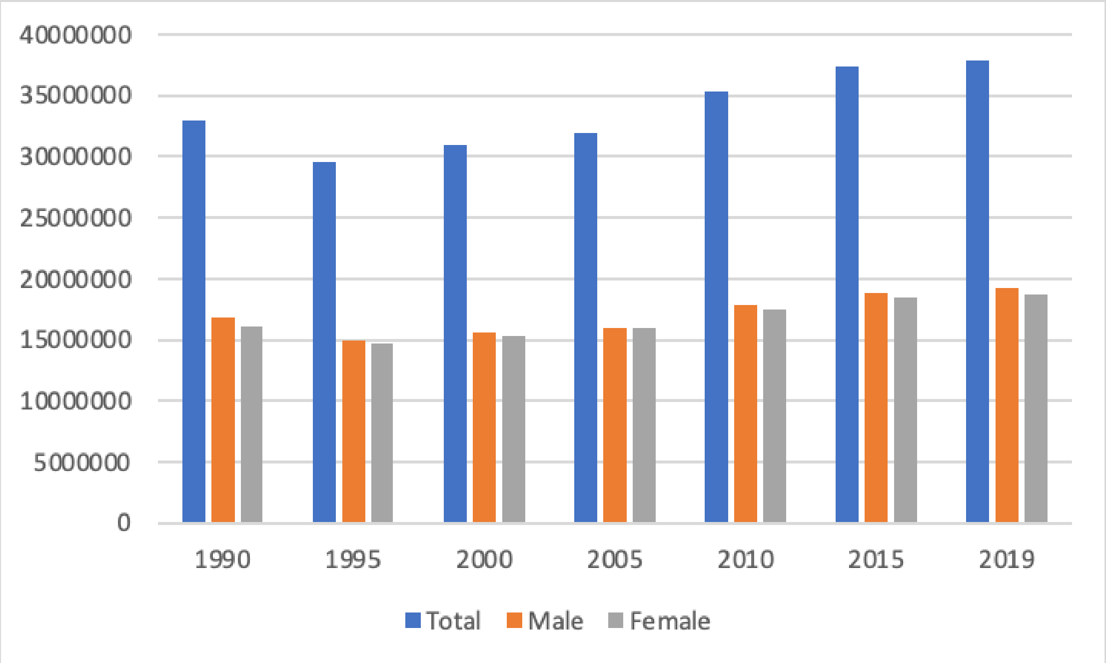
32. Out-migration (emigration) from Asia. In 2017, Asia (including the Middle East) was estimated to be the region of origin for 105.7 million of the world's 257.7 million migrants.[32] After the continent itself, the second biggest destination region for Asian migrants was Europe, which housed an estimated 20.5 million Asian migrants as of 2017. North America was estimated to house 17.2 million Asian migrants in the same year. India and the PRC contribute significantly to global emigration, with emigrants from India estimated at 17.5 million in 2019 and emigrants from the PRC at 10.7 million.[33]

33. Refugees and stateless persons. Asia (including the Middle East) is also home to almost half of the world's refugee population, housing almost 10 million refugees. The bulk of the refugee population in the continent as a whole consists of Syrian refugees spread across the Middle East. Of the remaining, 3.5 million refugees are in South Asia, mainly Afghans. More than half of the world's stateless citizens were also resident in Asia as of 2019. Human trafficking is also a major issue for many Asian countries and, in 2015, the continent accounted for about a fifth of identified human trafficking victims. This number very likely underestimates the true magnitude of the problem.

34. Within the continent, some neighboring countries (for example India and Nepal) allow relatively free movement of labor across borders. For the most part, however, Asian countries tend to closely regulate movement. The figure below shows migrant stocks in Asia and the Pacific over 30 years, which have remained fairly consistent.

30 UN DESA. (2017). International Migration Report 2017. See Table 1.2.
31 Ibid.
32 UN DESA. (2017). International Migration Report 2017. See Table 1.2.
33 Data on international emigrants from IOM's Migration Data Portal, country data.

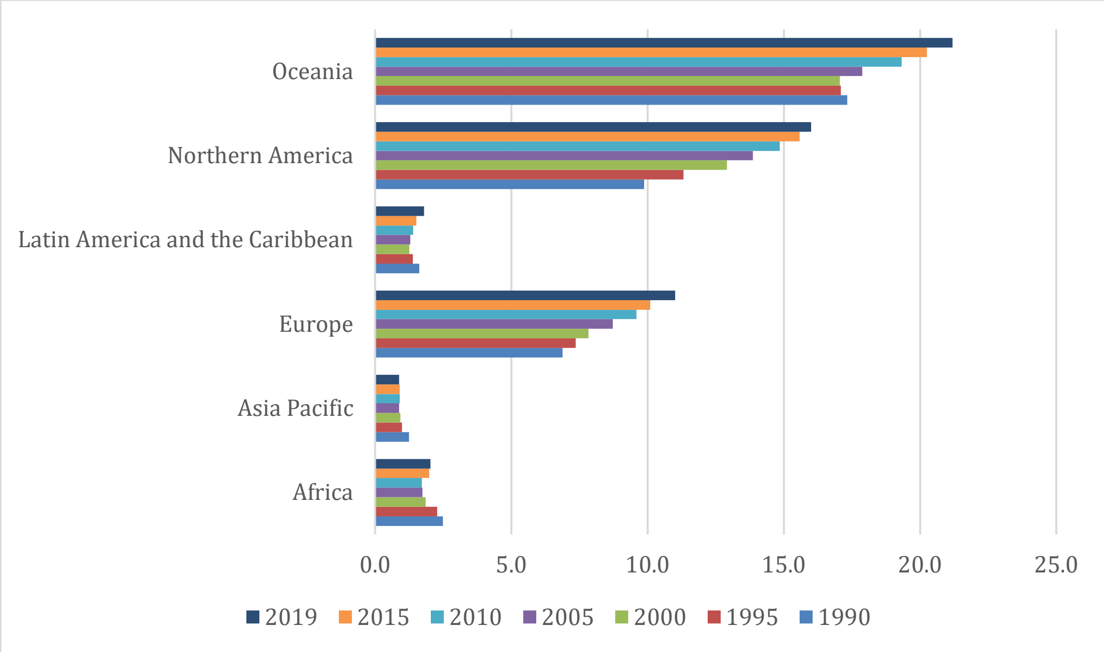
Figure 1.1: Asia and the Pacific: International Migrant Stock



Source: UN DESA, Population Division database, 2019.
https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/index.asp

35. While migrant stocks have increased somewhat in absolute terms in Asia and the Pacific, the growth of the region's population has ensured that the proportion of migrants in the total population has, on an average, remained more or less consistent over about 3 decades at under 2%. In contrast, the share of migrants in the total population has varied significantly over this period in Europe, North America, and Oceania, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 1.2: International Migrant Stock as a Percentage of Total Population



Source: UN DESA, Population Division database, 2019.
https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/index.asp

C. Forms of Migration in Asia and the Pacific

36. With almost 50% of the world's population resident in Asia (excluding the Middle East), the continent is diverse and heterogenous, and it is almost impossible to condense information on it. Nevertheless, the data and literature suggest that there are two main forms of migration in Asia and the Pacific: migration for economic reasons (looking for better work opportunities) and forced migration, mainly as a result of conflict. Of these, migration for work, or labor migration, is the dominant form, as it is in most other parts of the world.

37. These are discussed in the following subsections.

1. Migrant Labor

38. Labor migration is believed to be the dominant form of migration in the region, with several countries processing up to half a million applications a year.[34]

39. There are three main corridors for labor migration for Asian migrants:

(i) Migration from Southeast and South Asia to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. The bulk of these migrants tend to be low or semiskilled and typically work on temporary work visas. These

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[34] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). (2017). Labor Migration in Asia and the Pacific. Paper prepared for Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Bangkok, November 2017. See Table 1.

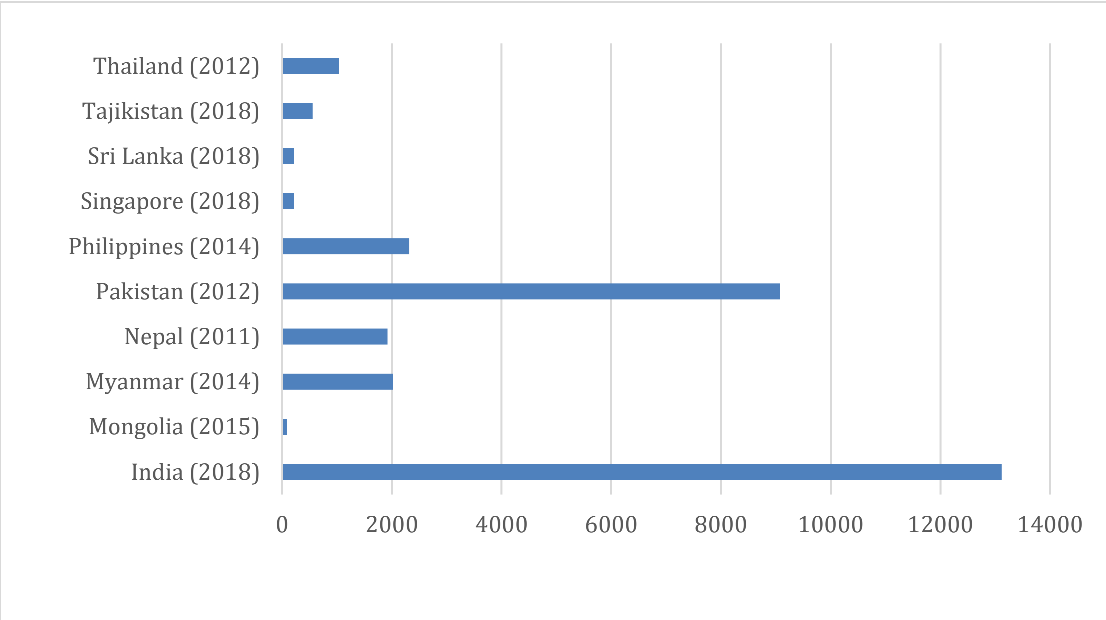
visas have, until recently, been renewed regularly, but do not generally translate into permanent stay or citizenship.

(ii) Migration to OECD countries. Migrants on this route are mainly highly skilled professionals who take a variety of paths to effect migration. These include pursuing higher education in OECD countries, leading to work visas, and applying for work visas to fill skill gaps (for example the H1-B visa program in the US, which has proved particularly beneficial for Indian nationals aspiring to work in technology companies).

(iii) Intraregional migration within ASEAN countries. Consisting mainly of semiskilled workers, intra-ASEAN migration does not involve big numbers but has been fairly consistent over the past decade. Within the ASEAN region, there are two major corridors. The first is the flow from the Mekong delta countries—Myanmar, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and Cambodia—into Thailand. The second is the flow from Indonesia and the Philippines into Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, and Malaysia.[35]

40. The figure below shows stocks of nationals living abroad for 10 Asian countries that provided official data for the years indicated.

Figure 1.3: Stock of Nationals Abroad ('000)



Source: ILOSTAT. https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/. Updated 20 October 2020. Accessed 25 October 2020.

41. India, with 13 million nationals living abroad in 2018, topped this list, with Pakistan, albeit with older data, in second place. Although this table did not include numbers for the PRC, other sources indicate that the number of Chinese nationals resident in other countries, most of whom are likely to be migrant workers, is also substantial.[36] In terms of migrants as a proportion of the total population, the Philippines is the leading source of migrant workers among Asian countries, with

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35 See discussion in Pasadilla, Gloria O. (2011). Social Security and Labor Migration in ASEAN. ADBI, Research Policy Brief 34. Page 4.

36 IOM data is quoted in Section B of this chapter.

more than 2 million overseas workers from among a population of about 108 million.[37] The Philippines and Indonesia are also unique in that the bulk of workers originating from them are women, engaged mainly in domestic work, nursing, and care services. In contrast, some other countries, notably India, have stipulated restrictions on overseas employment for low-skilled women, particularly those below 30 years of age, to prevent abuse and exploitation.

42. In terms of flows rather than stocks, data from ILOSTAT on inflows of working age noncitizens shows that in 2017 and 2018 alone, over 6 million workers from 21 Asian countries left to work across the world, from Australia to other countries in Asia, to Europe and the Middle East.[38] These numbers are substantiated by a recent report from the ADB Institute, according to which outflows of workers from 12 Asian countries averaged about 5 million per year.[39] The GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar are major employers of Asian workers, and an estimated 3.2 million workers from just seven Asian countries left to work in the GCC in 2016.[40] Saudi Arabia alone accounted for employment of almost 1.4 million workers from these countries. Flows to ASEAN countries (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand) amounted to just under 500,000 persons in the same year.[41] Flows of migrants to OECD countries averaged about 1.5 million a year from 2004 to 2014.[42] Migrants from the PRC dominated this category, closely followed by Indian citizens. The three key destination countries in the OECD for Asian migrants are the US, Japan, and Republic of Korea.[43]

43. Labor migration is closely tied to the vicissitudes of the global economy and, for Asian migrants, tends to be disproportionately influenced by oil prices and the state of the Gulf economies.[44] More recently, the policy of indigenization initiated in the Gulf economies has resulted in a reduction of migration there over the last 5 or 6 years. The "Saudi-ization" policy, for example, which was initiated in 2011, requires employers to first advertise vacancies locally, and, in addition to raising visa fees, has had significant impacts. On the other hand, intraregional flows increased by 10% in ASEAN countries over the period from 1995 to 2015, making this one of the new regions of the world where intraregional labor movement showed significant gains.[45]

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37 See data from the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration. Deployed Overseas Filipino Workers by Country. http://www.poea.gov.ph/ofwstat/compendium/2015-2016%20OES%202.pdf

38 ILOSTAT. https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/. Table on Inflow of working-age noncitizens by sex and country of citizenship. Updated 20 October 2020. Accessed 25 October 2020.

39 ADBI, OECD, and ILO. (2018). *Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology*. Figure 1.3.

40 ADBI, OECD, and ILO. (2018). *Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology*. See Table 1.2. The seven countries exporting labor to the GCC are India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Indonesia.

41 ADBI, OECD, and ILO. (2018). *Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology*. See Table 1.3.

42 ADBI, OECD, and ILO. (2018). *Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology*. See Table 1.4. The data is for the top 15 Asian countries of origin for migration to the OECD.

43 ADBI, OECD, and ILO. (2018). *Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology*. See Table 1.5.

44 See, for example, https://peoplesdispatch.org/2020/07/22/workers-returning-from-crisis-hit-gulf-economies-need-state-support-back-home/ and https://www.reuters.com/article/us-gulf-economy-migrants-kemp-idUSKCN0WS06Y

45 Testaverde, Mauro et al. (2017). *Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia*. World Bank. Figure O.1.

2. Forced Migration or Displacement

44. In general, forced or involuntary migration and/or displacement are not defined in international law per se. Forced migration can refer to a range of situations, including people escaping war or low-level conflict or even discrimination, environmental stress, or natural disasters. To begin with, we discuss forced displacement, which involves crossing borders,[46] within the categories formally recognized by the international community, as shown in the table below.

TABLE 1.2: FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (2019)

Categories	Numbers for Asia and the Pacific
Refugees	4,133,700
People in Refugee Like Situations	48,700
Asylum Seekers	212,396
Returned refugees	10,361
People Under UNHCR's Statelessness Mandate	2,284,461
Total	6,689,543

Source: Derived from UNHCR (2019). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*. Table 1 and Annex Table 1.
Notes: (i) Data on Asia and the Pacific excludes the Middle East. (ii) Returned refugees refers to those who were repatriated to their countries of origin in 2019.

45. Refugees and people in refugee-like situations. As of 2019, over 4 million people were living as refugees or in refugee-like situations in Asia and the Pacific. They included 2.7 million Afghans (resident mainly in Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, in Iran) and about 1.1 million people who left Myanmar and have entered Bangladesh and some countries in Southeast Asia.[47]

46. The Afghan refugee situation is a protracted one, beginning as it did when political exiles from Afghanistan began to trickle into Pakistan in the late 1970s. Following the invasion of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union in December 1979, the trickle turned into a flood; by the time the Soviets withdrew in early 1989, 3.2 million Afghans were resident in Pakistan.[48] In spite of numerous repatriation efforts spearheaded by UNHCR, beginning in 1992, relatively few refugees have returned to Afghanistan. In 2005, the Government of Pakistan carried out a census of Afghan refugees, covering all Afghan families who themselves or whose forebears had entered Pakistan after 1 December 1979. The census estimated the Afghan-origin population in Pakistan at just over 3 million people.[49] Not all were registered with UNHCR and the census prompted a series of initiatives by the Government of Pakistan to register Afghans or persons of Afghan origin resident in the country.

47. The situation has reached a stalemate. Afghans registered as refugees with UNHCR keep having their proof of registration cards extended to enable them to maintain a legal identity. Others have been registered as Afghan citizens resident in Pakistan under an IOM-sponsored initiative and have been issued Afghan citizen cards. Neither mechanism accords full rights to Afghans living in Pakistan, who are

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46 For the purposes of this report, we are not discussing internally displaced persons.

47 UNHCR (2019). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019.* Page 3.

48 UNHCR estimate quoted in Frederic Grare and William Maley. 2011. *The Afghan Refugees in Pakistan*. Middle East Institute. June.

49 Government of Pakistan (Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON)/Population Census Organization) and UNHCR. 2005. Census of Afghans in Pakistan.

legally not allowed to own businesses, open bank accounts, or even get driver's licenses. In effect though, the community has found its way around these strictures, and voluntary repatriation to Afghanistan is not considered a viable option for most Afghans settled in Pakistan, given the highly volatile conditions there.

48. Stateless persons. According to UNHCR, about 2.2 million people in Asia and the Pacific did not hold the nationality of any country in 2019, and are thus considered stateless.

49. Asylum seekers. The number of asylum seekers in Asia and the Pacific steadily rose over the last few years. Afghans account for 1.1 million applications and Pakistanis for 300,000; both groups applied mainly to Germany.[50] Asia is generally not a destination for asylum seekers, although countries such as Indonesia and Thailand have served as transit destinations for asylum seekers and refugees seeking resettlement in a third country. Most asylum applications are sent to Germany, the US, and other European nations.

50. Climate change– and environment-induced migration. Climate change–induced migration is assuming greater relevance in Asia and the Pacific as the region's vulnerability to climate-induced natural disasters becomes more acute. Asia and the Pacific are witnessing greater monsoon variability, the effects of sea-level rise, greater frequency of flooding, and more intense tropical cyclones, all of which have potentially devastating effects in a region with high population density. Nevertheless, tracking climate change–induced migration is complicated, as it is often linked with economic migration in the international context. Within countries, climate-induced migration is often the cause of internal displacement but, given that this paper focuses on international migration, we do not discuss this form of migration in detail.

D. Causes of Migration

51. The literature suggests that migration is triggered by a number of push and pull factors, some of which are linked to societal and economic changes and others to personal circumstances. The key factors influencing labor migration are as follows:

1. Pull Factors

52. Networks and linguistic links. Researchers often use gravity models to analyze triggers of migration, using regression analysis to estimate a utility function describing how an individual derives benefits or otherwise from moving countries. Such models typically show that movement either takes place to places with similar cultures or common "official" languages (the latter often the result of a colonial past), or to places that may be further away and culturally removed but house a diaspora, which can help new migrants to find their feet in the new environment.[51]

53. There are many examples of this in Asia and the Pacific beginning with the migration to the United Kingdom (UK) in the 1950s and 1960s from the India-Pakistan subcontinent. The initial trigger for this was the need to meet labor shortages in the wake of World War II, and the need for qualified medical staff for the newly formed

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[50] UNHCR. (2019). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019.* Page 43.

[51] See for example Alicia Adsera and Mariola Pytllikova. (2015). International Migration: The Impact of Linguistic Proximity on Preferred Destinations. https://voxeu.org/article/language-and-migration

National Health Service.[52] An English-speaking workforce, with some experience of working with the British in subordinate positions, proved invaluable to the host country. In the 1970s, the Gulf became an attractive destination as the need for unskilled construction workers fueled a boom in labor migration again from the subcontinent. Here, the migration did not often result in families joining the (mostly male) migrants, as Gulf countries have long pursued a policy of issuing "temporary" work permits. However, the networks built up by the migrants have proved invaluable in attracting further migration from the home countries as Gulf economies diversified and the need for semiskilled labor picked up. Similar patterns are visible for female domestic workers migrating to the Gulf and other countries.

54. Demographics. In recent decades, the effects of demographics on migration are becoming ever more apparent as aging populations in OECD countries require migrant workers, particularly for the health sector, to manage care services, and in information technology (IT) and other knowledge management sectors. Within Asia and the Pacific, the largest number of skilled migrants emigrating to OECD countries are from the PRC, India, and the Philippines, with Pakistan and Viet Nam sending mainly semiskilled migrants to developed countries.[53]

2. Push Factors

55. Income and labor market gaps. Incentives to migrate are high in situations where there are substantial average income differences between the source and destination countries. A recent study evaluating the determinants of migration from Asia using regression analysis found that the income gap between destination and source countries, as measured by real per capita gross domestic product (GDP), is strongly positively associated with the volume of bilateral migration.[54] At the same time, migration rates also tend to increase when incomes are increasing in source countries, as prospective migrants are then better able to meet the upfront costs of migration. Differences in unemployment rates and skill gaps can also play a role in the migration decision, as skilled migrants tend to head to destinations where skill gaps are manifest. An obvious example is the large-scale migration to the Gulf in the 1970s and 1980s, which was prompted by the demand for labor and other expertise in the construction sector; the requisite skills and manpower were not available locally. Another example is the marked success of the Indian diaspora in the tech industries, particularly in the US.

56. Complementarity between skilled migration and foreign direct investment (FDI). The experience of the North American Free Trade Agreement countries is illustrative of how an increase in FDI inflows in a developing economy can increase skilled migration from the developing to the developed economy, as FDI flows reduce information asymmetry and allow potential employers to assess skills in a new labor market. This is also true in reverse; migration of skilled labor in particular is instrumental in increasing FDI into the home country, as migrants use networks in home countries to either set up new ventures themselves or advise industry colleagues on how to operate in their home environments. In short, highly skilled migrants who have power over decision-making in their host countries tend to facilitate FDI in their

[52] See for example Lena Robinson. (2005). South Asians in Britain: Acculturation, Identity and Perceived Discrimination. *Psychology and Developing Societies*. 17 (2).

[53] Anna Platonova and Giuliana Urso. (2013). Asian Immigration to the European Union, United States and Canada: An Initial Comparison. *Journal of Global Policy and Governance.* 1: 143–56.

[54] Aiko Kikkawa et al. (2019). International Migration in Asia and the Pacific: Determinants and Role of Economic Integration. *ADB Economics Working Paper Series*. 592. See Table 1.

home countries.[55] Such effects are apparent in Asia, particularly in India and the PRC (see section in next chapter on Diaspora Engagement).

57. Reverse flows. Although not yet widely studied, reverse migration flows are increasingly common, as professionals who have spent significant periods of time outside their countries of origin opt to return, while still at working age, to set up businesses or apply skills that they have picked up overseas.

58. Conflict. While the above factors explain labor migration to a considerable extent, forced migration in Asia is triggered almost entirely by conflict and internal unrest in source countries. Whether caused by war and invasion (as in Afghanistan), conflict has triggered large-scale movements across borders, particularly to contiguous states, which are often poorly equipped when it comes to handling significant flows of distressed populations.

E. Gender and Origin of Migrants

59. Economic migrants and refugees and/or victims of forced displacement constitute the key migrant categories in Asia and the Pacific, but there are many stratifications within these broad categories. Data on migrants is scarce in the Gulf and other Asian countries, with no official public records of education levels, age profiles, or other socioeconomic information. The UN has data on male–female breakdowns across migrant populations and country of origin. Based on these indicators, this section presents a brief profile of migrants from Asia and the Pacific (excluding the Middle East) in the three main destination regions: GCC countries, OECD countries, and the ASEAN region. The data in this section is from the UN DESA Population Division database, unless stated otherwise.

1. Migrants in GCC Countries

60. The oil price boom of 1973 was followed by a construction boom in the Gulf countries.[56] With small populations and a disinclination for manual labor, the GCC countries allowed substantial numbers of male unskilled migrants, mainly from the Indian subcontinent, to enter on temporary visas to work mainly on construction sites. From the mid-1980 onwards, as living standards rose and the Gulf economies began to diversify, a feminization of Gulf migrant labor began to occur as the demand for health technicians and domestic workers began to increase, and was met mainly by female migrants from Southeast Asia, mainly the Philippines. The Gulf is a unique region in that the proportion of migrant stocks in the total population is extremely high, and Gulf states normally do not allow for naturalization, thus ensuring that the proportion of non-nationals in the population has remained high over time.The table below shows the proportion of migrants in the total population for all six Gulf states.

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55 For an empirical examination of this see Ana Cuadros et al. (2018). Migration and FDI: The Role of Job Skills. *International Review of Economics and Finance.* 59: 318–32.

56 Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

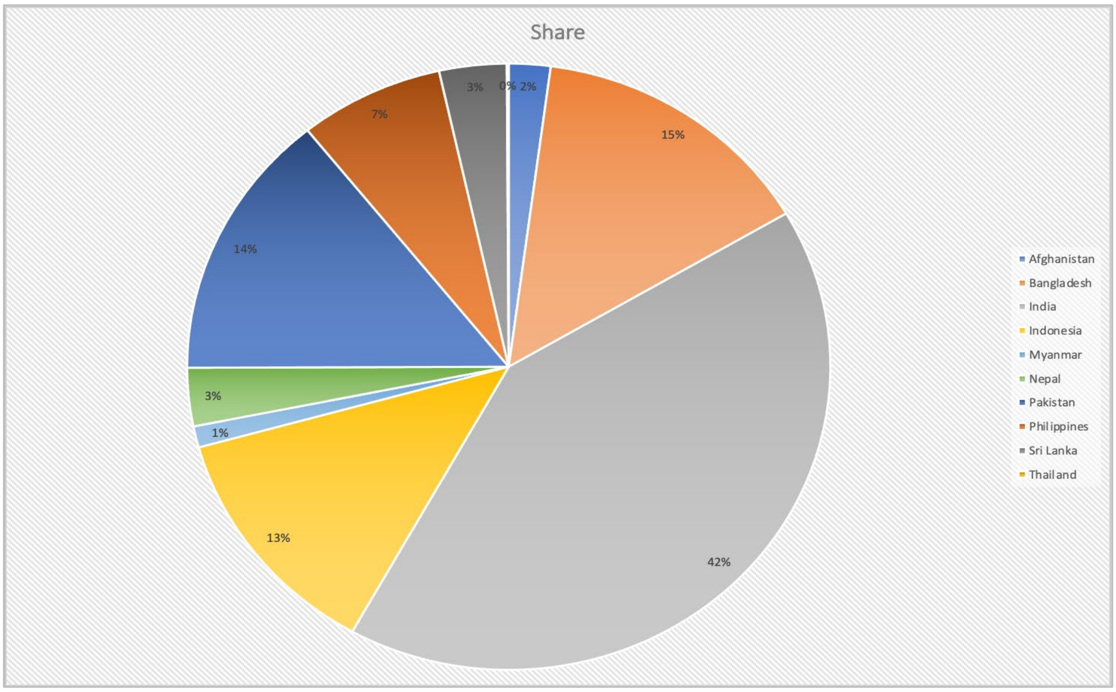
Table 1.3: Share of Migrants in Total Population in 2019

Country	*Share of Migrants*
Bahrain	45.2
Kuwait	72.1
Oman	46.0
Qatar	78.7
Saudi Arabia	38.3
United Arab Emirates	87.9

Source: UN DESA, Population Division. (2019). Table 3 Total Migrant Stock as a Proportion of Total Population.

61. As the table shows, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Oman, all of whom have recently instituted policies of indigenization of labor, have kept migrant populations to less than half of the total. On the other hand, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE are remarkable as migrants far outstrip locals in number. According to UN DESA statistics, in 2017 there were about 28 million migrant workers in the six Gulf states, 76% of whom came from 10 countries in Asia and the Pacific. About 75% of all migrants living in the Gulf were male.

Figure 1.4: Asian Origin Countries for Gulf Migrants



Source: UN DESA, Population Division. (2017). Table 1: Total Migrant Stock by Origin.

62. Of female migrants, who may or may not be employed (the UN data does not make this clear), the bulk came from India (39% of female migrants from 10 Asian countries), Indonesia (15%), Pakistan (14%), and the Philippines (10%).

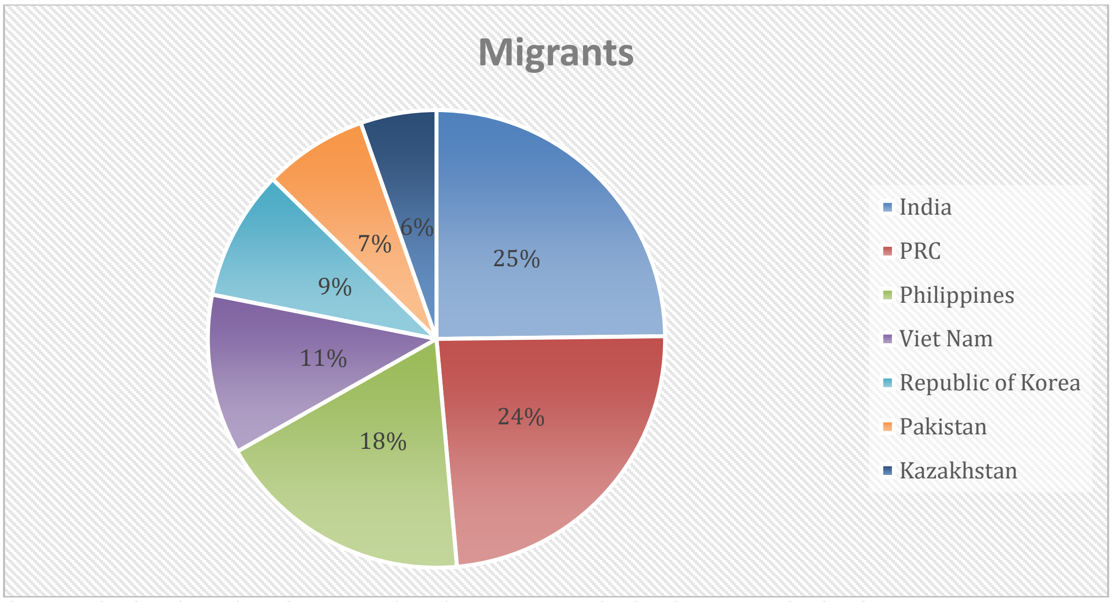
2. Migrants in OECD Countries

63. In contrast to the Gulf, almost half of the estimated 31 million Asian emigrants to the OECD have a tertiary education and 52% are women.[57] About 87% of migrants from Asia into OECD countries were less than 65 years of age in 2015/16. The OECD maintains more data on migrants than most countries, and Annex Table 1 shows OECD data on country of origin of migrants, share of women in total migration into OECD from that country, and level of education of the migrant population.

64. As the table shows, India ranks at the top from among countries of Asia and the Pacific with regard to migration to OECD countries, with over 4.8 million migrants. The PRC was a close second with 4.6 million migrants. The Philippines, with less than 10% of the population of India and the PRC, ranks third in the list of Asian countries with migrants in the OECD, with 3.5 million migrants, 62% of whom are women. Only Maldives, with only 2,000 migrants in the OECD, had a greater proportion of women migrants (65%) than the Philippines.

65. The figure below shows the six countries of the Asia Pacific region with more than 1 million migrants in the OECD countries in 2015/16.

Figure 1.5: Asian Countries with More than 1 Million Migrants in OECD



Source: OECD. (2020). *A Global Profile of Emigrants to OECD Countries*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 239. Annex Table A.2.

66. About 65% of Indian migrants in OECD countries were highly educated as per the OECD data, while among Chinese migrants, 48.6% were classified as highly educated. Among other Asian countries, both the Kyrgyz Republic and Malaysia had highly educated migrants settled in OECD countries, with over 60% of migrants classified as such.

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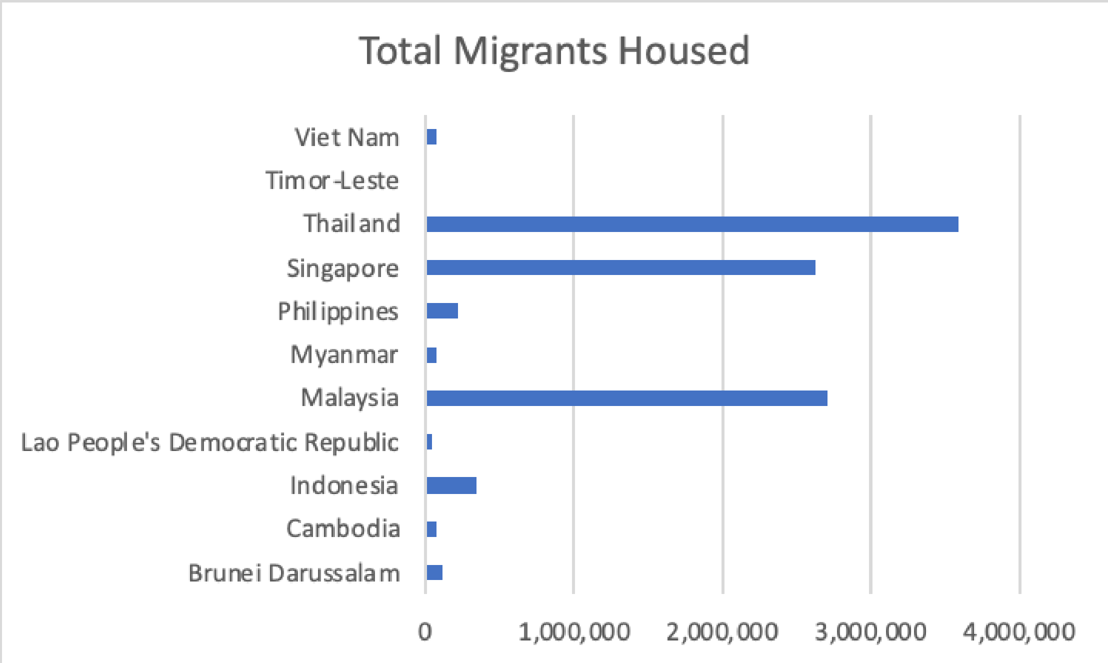
[57] OECD. (2020). *A Global Profile of Emigrants to OECD Countries*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 239. Table 4.

3. Migrants in ASEAN Countries

67. As stated earlier, migration within the ASEAN states, particularly from the Mekong states into Thailand and from Indonesia and the Philippines into Malaysia and Singapore, constitutes key corridors within Asia and the Pacific. According to UN DESA data, ASEAN countries had just over 9 million migrants from Asia and the Pacific in 2017, of whom 47% were women.[58] Within the ASEAN region, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand housed the highest numbers of migrants as shown in the figure.

Figure 1.6: Numbers of Migrants Housed by ASEAN Countries



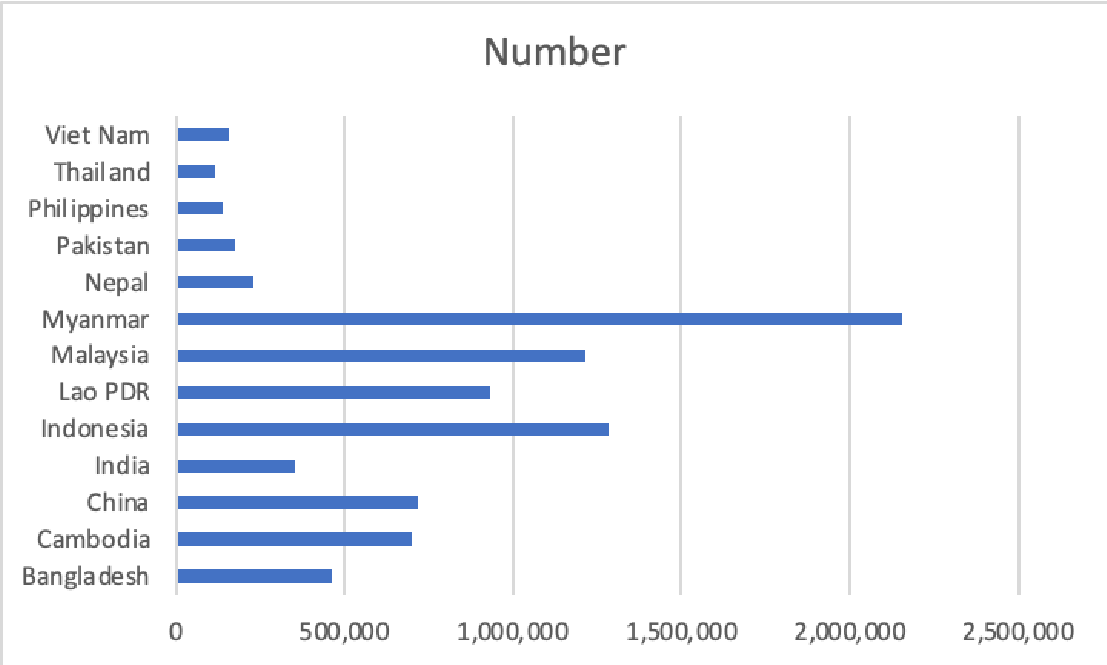
Source: UN DESA, Population Division. (2017). Table 1 Total Migrant Stock by Origin.

68. The breakdown of migrants by origin shows that the three ASEAN countries with the highest levels of in-migration had distinct patterns in terms of origins of migrants. For Thailand, migrants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar constituted 95% of all migrants from Asia and the Pacific. Singapore's largest group of migrants came from Malaysia, accounting for almost half of all migrants from Asia and the Pacific. Malaysia had the most diverse group of migrants in general but just over 40% originated from Indonesia.

69. In terms of sending out emigrants into ASEAN countries, the data for countries of origin is as follows.

[58] Source: UN DESA, Population Division. (2017). Tables 1 and 3.

Figure 1.7: Migrants by Countries of Origin



Source: UN DESA, Population Division. (2017). Table 1 Total Migrant Stock by Origin.

70. If forced migration of the Rohingya community is excluded, Indonesia and Malaysia emerge as most likely to send out emigrants into other ASEAN countries. For Malaysian emigrants the key destination is Singapore, while for Indonesian emigrants it is Malaysia.

II. IMPACTS OF MIGRATION

71. Migration can potentially change the composition of population, social and cultural mores, structure of the economy, and functioning of the labor market in both the destination and source countries. This section examines some of the channels through which such changes occur.

A. Impacts of Labor Migration

72. The impacts of labor migration can occur in both source and destination countries. While economic impacts are the ones most commonly cited in the literature, there is increasing recognition of how the presence of migrants affects the societies they settle in, as well as the ones they leave behind.

1. Remittances

73. The World Bank estimates that worldwide remittance inflows amounted to $719 billion in 2019.[59] Of the total, 76.4%, or $548 billion flowed into low- or middle-income economies. Not surprisingly, COVID-19 has had a negative impact on these flows; as of October 2020, total remittances for 2020 were estimated at $666 billion, with $508 billion going to developing countries. With regard to the Asia and the Pacific

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[59] World Bank. (2020). Inward Remittance Flows. October. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data. Accessed 3 November 2020.

region specifically, remittances amounted to $309 billion in 2019 and were estimated to reach $286 billion in 2020 (see Annex II for inward remittances into Asia and the Pacific by country).[60]

74. Within Asia and the Pacific, India with inflows of $83 billion in 2019 and the PRC with inflows of $68 billion led in the region. Other countries with substantial inflows included the Philippines ($35 billion), Pakistan ($22 billion), Bangladesh ($18 billion), and Viet Nam ($17 billion). Estimated remittances have dropped for most countries in 2020, but among the exceptions are Pakistan and Bangladesh, which have continued to see remittance flows from the Middle East. A probable reason for this is the continued switch in remittance flows from informal channels to formal banking systems in response to tax incentives in both countries.[61] While remittance flows in these countries are high in absolute terms, remittances may not constitute an important source of revenue for them. Data from the same source on remittances as percentage of GDP shows that two Central Asian republics, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, are the most heavily dependent on remittances, with flows constituting a little over 25% of their GDP. Similarly, remittances constituted 22% of GDP for Nepal.

Table 2.1: Top 5 Countries for Inward Remittances in Asia

Countries	*2018*	*2019*	*2020e*	*Remittances as Percent of GDP*
	Remittances in US Million $			*%*
India	78,790	83,332	75,916	2.9
PRC	67,414	68,398	59,507	0.4
Philippines	33,809	35,167	33,339	8.8
Pakistan	21,193	22,245	24,136	9.1
Bangladesh	15,566	18,363	19,758	6.2

Source: Derived from World Bank. (2020). Inward Remittance Flows. October.

75. It is also important to understand that documented remittances do not tell the whole story. In spite of increased controls on informal systems of money transfer,[62] particularly post 9/11, such channels have by no means been eliminated and, in some countries, may be the primary means of sending funds to families from overseas. The inflow of remittances is the most cited direct effect of overseas migration in source countries. Remittances constitute the key motivation for migration, particularly individual migration sans families, where migrants choose to relocate to ensure a steady stream of income to their families back home. The effects of remittances are apparent at multiple levels as discussed below.

76. Effects on household consumption. Remittances are payments to families from overseas workers, which immediately translate into injections of cash into household budgets. The impacts on household access to staples, including food, better housing, energy, and essential services such as education and health, are immediate and often substantial.[63] There are, however, competing views in the literature on whether

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60 Calculated from World Bank data. See footnote above.

61 See World Bank. (2020). Phase II COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens. *Migration and Development Brief.* 32.

62 For details on how these systems operate see Mohammed El Qorchi, Samuel Munzele Maimbo, and John F. Wilson. (2003). An Analysis of the Informal Hawala System. A Joint IMF/World Bank paper. August.

63 See for example, Sandhya Mahapatro, et al. (2014). Remittances and Household Expenditure Patterns in India and Selected States. *Journal of Migration and Development.* 6 (I): 83–101.

remittances alleviate poverty and reduce inequality in the longer run. Essentially, the long-run effects on poverty depend on the proportion of migrants belonging to households falling in lower-income quintiles and on the spending pattern of households once they receive remittances. If migrants send remittances back to low-income households, and such households manage to use the additional income for investment in education and health services, then the positive impacts of remittances may be intergenerational.

77. There is some evidence that this is indeed the case. Macro-level analyses have demonstrated that households receiving remittances tend to spend less, on the margin, on consumption and tend to increase expenditure, as a proportion of household income, on education, health, and even entrepreneurial activities.[64] Another recent study on effects on remittances on households falling into different income quintiles showed that remittances increase household consumption, particularly for households at lower levels of consumption: a 10% increase in income increases household consumption by 7.2% at the lowest income quintile.[65] When second- and third-order effects are taken into account, i.e., the ripple effects of the investment of migrants in housing and possibly small businesses are accounted for, it is clear that remittances could have a significant impact on the national economy.

78. *Effects on School Dropout Rates and Child Labor*: Households receiving remittances are less likely to allow children to drop out of school and/or enter the labor market. Again, these effects have been reported in a number of studies.[66] It could be postulated that households that send migrants overseas are also generally relatively enlightened and likely to place a premium on education. The likelihood of children from such households continuing with their studies through to at least high school is therefore higher. At least one study based on data from the Philippines, which followed household consumption in the wake of exchange rate shocks post the 1997–1998 Asian financial crisis, found that unanticipated increases in remittances also led to enhanced spending on children's schooling.[67] It would thus appear that households tend to invest in education when receiving remittances; part of the reason for this could be the demonstration effect of relatively developed economies with higher levels of education.

79. Macro impacts—support for balance of payments. Remittances routed through banking channels support the balance of payments accounts and can be crucial to maintain a supply of essential imports. In 2019, remittances were estimated to have overtaken FDI as the biggest source of foreign capital flowing into developing countries.[68] These flows have been particularly crucial to developing economies that

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64 See for example Richard H. Adams. (2007). International Remittances and the Household: Analysis and Review of Global Evidence. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*. 4116. February.

65 Yaha Keho. (2017). Effect of Remittances on Household Consumption in African and Asian Countries: A Quantile Regression Approach. *Economics Bulletin*. 37 (3): 1753–67.

66 See for example, S. Duryea, E. Lopes Córdova, and A. Olmedo. (2005). Migrant Remittances and Infant Mortality: Evidence from Mexico. Mimeo. Washington, DC, IADB; and D. Yang. (2004). International Migration, Human Capital and Entrepreneurship: Evidence from Philippine Migrants' Exchange Rate Shocks. *Ford School of Public Policy, Working Paper.* 02-011. Ann Arbor, Michigan, University of Michigan.

67 D. Yang and C. Martinez. (2005). Remittances and Poverty in Migrants' Home Areas: Evidence from the Philippines. Unpublished. University of Michigan. Quoted in IOM. (2006). *Migrants' Remittances and Development: Myths, Rhetoric and Realities*. Geneva.

68 Data from the World Bank quoted in Federica Cocco et al. (2019). Remittances: The Hidden Engine of Globalisation. *The Financial Times*. 28 August.

are struggling even in periods of high growth in the world economy; remittances can serve as countercyclical stabilizers in such circumstances.

80. Costs to source countries. To the extent that high remittances can signal mass migration of skilled labor, they may be signaling the occurrence of a brain drain. The literature on this is not conclusive, however. Early models on the brain drain, which assumed that education in source countries is largely publicly funded and wages are rigid, posited that emigration lowers output in these countries.[69] This conclusion is now disputed by some economists who say that developing economies may not have the resources or the types of jobs needed to accommodate highly skilled workers, at least in some sectors. In fact, they say that emigration entails costs and benefits for both source and destination countries.[70]

81. Remittances may also create dependency, enabling members of extended or joint families to become or remain unproductive.[71] In rare cases, remittances may be the cause of "Dutch disease" symptoms in the economy, where inflows lead to an appreciation of the real exchange rate.[72] In general though, the benefits of remittances appear to offset such costs.

2. Diaspora Engagement

82. Diaspora engagement can go beyond remittances and can result in reversing the brain drain to some extent. In the PRC and Taipei,China, for instance, a number of tech startups were started by expatriates who had worked in Silicon Valley and then decided to return to establish similar businesses. According to one estimate, 40% of the companies set up in Taipei,China's Hsinchu Science-Based Industrial Park were owned by expatriates.[73] This was partly the result of a concerted effort on the part of the Taipei,China administration, which was focused on encouraging expatriates to return and invest. Similar trends were seen in Guangdong in the PRC in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

83. Indian expatriates, on the other hand, provide examples of how investment in specific sectors in the home country—in India's case in the software industry—has been driven by a diaspora. Indian software engineers and entrepreneurs did not necessarily relocate but shifted some elements of production and development to the home country, thus promoting the Indian software industry. Similarly, the presence of Indian expatriates at senior levels in major US corporations is believed to be a major factor in the interest of companies such as Microsoft, IBM, Hewlett Packard, General Electric, and many others in opening up operations in India.

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69 Jagdish Bhagwati and Koichi Hamada. (1974). The Brain Drain, International Integration of Markets for Professionals and Unemployment: A Theoretical Analysis. *Journal of Development Economics*. 1 (1): 19–42.

70 For a discussion, see The Most Persistent Myths: Brain Drain and Brain Gain, in ADB/Edward Elgar Publications. (2019). *Skilled Labor Mobility and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities for the ASEAN Economic Community*. Edited by Elisabetta Gentile. Northampton, UK.

71 See Sanjeev Gupta, Catherine Pattillo, and Smita Wagh. (2009), Impact of Remittances on Poverty and Financial Development in Sub-Saharan Africa. *World Development*. 31 (1): pp. 104–15.

72 The mechanism is, briefly, as follows. An inordinate increase in supply of foreign exchange would lead to a rise in the nominal exchange rate, essentially increasing the value of the domestic currency. This implies an appreciation of the real exchange rate, which can in theory weaken export competitiveness. For a more detailed discussion see Christine Ebrahimzadeh. (2020). Dutch Disease: Wealth Managed Unwisely. *Finance and Development*. https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/basics/dutch.htm.

73 Richard Davone. No date. Diasporas and Development. World Bank open document No. 39382.

84. Another important form of diaspora engagement is the "diaspora bond," successfully piloted by Israel in the 1950s and now utilized by many other countries, including India. These are essentially bonds issued by a country to its expatriate population to encourage investment in large infrastructure and other development projects. Diaspora bonds can raise substantial international capital if the expatriate population is committed to the long-term welfare of the home country and/or is interested in holding assets there.

85. While the above elements constitute impacts of migration on source countries, labor migration also has important effects in destination countries as discussed below.

3. Economic Growth

86. The effects of labor migration inflows on economic growth in destination countries are not entirely clear and are believed to vary based on the skill level of migrants. Most studies suggest that highly skilled migrants are associated with positive, long-term productivity increases in host economies, but that few such productivity gains are apparent if migrants are low or semiskilled.[74] However, there is also evidence that in-migration of low-skilled labor helps to keep wage levels low, with resultant positive impacts on production costs and profits. This, in turn, can have positive effects on growth. In countries such as the GCC countries, where local populations were too small to undertake the large-scale infrastructure development needed in the 1970s and 1980s, even unskilled immigrant labor, employed mainly in construction, played a pivotal role. Similarly, guest workers are employed as seasonal farm workers in many industrial countries (examples close to the Asia-Pacific region are Australia and New Zealand) as well as middle-income economies (some ASEAN countries such as Malaysia). Such seasonal labor hiring is normally managed through contractors and normally consists of male labor. Many such workers are unauthorized and their remuneration is unregulated.[75]

87. Evidence from ASEAN countries shows some positive impacts even of low-skilled in-migration. In Malaysia, for example, Computable General Equilibrium modeling showed that a 10% net increase in low-skilled immigrant workers leads to a 1.1% increase in real GDP.[76] Similar effects were apparent in Thailand. Effects of migration on productivity are more uncertain and appear to be highly dependent on the skill levels of migrants and the sectors in which they are mainly employed. On the one hand, low-skilled immigrants can free up locals to pursue higher education and other skill-upgrading methods. On the other hand, the proliferation of low-skilled labor can result in a decline in capital–labor ratios, and discourage the adoption of labor-saving technology.

88. With regard to contributions to government finances, migrants more often than not lead to increases in tax collections, through indirect taxes in addition to direct taxes. In most countries in Asia, they are not eligible for social protection unless they are citizens (as in the case of Pakistan's Benazir Income Support Program) or unless they are employed in the formal sector and are paying tax, in which case they may be eligible for pension benefits.

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[74] See Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). *Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia*. Page 82. A number of studies are referenced.

[75] For a discussion on such labor, see Philip L. Martin. (2016). *Migrant Workers in Commercial Agriculture*. Published by the ILO Labor Migration Branch.

[76] See Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). *Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia*. See pages 82-85 for references to studies from ASEAN.

89. In general, low-skilled migrants provide a pool of cheap labor, often to countries whose nationals are either overqualified for certain jobs or where the local population is not large enough to sustain a labor-intensive economy. Highly skilled migrants, on the other hand, are often sought after to plug key skill gaps. However, migration may discourage local populations from acquiring certain skills or may artificially depress wages as explained above. More specific studies are required, focusing on particular skill sets and sectors to understand the impacts of migrants on the economies and labor markets of destination countries.

4. Impacts on Society

90. Whether or not migrants integrate into host societies is also dependent on a number of factors. Recent evidence from Europe and longer-term evidence from the UK, which has long hosted migrant communities from the India–Pakistan subcontinent, would suggest that cultural integration is often difficult.[77] First-generation migrants typically tend to focus on work opportunities and may not even attempt to integrate or experience the host culture. Second-generation migrants may be better integrated socially but may react more strongly to real or supposed discrimination. Some studies find that perceived group discrimination is larger than individual discrimination and a stronger ethnic identity is more closely linked with perception of group discrimination.[78]

91. Migrants are particularly vulnerable during periods of slow growth or social upheaval. Political leaders in developed countries have been known to play up the fear of migrants taking jobs that would otherwise be available to locals. Regional instability or incidents of terrorism can be associated with migrant communities and can spawn negative reactions from host-country citizens. These issues are discussed in more detail in a later section.

B. Impacts of Forced Migration

92. Forced migration is a situation where (more often than not) large numbers of people enter a particular region of another country. Such migrants typically have few, if any, resources or assets. They require significant support from the host country and humanitarian agencies and, in the longer term, from the international community, including development agencies. This is particularly true if, as is often the case in Asia and the Pacific, the host country is a developing nation.

93. Not surprisingly, forced migration is almost always a crisis scenario and, if left unattended by the international community, can result in a serious strain on the host country's resources. Some key impacts of forced migration are as follows.

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[77] Defined in the literature as the process via which immigrants take on the characteristics and habits of the host-country population. See Lisa Cameron et al. (2015). Cultural Integration: Experimental Evidence of Convergence in Immigrants' Preferences. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*. 111. March for an example of a definition.

[78] For a review of literature from Europe, see S. Andre et al. (2008). The Different Levels of Discrimination, Experienced by First and Second Generation Immigrants from Different Countries of Origin in the Different EU Member-States. Paper presented at the RC28 Spring Meeting 2008 Social Stratification and Insiders/Outsiders: Cross-national Comparisons within and between Continents. Florence, Italy, 15–18 May 2008

1. Crisis Support Required

94. Forced migration almost always takes place in dangerous conditions, and migrants can face a range of potentially life-threatening situations as they travel. These can include being targeted by security forces or warlords and militiamen, threatened with assault and rape if captured, or even fear of being injured or maimed. Vulnerable populations such as the disabled, women, and children are often at greater risk in such situations. The trauma of such experiences is long term, and most victims of forced migration do not have access to mental health professionals who can assist in rehabilitation and recovery. In addition to the psychological effects, forced migration often results in situations where large numbers of people require medical attention. They also require emergency supplies—food, shelter, medicines, etc.—which host governments cannot always provide at short notice. In the short term, forced migration is a humanitarian crisis and needs to be responded to as such.

95. The support required by victims of forced migration depends on whether the crisis is over fairly soon and they can move back to their source country, or whether their situation becomes a protracted one.[79] By UNHCR estimates, 77% of the world's refugees were in protracted situations as of end 2019. In Asia, they include mainly Afghans in Pakistan and Iran. In protracted situations, the experience of refugees varies based on whether the host government considers integrating them into the local economy and society, or whether it wants to preserve their status as "temporary" residents who will return to their place of origin. For Afghans in Pakistan, for example, there is no option of legally acquiring Pakistani nationality, which severely limits options of earning a livelihood or building assets.

2. Impacts on Labor Markets

96. Where a forced migration situation becomes protracted, it is inevitable that migrants will enter the labor market. More often than not, their access is limited to informal labor markets, where the entry of a substantial number of workers has a negative impact on wages. Evidence from Latin America suggests that a 10% increase in the working-age population reduced real wages by 3%.[80] There is a need for similar rigorous studies in Asia and the Pacific to ascertain how forced migration has impacted labor markets in the region.

97. Where forced migration does become protracted and migrants cannot remain dependent on the host country or on international agencies, they can be highly innovative in how they enter the economy. In Pakistan, for example, refugees are not allowed to own businesses or open bank accounts. However, Afghan refugees, many of whom were born in the host country, given that inflows into Pakistan began in the 1970s, have found ways to circumvent these restrictions. From using Pakistani friends or associates as "proxy" owners, to obtaining forged identity documents, persons with Afghan antecedents are overrepresented in key sectors, including transport, carpet making, trade in gemstones, and the retail sector in some cities. Their expertise in certain sectors such as carpet making and honey farming has contributed to opening up new sectors, albeit on a small scale, in the local economy. Similarly, anecdotal

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[79] UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation as one in which 25,000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for at least five consecutive years in a given host country.' UNHCR. (2019). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019.

[80] V. Calderon and A. M. Ibañez. (2009). Labor Market Effects of Migration-Related Supply Shocks: Evidence from Internally Displaced Populations in Colombia. *Research Working Paper.* 14. MICROCON.

evidence from farmers in the border provinces where these migrants settled suggests that their skills in managing orchards was appreciated by local farmers, who adopted some of the techniques they learned from migrant workers.

98. Interestingly, some studies indicate that household well-being improves in host communities as a result of forced migration. This occurs mainly due to the cash, food vouchers, or other forms of support provided to refugees by international organizations.[81] These injections of cash or aid in kind result in more business for local retailers, particularly suppliers of essential commodities. Similarly, an influx of aid, including the establishment of additional services for migrants and host communities, can also have positive impacts on local economies.

3. Strain on Public Services and Natural Resources

99. Public services in developing countries tend to be stretched at the best of times, and an influx of people who need to access water and sanitation systems, health facilities, and energy resources at the very least can put a tremendous strain on host governments. If incoming migrants are present in rural areas and are dependent on livestock or subsistence farming systems, their presence can strain a fragile natural environment.

C. Legal and Political Regimes for Migrants

100. The experience of migrants is highly dependent on the immigration regimes of the host country, and the terms and conditions under which they live and work in a foreign country. These issues are explored in this section.

101. Legal regimes in the main destination regions for Asian workers are becoming more and more unfavorable to migration from developing countries. The “pull” factors for migration are not as evident as they were in the immediate postwar era and even in the 1960s and 1970s. In that period, developed countries needed labor for manufacturing facilities, and newly oil-rich economies needed labor to build infrastructure. Now, with greater economic integration in Europe, selective labor market needs in North America, and a move to integration of locals in the labor market it the Gulf, labor demand from Asia and the Pacific is waning. Broadly, the following characteristics of immigration regimes are apparent in destination regions:

1. GCC Countries

102. Migration regimes in GCC countries are highly restrictive and do not allow foreign workers to make long-term plans for settlement. The key feature of migration to the GCC is the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, according to which migration is dependent on a job offer from a sponsor and migrants are not allowed to change jobs once in the country without the sponsor’s authorization. Violations of this condition can result in deportation and, in some cases, even a ban on getting employment in the host country again. Although the conditions for possible transfer from one employer to another (or the process for obtaining authorization for such a transfer) differ from country to country in the GCC, the common thread is that labor mobility is restricted.[82]

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[81] See Paolo Verme and Kirsten Schuettler. (2019). The Impact of Forced Displacement on Host Communities: A Review of the Empirical Literature in Economics. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*. 8727. February. Page 6.

[82] See Jason Williams. (2017). Labor Immigration into the Gulf: Policies and Impacts. Paper for Kuwait Program at Sciences Po.

GCC countries typically issue short-term visas for workers and although these visas are often extended, there is no guarantee that the governments will allow long-term stay.

103. The GCC has recently moved more to a policy of "nationalization," which emphasizes hiring Gulf nationals rather than migrants wherever possible in the private and public sectors. The policy was initiated in Saudi Arabia in 2004, when the country imposed a ban on visas for workers coming in to work in small companies with fewer than 10 employees.[83] Similarly, Qatar and other Gulf countries decided in 2005 that they would require clearance from embassies before hiring semiskilled Indian workers.[84] Matters have progressed to the point where Saudi Arabia institutionalized a "Saudi-ization" policy, titled *Nitaqat* or Range, in 2011, wherein companies have been given goals for employment of Saudi nationals depending on size of the company and types of skills required. Other countries have implemented similar policies. Bahrain has raised the minimum cost of hiring foreign workers, Kuwait has set a 35% ceiling on the recruitment of foreigners in the public sector, and the UAE, which started an "Emiratization" policy more than a decade ago, has doubled efforts to ensure that public sector jobs in particular go to Emirati nationals.

2. Other Major Destinations

104. European Union labor migration policy. The integration of the European Union (EU) has led to a situation where, in 2008, more than half of the migrants living in different countries in Europe were from other European countries and only 10% were from less developed countries.[85] With regard to third-country nationals, the EU regulates immigration through the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) adopted by the European Commission in 2011. In 2009, the EU instituted the blue card system for highly qualified migrants from non-EU countries. According to the system, potential migrants are eligible for a blue card if they have a master's degree or equivalent, at least 5 years of experience, and a contract or job offer for highly qualified employment for at least 1 year.[86] Further, applicants must be earning a salary equivalent to 1.5 times the average national salary in the EU at the time of application. Not surprisingly, migration under this scheme is limited. In 2018, 32,678 blue cards were issued for all non-EU citizens (not just Asians).[87] The EU also allows migration under seasonal worker permits, intra-corporate transfers and for purposes of research. Intake under these schemes is limited.

105. European Union refugee and asylum policy. The EU aims to develop a common policy on asylum, subsidiary protection, and temporary protection, but the Common European Asylum System has not yet been finalized. As things stand now, the EU recognizes the right to asylum and the prohibition of refoulement, as guaranteed by the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. As such, while each country has its own

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83 Nasra M. Shah (2006). Restrictive Labor Immigration Policies in the Oil-Rich Gulf: Effectiveness and Implications for Sending Asian Countries. UN DESA Population Division. May. Page 7.

84 Ibid.

85 Pawel Kaczmarczyk et al. (2015). Shifting Migration Flows and Integration Policies in Europe: An Overview. In Juliet Pietsch and Marshal Clark, eds. (2015). *Migration and Integration in Europe, Southeast Asia, and Australia*. Amsterdam University Press.

86 https://ec.europa.eu/immigration/blue-card/essential-information_en. The blue card does not apply in Denmark or Ireland.

87 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_statistics_on_authorisations_to_reside_and_work#Single_procedure_for_non-EU_citizens_to_reside_and_work_in_the_EU

policy on asylum, EU states are supposed to grant international protection to refugees who are fleeing persecution and those who face a real risk of serious harm if returned to their country of origin. Illegal economic migrants are, however, supposed to be returned to their country of origin. Decisions are made on a case by case basis.

106. United States Labor migration. The US is relatively open to labor migration and has instituted a system of labor migration through temporary (nonimmigrant) and permanent (immigrant) visas. Immigration visas cover a range of categories from persons of extraordinary ability in the sciences or arts to skilled workers. About 1 million immigrants arrived in the US in 2018, of whom 37% were from Asia.[88]

107. United States refugee and asylum policy. The US recognizes the right of asylum as specified in international law. As in Europe, asylum applicants must establish that they fear persecution in their home country on the basis of race, religion, political opinion, or nationality. The US has an annually defined quota for refugees and asylum seekers, who can apply from inside or outside the US. The criteria for assessment are stringent and most applications are not successful. In 2019, the US received 7,831 refugees and asylum seekers from East, Southeast, and South Asia.[89]

108. ASEAN labor migration policy. Although ASEAN has moved toward harmonizing intraregional tariffs and taken steps to promote trade, it has not made as much progress in labor mobility, which is still subject to barriers imposed by the member states. In 2003, ASEAN members pledged to facilitate movement of skilled labor and businesspeople.[90] However, progress has been slow. In any event, the declaration is fairly limiting given that most intra-ASEAN migrants are not highly skilled. Some steps have been taken to recognize professional qualifications across the ASEAN countries, particularly for health professionals, accountants, and tourism professionals, but fairly complicated verification remains in place even for these certifications.

109. ASEAN policy on refugees and asylum seekers. Among the ASEAN members, only the Philippines and Cambodia are parties to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. There is no integrated ASEAN policy on asylum seekers, and individual states tend to follow a policy of regional nonintervention.[91]

3. Social Attitudes in Host Countries

110. The social integration of migrants in their host countries is crucial to the migration experience. Migrants don’t just bring their skills to their destination countries; they also bring their culture, food, religious beliefs, and values. How these cultural and social mores are perceived in the host country is an issue that requires in-depth and context-specific research. The experiences of migrants vary significantly by ethnicity, religion, gender, and income group. Further, some experiences are specific to host countries. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to generalize about how migrants are

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88 Pew Research Center tabulations of 2018 American Community Survey.

89 Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Refugee Arrivals by Region. Oct 2018 to Sep 2019. https://www.wrapsnet.org/archives/

90 Declaration of ASEAN Concord II. See point B.3. https://asean.org/declaration-of-asean-concord-ii-bali-concord-ii-3/

91 Shivakoti, Richa. ‘ASEAN’s Role in the Rohingya Refugee Crisis.’ In Forced Migration Review. https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/latinamerica-caribbean/shivakoti.pdf

perceived or treated. Having said that, we will attempt to highlight how migrants from Asia and the Pacific are perceived in key destination regions.

111. Gulf countries. The Gulf is characterized by a unique population mix wherein migrant workers constitute most of the population in many states. In the UAE and Qatar, for example, migrants constitute more than two-thirds of the population. Yet they are afforded few state privileges[92] and are not eligible for the benefits and subsidies accorded to the local population. Until recently, migrants did not compete for jobs with locals. The bulk of migration was for low-skilled jobs that locals did not apply for or considered too menial. For example, Qatari nationals were up in arms when a local newspaper advertised jobs for Qatari women to work as domestic supervisors. The general reaction was that it was insulting to assume that local women would apply for such work.[93]
While labor migration to the Gulf has been studied extensively, in terms of skill sets required, remittance flows etc., the attitudes of Gulf nationals toward foreign nationals is an area where little research has been done. A recent paper on Qatar found that nationals feel more positive toward highly skilled migrants but, given their dependence on low-skilled migrants, the difference in attitudes is not significant.[94] A recent survey from IOM showed that most respondents in Gulf countries wanted present levels of immigration in the country (the survey was conducted in 2015) to remain the same or increase.[95]

112. The GCC countries have, however, been the subject of research on how migrant workers, particularly female domestic workers and male unskilled labor, are treated in households and by labor contractors. A number of studies have highlighted how women domestic workers face the threat of violence and exploitative working conditions.[96] Some studies document how female workers are expected to surrender their passports to their employers and face severe restrictions on movement as well as, in many cases, poor living conditions.[97] Conditions in labor camps in the UAE and Qatar (for the latter, particularly in the context of preparations for the World Cup in 2022) have been repeatedly highlighted in the media and in recent research.[98] Some Gulf states have announced intentions to amend the legal framework governing migrant workers, particularly the *kafala* system.

113. Europe and the United States. The IOM study quoted earlier also found that in general attitudes toward migration were more negative in Europe than in any other region in the world, with a small majority (52.1%) saying immigration levels need to be

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92 These can be considerable. In the UAE, for example, Emiratis are eligible for free high-quality health care and higher education, generous pensions, and interest-free loans for housing, among other benefits.

93 See news report about an advertisement in the Qatari paper The Peninsula in 2012: https://dohanews.tumblr.com/post/20955816599/ad-seeking-to-hire-qatari-women-as-domestic

94 Abdoulaye Diop et al. (2012). Attitudes towards Migrant Workers in the GCC: Evidence from Qatar. *Journal of Arabian Studies: Arabia, the Gulf, and the Red Sea*. 2 (2): 173–87.

95 IOM Migration Research Division. (2015*). How the World Views Migration*. January. See Table on page 2.

96 See for example Ray Jureidini. (2003). Migrant Workers and Xenophobia in the Middle East. Paper for UN Research Institute for Social Development. Identities, Conflict and Cohesion Programme Paper. 2. December.

97 Please see an extensive annotated bibliography in Romina Halabi. (No date). Contract Enslavement of Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. *Topical Research Digest: Human Rights and Contemporary Slavery*. https://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/researchdigest/slavery/fmd.pdf

98 See for example, Sara Hamza. (2015). Migrant Labor in the Arabian Gulf: A Case Study of Dubai, UAE. *Pursuit: The Journal of Undergraduate Research at the University of Tennessee*. 6 (1).

curtailed.[99] There were differences across Europe on the issue of migration. Respondents from Nordic countries were generally more positive about migration than those in Southern Europe (which is often the first port of call for illegal migrants). Migration is a political issue in Europe in particular. Debates on migration have at least partially fueled the rise of radical right-wing political parties that are strongly opposed to migration and campaign with this as their key manifesto issue.

114. In North America, a little over a third of respondents felt that migration levels should be maintained and 22.8% felt that levels should increase.[100] In a recent Pew poll, about two-thirds of Americans were found to have a positive view of immigrants.[101] Nevertheless, attitudes toward migration differ by political affiliation. The same Pew Research poll found that while those who vote Democrat were overwhelmingly in favor of migration (88% were positive about it), those who identify as Republican were more likely to have reservations (only 41% were positive about migration).[102]

115. Data from Europe has also shown that there is a clear hierarchy of the type of migrant who is acceptable. Thus, the Roma are the most unacceptable, according to one study, followed by Muslims.[103] In terms of migration from Asia and the Pacific, this has implications for potential migrants, even skilled ones, from countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. One reason for the skepticism about Muslims may be the association of Muslim populations with terrorism post 9/11. Another recent Pew poll found that the public in many OECD countries is less concerned with migrants committing crime than with their possible links to terrorist groups.[104]

116. ASEAN. A survey on the view on immigration in ASEAN countries showed that, other than Malaysia and Singapore, ASEAN members were generally satisfied with the level of immigration into their countries.[105] However, migrants are believed to be involved in crime in Malaysia and Thailand, where 80% of respondents expressed this belief, and in Singapore, where 52% said this.[106] Attitudes in mainly destination countries such as Malaysia and Thailand were hard with regard to social contact. According to another survey quoted in the same study, 60% of those interviewed did not want migrants as their neighbors. Strict limits on migration were generally favored, with most respondents expressing the view that migrants should only be hired if locals were not available for the jobs that needed to be filled.

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99 IOM Migration Research Division. (2015). *How the World Views Migration*. January. See section 2.

100 Ibid.

101 Abby Budiman. (2020). Key Findings About US Immigrants. Pew Research Center. August. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/20/key-findings-about-u-s-immigrants/

102 Ibid.

103 Anthony Heath and Lindsay Richards. (2015). How do Europeans Differ in Their Attitudes to Immigration? Paper presented in session 1.1.2 Attitudes towards immigrants: contextual and individual sources, 3rd International ESS Conference, 13–15 July 2016, Lausanne, Switzerland. See Figure 2.

104 Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Phillip Connor. (2019). Around the World, More Say Immigrants Are a Strength than a Burden. Pew Research Center. March.

105 Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. Table 3.3 on page 105.

106 Ibid.

III. CASE STUDY

117. Migration as a phenomenon has some common characteristics, but the vicissitudes of the process are best explored through specific cases. In some sense, each migration experience is unique, to the extent that the experience of each individual is one of a kind. Here we study a case of labor migration for economic reasons.

A. Economic Migration (Myanmar to Thailand)

118. Our case study looks at the migration from Myanmar to Thailand, which provides some insight into migration within the Mekong region.

1. Background and Context

119. Thailand's economy is the second largest in the ASEAN bloc (following Indonesia), as well as in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), after the PRC. With strong prospects for growth and development, the country acts as a magnet for labor from smaller economies in the Mekong states.

120. Thailand was one of the widely cited Asian "growth miracle" countries of the 1990s. The financial crisis of 1997 was a severe setback to growth for the so-called Asian Tigers, and average annual growth in Thailand fell from over 9% in the 1990s to barely 3% from 2015 to 2019.[107] Nevertheless, long-term poverty rates declined dramatically over a 30-year period, from an incidence of 65.2% in 1988 to 9.9% in 2018.[108] The economy is highly diversified, with agriculture contributing 8% of GDP and employing 31% of the workforce; manufacturing contributing 33% of GDP and employing 22% of the workforce; and services, particularly financial services, contributing almost 60% of GDP and employing 46% of the workforce.[109]

121. As an upper-middle-income economy with a positive economic outlook, Thailand's capacity to generate positive spillover effects for the GMS is significant. It has historically attracted labor from neighboring countries with smaller economies, particularly for work in agriculture and in construction as unskilled workers. Thailand has a border with Myanmar, and movement of persons and goods has gone on for decades, if not centuries, with ethnic groups who live on both sides of the border (for example, the Karen) moving frequently to visit family and friends or for trade and commerce. In the 1980s, the military regime in Myanmar made more of an effort to control undocumented flows, and border crossings came to be regulated. In 1992, Thailand began the first registration of migrants from Myanmar, while specifying that only unskilled workers would be allowed to work in the country.[110] Thereafter, numbers have grown substantially as shown in the section below.

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[107] World Bank. (2019). Country Partnership Framework. Page 6.

[108] Government of Thailand's official statistics quoted in World Bank. (2020). Overview of Thailand Economy. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/overview

[109] https://www.statista.com/statistics/332341/employment-by-economic-sector-in-thailand/.

[110] Supang Chantavanich. (2012). Policy Review on Myanmar Economy. Policy paper as a part of the research project on Myanmar Economy in the Context of ASEAN Economic Integration and Regional Change conducted by Institute of Developing Economies–Japan External Trade Organization JETRO. October.

2. Trends in Migration

122. As of mid-2019, Thailand had an international migrant stock (persons living in Thailand who were not born in the country) of 3.6 million.[111] This constituted about 5% of Thailand's population (which was estimated at 69.6 million for mid-2019).[112] In 2017, the number of migrants from Myanmar estimated to be resident in Thailand was a little over 1.8 million.[113] Assuming that this number would have risen only nominally in 2 years, this would mean that migrants from Myanmar constitute about half of all migrants in Thailand. Thailand is the top destination country for migrants from Myanmar, with recent data showing that 69% of all migrants from that country go to Thailand.[114] It is important to note that experts believe that the number of undocumented migrants in Thailand is very high; the figures quoted above may not, therefore, reflect the true picture. According to some estimates, for example, the number of migrants from Myanmar resident in Thailand was close to 2.3 million in 2013.[115]

123. Official data (from UN DESA) places Myanmar as the single largest source of migration into Thailand. The second biggest group of migrants in Thailand comes from Lao PDR and is estimated at a little less than a million. Of the total migrants from Myanmar, about 988,000 are estimated to be male, while about 846,000 were female.[116]

124. In terms of trends, the available data shows that numbers have increased substantially over the last 3 decades. The table below gives details.

Table 3.1: Myanmar Migrants in Thailand

Year	Total	Male	Female	Annual average growth rate of total population (%)
1990	229,504	137,948	91,556	
1995	436,777	243,661	193,116	13.7
2000	734,129	394,930	339,199	10.9
2005	1,150,168	615,256	534,912	9.4
2010	1,648,602	890,739	757,863	7.5
2015	1,782,773	960,485	822,288	1.6
2017	1,835,106	988,552	846,554	1.5

Source: UN DESA, Population Division. (2017). Workbook: UN Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination, 2017. Tables 1, 2 and 3: Male and Female Migrant Stock by Origin and Major Area.

111 UN DESA, Population Division. (2019). Workbook: UN Migrant Stock Total, 2019. Table 1: Total Migrant Stock.

112 UN DESA, Population Division. (2019). Workbook: UN Migrant Stock Total, 2019. Table 2: Total Population.

113 UN DESA, Population Division. (2017). Workbook: UN Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination, 2017. Table 1: Total Migrant Stock by Origin and Major Area.

114 UN ESCAP. (2018). *Towards Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Asia-Pacific Region Challenges and Opportunities.* Annex Table 4.

115 IOM. (2013). *Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and Their Impacts on Thailand*.

116 UN DESA, Population Division. (2017). Workbook: UN Migrant Stock by Origin and Destination, 2017. Tables 2 and 3: Male and Female Migrant Stock by Origin and Major Area.

125. Applying an annual average growth rate to the data in the table, one finds that the bulk of documented migration from Myanmar to Thailand took place from 1990 to 2000. The annual average growth rate for the 5 years from 1990 to 1995 was over 13%, while over the next 5 years, it was almost 11% per year. More recently, from 2015 onward, the annual average growth rate has fallen into single digits. The influx of female migrants was particularly high in the period from 1990 to 1995, when the annual average growth rate for this category was more than 16%.

126. Remittances. Total remittances to Myanmar increased from $115 million in 2010 to $2.4 billion in 2019 or about 3.4% of GDP.[117] Given that about 70% of migrants from Myanmar go to Thailand, it is possible to assume that recorded remittances from Thailand to Myanmar amount to about $1.7 billion. This number is probably understating the actual flows. According to one study, an estimated 68% of remittances from Thailand to Myanmar went through informal channels.[118] In an IOM survey of more than 5,000 Myanmar migrants in Thailand, 87% said that they used informal channels to send remittances home.[119]

3. Drivers of Migration

127. Pull and push factors are at play in the context of migration from Myanmar to Thailand.

128. Pull factors. With average growth rates of about 3% over the last decade, unemployment rate of 0.8%, and an average annual population growth rate of just 0.3%, Thailand presents a picture of an economy that has the potential to move into a higher growth trajectory and needs manpower to support it. Although growth post 1997 has not reached the 9% average annual levels of the boom period, Thailand is performing better than many countries in the region. This is in spite of a downturn in the world economy in 2019, which resulted in a drop in world trade. For a strongly export-oriented economy like Thailand's, the slowdown 2 years ago, followed by the disastrous effects on the world economy due to COVID-19, could have had dire consequences. Nevertheless, the government reacted to the crisis with an unprecedented fiscal package, worth 6% of GDP, to support livelihoods and provide social protection to vulnerable groups.[120] While the country's GDP growth rate dipped to –8% in 2020, it is expected to revive to 4.5% in the coming year.[121]

129. As Thailand's population acquires skills, however, opportunities open in agriculture and in unskilled jobs in services, including construction, retail, and low-skilled jobs in tourism. Many of these are occupations that an upwardly mobile local population is no longer interested in doing. In Thailand, 90% of migrants work in low-skilled elementary occupations, while in the local labor force only 7% of workers work

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[117] World Bank. (2020). Extracted from Inward Remittance Flows. October. Downloadable at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data. GDP was taken from ADB Basic Statistics 2020 for the calculation

[118] ADBI, OECD, and ILO. (2018). *Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology*. Page 15.

[119] IOM. (2016). *Assessing Potential Changes in the Migration Patterns of Myanmar Migrants and the Impacts on Thailand: Supplementary Report*. Bangkok.

[120] See World Bank's Thailand Overview. https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/overview. According to another source, the stimulus package amounts to 14% of GDP. https://think.ing.com/articles/thailand-macro-update-sinking-into-recession

[121] ADB's economic forecast for Thailand is at https://www.adb.org/countries/thailand/main

in these occupations.[122] Thailand does not allow migrants to work in many skilled occupations such as engineering and accounting.[123]

130. While Thailand has a rich growth history, it is facing a demographic challenge in the form of an aging population. The population growth rate is very low (0.3%) and the median age, at about 37 years, is significantly higher than that of Myanmar, at 26 years.[124] By some estimates, the country's working-age population will reduce by 7.7 million people by 2040.[125] As the working-age population reduces, Thailand will need migrant workers to fill labor market gaps. The government is, therefore, open to allowing migration for sectors where it anticipates that manpower will be required in the medium to long term. Thailand has thus benefitted from cheap labor coming in from Myanmar but, as the economy grows in the latter, this advantage may erode.

131. Push factors. A key push factor is the difference in the economic status of the two countries. The ratio of the destination to origin country GDP per capita was 3.1 in 2015.[126]

132. In the 1960s, Myanmar's per capita income was double that of Thailand.[127] However, with its complex political history, the country retreated into international isolation in the mid- to late 1960s. The economy was centralized, private enterprises nationalized, and a one party system introduced. By 1987, when Myanmar approached the UN for assistance, it was classified as a least developed country.[128] The country started gradually opening up after the first free and fair elections were held in 1990. But it was not until 2011 that a new government started moving toward comprehensive economic reform. Growth is estimated to have picked up to about 5% in 2009–2010,[129] the first year for which the International Monetary Fund provided an estimate. Subsequently, the economy has been on a high-growth path, with growth in 2019 estimated at 6.8%, and, after a fall in 2020, expected to revive to 6% in 2021.[130] Although Myanmar has lately been on an impressive growth trajectory, a quarter of the population still lives below the poverty line.[131] Nevertheless, this is likely to change in the medium term as Myanmar's economy grows, and growth rates of migrant inflows have already fallen significantly.

4. Migrant Profiles

133. A recent report from the IOM gives a comprehensive profile of migrants from Myanmar, using data from a survey of over 10,000 migrant workers, who were crossing into Thailand or leaving.[132] Thus, the tools covered workers who were entering the country, as well as those preparing to return to Myanmar having worked in Thailand for at least a day. The key findings of the survey are summarized in this section.

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[122] Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. Page 52.
[123] Ibid. Page 121.
[124] Ibid. Figure 2.3.
[125] Aiko Kikkawa et al. (2019). International Migration in Asia and the Pacific: Determinants and Role of Economic Integration. *ADB Economics Working Paper Series*. 592. October. See Figure 4.
[126] Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. Table 2.1.
[127] ADB. (2012). *Myanmar in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges*. Page 3.
[128] https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/least-developed-country-category-myanmar.html
[129] IMF. (2012). Article IV Consultation with Myanmar.
[130] ADB's economic forecast for Myanmar at https://www.adb.org/countries/myanmar/main
[131] ADB Basic Statistics 2020.
[132] IOM. (2019). *Flow Monitoring Surveys: Insights into the Profiles and Vulnerabilities of Myanmar Migrants to Thailand*. August.

134. Age, sex, marital status. The survey corroborated the findings of the UN DESA database, in that the sample, which was randomly selected, had 57% male respondents, apparently a reflection of the true distribution across sexes according to the DESA database.[133] The bulk of respondents (58%) were between the ages of 16 to 30, while a further 38% fell between the ages of 31 to 45. Thus 96% of all respondents were below 46 years of age. Most respondents were married (68%), while more than half (58%) had children.

135. Education. About 53% of female migrants and 49% of male migrants had completed primary education, while 37% and 38%, respectively, had completed secondary education. On an average, 7% had had no education at all, while only 1% had a bachelor's degree.

136. Ethnic group. About half of migrants were Bamar (the majority ethnic group in Myanmar), while 20% were Karen, and others belonged to smaller ethnic groups.

137. Employment. Most migrants who were entering (62%) expected to stay in Thailand a year or more. Of those leaving, almost half had completed a year or more. Almost half of incoming migrants (48%) expected to work as daily wage labor, or be self-employed (21%). More than 90% said that they had left Myanmar because of better work opportunities and/or higher wages in Thailand. When asked why Thailand was chosen as the destination, ease of access was the commonly cited reason (69%). Of the total respondents, 21% said they had chosen Thailand as they had friends there, while 18% cited having family in Thailand as a major reason. Friends and family were commonly cited as sources of information about work in Thailand (more than 70%), while about 15% said that they had obtained information about jobs through agents. Almost all migrants (more than 90%) said that they had already lined up jobs in Thailand before they left Myanmar. Manufacturing and construction are the main sectors of employment, with 35% and 19% of respondents citing these.

138. Vulnerability. Whether or not migrants had documentation was correlated with the sectors they worked in. Thus, those working in agriculture tend to not carry the required documentation (36% of respondents). To a lesser extent, the same is true of those employed in domestic work (24%).

5. Process

139. Thailand signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in the Employment of Workers with Myanmar in June 2003, which aims to ensure that both parties will institute formal procedures for recruitment and deployment of workers and work together to end illegal immigration.[134] The MOU laid out the process of verification of documents and so on that must be followed before workers are allowed to leave for their proposed work destination. The MOU allowed Thailand to regularize undocumented workers from Myanmar and allowed Myanmar to issue nationality verification documents or travel documents to such workers.[135] The MOU process is in the box below. As per the ILO estimation, this typically took 89 days.[136] Not surprisingly,

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133 See Table 3.1, which gives a breakdown of 54% males in the total population of migrants.
134 The text of the MOU is at https://www.ilo.org/asia/info/WCMS_160932/lang--en/index.htm
135 ILO. (2015). *Review of the Effectiveness of the MOUs in Managing Labor Migration Between Thailand and Neighboring Countries*. Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.
136 Ibid. See Figure 1 on Page 12.

the process requires potential migrants to hire recruitment agents to walk them through the process, which adds to the cost of migration.

Box 3.1: Process of Recruitment and Deployment under the Memorandum of Understanding

Employers in Thailand communicate labor requests to provincial employment offices. The provincial employment office sends the request to the Department of Employment.

The request is then sent to Labor Department in Myanmar via the embassy in Bangkok. The Labor Department advertises and carries out a selection process.

Names of candidates are then sent to the Department of Employment in Thailand, which communicates these to the prospective employer.

Employer confirms his/her agreement to the candidates or otherwise to the Department of Employment.

The Department of Employment informs the Embassy of Myanmar as well as immigration authorities in Thailand, who are supposed to authorize visas.

Visas are then issued by the Thai embassy in Yangon.

Adapted from Figure 1 in ILO. (2015). Review of the Effectiveness of the MOUs in Managing Labor Migration Between Thailand and Neighboring Countries. Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

140. Work on the implementation of the MOU had not yet begun when, in 2004, Thailand decided to allow irregular migrants to register with the authorities and get a temporary identity card as a basic legal document. About 1.2 million undocumented migrants, mostly from Myanmar, registered under this scheme. Subsequently, further registration drives have been carried out from time to time, including in 2009 and 2011. In effect, the registration process took over the MOU process; it is more convenient for potential workers to enter Thailand without work permits and then proceed to regularize themselves than to go through the MOU process. Recognizing this, Thailand and Myanmar signed another MOU in February 2016 to simplify matters.[137] Nevertheless, the MOU process remains underutilized, with one recent study estimating use of the MOU channel at only 1% to 2% of all Myanmar migrants in Thailand.[138]

141. Recognizing that the MOU system was being bypassed, the Government of Thailand issued a new legislation, the Royal Ordinance on Foreign Worker Management, in June 2017.[139] The new law prescribed substantial penalties for those working without proper documentation, as well as for employers providing work to undocumented foreigners. Less than a year later, in March 2018, the law was amended and some of the more severe provisions toned down. Nevertheless, Thailand is moving toward a more formal system of recruitment and stay.

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[137] See press release: https://thailand.prd.go.th/ewt_news.php?nid=2730&filename=index

[138] Mark Taylor. (2018). *Developing a Financially Viable Ethical Recruitment Model—Prospects for the Myanmar Thailand Recruitment Channel*. Issara Institute. March. Page 13.

[139] Text downloadable at https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=107728&p_count=4&p_classification=17

Box 3.2: Documents Used by Workers from Myanmar in Thailand

Certificate of identification (CI). Migrants who do not have a Myanmar passport or national identity card, but are working in Thailand, are required to obtain a CI. The CI permits them to travel freely in the two countries until they apply for a passport.

Pink card. Issued to Myanmar migrants who entered Thailand illegally and have been living and working in the country. The card gives temporary permission (validity of 120 days) to remain in the country until a passport is obtained. Holders of pink cards are not allowed to travel outside their province of registration for more than 7 days, and are not allowed to return to their home country without the employer's permission. Holders of pink cards are encouraged to apply for passports directly, without getting a CI.

Purple passport. Issued by the Government of Myanmar to nationals migrating to Thailand to work. As of 2018, the passports have not been issued and all workers are required to have a standard national passport.

Section 64 border pass. Named after the relevant section of the Royal Ordinance on the Management of Foreign Workers, 2017. The scheme permits nationals of countries that share a land border with Thailand to enter the country on a temporary basis or for seasonal work at a specified location. In the case of Myanmar, the border pass applies to residents of the border region of Myawaddy and permits them to live and work in Tak province for up to 30 days.

6. Protection of Migrant Workers

142. The following protection systems are in place for workers in Myanmar and Thailand.

Myanmar

143. Law Relating to Overseas Employment, 1999. The legislation was enacted mainly to regulate the activities of recruitment agents (called service agents in the act). It sets out conditions under which agents may have their licenses revoked (including charging excess fees or defrauding the client). The law sets out procedures through which workers can claim compensation for injury sustained at a foreign worksite. The law requires all Myanmar citizens, except government servants, to register with the Directorate of Labor. If they are sent to work abroad by their employer, their employment conditions continue to be governed by Myanmar labor laws, unless the employment contract explicitly states otherwise.

144. Restrictions on women's migration for domestic work. Since 2014, Myanmar has banned women from migrating to work as domestic staff. While the law was enacted to protect women workers from abuse, there has been concern that it may have forced women to use informal channels to apply for and obtain work, thus losing any protection they may have been entitled to under other laws.[140]

Thailand

145. Labor Protection Act 1998. This is a comprehensive law that covers the rights of all workers in Thailand, including migrant workers. It sets the minimum wage, the right to leave, the right to a day off in the week, etc.

146. Alien Working Act, 2008. The act aims to reduce the number of undocumented workers employed in the country. Section 54 prescribes fines for employers for each undocumented worker employed.

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[140] Rebecca Napier-Moore. (2017). *Protected or Put in Harm's Way? Bans and Restrictions on Women's Labor Migration in ASEAN Countries*. UN Women/ILO.

147. Legal migrants, with the exception of domestic workers, are supposed to be covered under social insurance schemes such as provident funds and so on in Thailand.[141] They are eligible for workplace injury benefits. Benefits such as pensions are exportable in theory but no framework has been specified for ensuring that this is operationalized. There are no systems for portability of benefits within ASEAN countries. Pensions and other retirement benefits can be given to legal migrants, provided they have worked for at least 15 years.

148. Unlike social insurance schemes, health benefits in Thailand are open to all migrants, regardless of the status of their documentation. Legal migrants are normally covered through social security provided by their employers. Those who registered themselves in Thailand through one of the many recent schemes launched for the purpose are supposed to get insurance through the Compulsory Migrant Health Insurance Scheme. This is a voluntary prepayment scheme financed by an annual premium paid by the migrant worker but, unlike the social security provided to legal workers, the scheme has no employer or state contribution. Migrants who participate in the scheme are required to register at a certain hospital, where they are given a health screening before the policy is issued.

IV. MAKING MIGRATION WORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

149. Economic migration is, for the most part, a livelihood strategy, and forced migration is a life-preservation or life-saving one. The former represents a possible way out of poverty, while the latter is a means to attain security and a normal life. Both forms of migration can yield welfare dividends if the experience is well regulated. At the same time, migration in all forms can carry significant risks, and entail high costs, particularly in a global environment where major destination countries are keen to limit intake of migrants for a variety of reasons, while transition countries are increasingly apprehensive about potentially prolonged stays.

150. The free movement of persons has been discussed extensively in the literature, for ASEAN countries[142] and particularly in the context of studies on the EU. In the latter case, labor mobility is one of the cardinal principles of European integration. In theory, allowing labor to move freely helps fill skill gaps or meet labor shortages across borders, prevents wage inflation, and is a good way to deal with demographic issues. On the other hand, movements of people, particularly in large numbers over a short period of time, can strain infrastructure and public resources in recipient countries, cause environmental degradation in fragile areas (particularly in the case of forced migration), cause wages to stagnate, and be a catalyst for societal upheaval. Many of these effects, both positive and negative, are apparent in Asia and the Pacific.

151. As countries develop and economies diversify, more and more people are likely to move across borders to take advantage of new opportunities. Governments need to work together to ensure that migration is conducted in a safe and orderly fashion and that potential migrants are not pushed to consider illegal options that may endanger

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[141] Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. See Table 8.2.

[142] A number of studies have been referenced in this paper, which discuss movement of labor in southeast Asia. See in particular Testaverde, Mauro., et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. Page 82. Also, ADBI/OECD/ILO. (2018). Labor Migration in Asia: Increasing the Development Impact of Migration Through Science and Technology.

their lives. In many ways, overseeing migration protocols across borders affords excellent opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation for wider economic development.

A. Regional Agreements

152. There are two main international agreements on migration, which have been discussed in section 1 of this report. These are the two global compacts, on migration and on refugees, which have been signed by almost all Asian countries. There are, however, no regional agreements on migration per se in the Asia-Pacific region. Even ASEAN, which potentially has much to gain from such agreements, given that it includes origin, destination, and transit countries, has made no move in the direction of developing a regional migration framework. This is in spite of the fact that the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II 2003 included a pledge to "promote regional mobility and mutual recognition of professional credentials, talents, and skills development."[143]

153. The closest ASEAN has come to this is the inclusion of some articles on recognition of qualifications in multilateral agreements. The first time ASEAN agreed to such a provision was when the group included an article in the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS) 1995 to the effect that "Each Member State may recognise the education or experience obtained, requirements met, or licenses or certifications granted in another Member State, for the purpose of licensing or certification of service suppliers."[144] The provision refers to short-term or temporary movement across borders for the provision of services and not to access to labor markets. Similarly, in the ASEAN Agreement on the Movement of Natural Persons 2012, the temporary stay and travel of business travelers was addressed and a number of provisions recommended to facilitate the same. Another group that facilitates business travel is the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, which has made an attempt to initiate visa free business travel of sorts in the region. The key features of the group's initiative are given in the box below.

Box 4.1: Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Mobility Group

The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)[145] was formed in 1989 to promote sustainable growth in the region. The group has 21 members, spread across three continents. APEC formed a Business Mobility Group (BMG) in 1997 to make the facilitation of business travel a priority across member states. The scheme commenced in 1999 and, as of 2020, there are 340,000 business travel cardholders in the region.[146] The card facilitates short-term business travel (up to 90 days) within APEC countries. Applicants seek permission to enter participating economies[147] and, if successful, get a 5-year travel card and some other benefits, including fast-track services at immigration counters of participating countries.

While the travel card was meant to start a process of visa-free business travel across APEC, it has not quite replicated the experience of the EU. Countries are free to add additional eligibility criteria for the issuance of travel cards, and preclearance of applicants is not done according to a uniform procedure. Each country has its own process for issuing clearance and the time frame for grant of clearance or processing of applications differs significantly. The travel card is a step in the right direction, but much more would need to be done to get to the stage where business travel across the Asia-Pacific region can be carried out unencumbered.

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143 ASEAN. (2003). Declaration of ASEAN Concord II, Section C.3. Adopted in Bali, Indonesia. October.
144 See Article V of AFAS 1995: https://asean.org/?static_post=asean-framework-agreement-on-services.
145 Members include Australia; New Zealand; Indonesia; PNG; Brunei Dar es Salam; the Philippines; the PRC; Taipei,China; Japan; Republic of Korea; Russia; Viet Nam; Thailand; Malaysia; Singapore; the US; Canada; Chile; Mexico and Peru.
146 https://www.apec.org/Groups/Committee-on-Trade-and-Investment/Business-Mobility-Group
147 The US and Canada are members of APEC but do not participate in the BMG.

154. While ASEAN and APEC have at least recognized the need to facilitate the movement of skilled workers for business reasons, if no other, the movement of unskilled workers has received little attention in the region. In 2007, ASEAN issued the Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, which even laid out the obligations of receiving and sending states (see box).[148]

Box 4.2: Rights of Migrant Workers

Obligations of Receiving States

Pursuant to the prevailing laws, regulations and policies of the respective receiving states, the receiving states will:

Intensify efforts to protect the fundamental human rights, promote the welfare and uphold human dignity of migrant workers;

Work towards the achievement of harmony and tolerance between receiving states and migrant workers;

Facilitate access to resources and remedies through information, training and education, access to justice, and social welfare services as appropriate and in accordance with the legislation of the receiving state, provided that they fulfill the requirements under applicable laws, regulations and policies of the said state, bilateral agreements and multilateral treaties;

Promote fair and appropriate employment protection, payment of wages, and adequate access to decent working and living conditions for migrant workers;
Provide migrant workers, who may be victims of discrimination, abuse, exploitation, violence, with adequate access to the legal and judicial system of the receiving states; and

Facilitate the exercise of consular functions to consular or diplomatic authorities of states of origin when a migrant worker is arrested or committed to prison or custody or detained in any other manner, under the laws and regulations of the receiving state and in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

Obligations of Sending States

Pursuant to the prevailing laws, regulations and policies of the respective sending states, the sending states will:
Enhance measures related to the promotion and protection of the rights of migrant workers;

Ensure access to employment and livelihood opportunities for their citizens as sustainable alternatives to migration of workers;

Set up policies and procedures to facilitate aspects of migration of workers, including recruitment, preparation for deployment overseas and protection of the migrant workers when abroad as well as repatriation and reintegration to the countries of origin; and

Establish and promote legal practices to regulate recruitment of migrant workers and adopt mechanisms to eliminate recruitment malpractices through legal and valid contracts, regulation and accreditation of recruitment agencies and employers, and blacklisting of negligent/unlawful agencies.

155. In the same declaration, ASEAN laid out its commitments, which include the pledge to, above all, ensure decent, dignified and remunerative employment for workers in the region. The declaration has not, however, been translated into a legal or binding agreement.

156. While Asia and the Pacific is still focused on restricting the physical movement of labor, markets are fast moving on to virtual employment, something that is likely to gain currency in a post-COVID-19 world. This form of employment is typically referred

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[148] ASEAN. (2007). Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers. Cebu, Philippines, January.

to in the literature as outsourcing and is not tracked by conventional labor market statistics. Outsourcing or subcontracting is not well understood yet, particularly in terms of possible displacement effects on local labor markets. However, as ASEAN, in particular, works to integrate trade in services, this is an area for future research and possible regulation.[149]

B. Regional Cooperation for Migration

157. Some of the strategies that can help Asia and the Pacific move in the direction of greater regional integration, while regulating flows of migrants, are discussed below.

1. Recognition of Qualifications

158. When professional qualifications are not recognized across borders, highly skilled migrants can end up in jobs for which they are overqualified. Not only is this frustrating for the worker, but it is also an example of "brain waste,"[150] wherein skills are not being utilized simply because systems to assess and certify them are not in place.

159. Brain waste is an issue all over the world, including in cases where migrants, who have acquired qualifications from their home countries, move to developed economies. According to a recent study, about 52% of migrants from Thailand working in OECD countries are overqualified for their jobs.[151] According to the same source, the same is true for more than 40% of workers from the Philippines, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Myanmar who are working in OECD countries. In general, about 35% of migrants to OECD countries are overqualified for their work, while this is true for only about a quarter of OECD country locals.[152]

160. For Asian migrants working in high-income economies to be overqualified for jobs they hold is bad enough, but this also happens with migrants in the Asia-Pacific region. Two possible approaches to solve the issue of portability of skills have been suggested in the literature: mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) and qualifications reference frameworks (QRFs).[153]

161. Mutual recognition arrangements. MRAs are typically limited to a few countries and one or two carefully chosen professions or skills. MRAs are normally legally valid and entail validation of qualifications by regulatory bodies, normally in all the countries involved. MRAs can involve asking a third-country professional or academic organization to validate qualifications in both countries. Such validation essentially renders the skills transferable and enables graduates in particular fields to freely move across the two countries or even beyond (if skills are certified by a third country or international regulatory body).

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149 Anna Fink and Elisabetta Gentile. (2019). Skill Flows and the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Future Questions and Directions for the ASEAN Economic Community. In Elisabetta Gentile, ed. *Skilled Labor Mobility and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities for the ASEAN Economic Community*. ADB.

150 For an explanation of this concept, see Elisabetta Gentile, ed. Skilled Labor Mobility and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities for the ASEAN Economic Community. ADB. Page 46.

151 Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. Figure 8.1.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid. Page 249–50.

162. The ASEAN countries have worked together to develop six MRAs and one framework agreement covering health practitioners, engineers, accountants, architects, or tourism professionals.[154] While these are important initiatives, collectively these MRAs represent only about 1.5% of the ASEAN workforce.[155] The ADB posits that umbrella agreements are a practical alternative to MRAs as long as regulatory bodies and professional associations are given the necessary government support.[156]

163. Qualifications reference frameworks. QRFs involve establishing equivalence between local qualifications and internationally recognized ones. Thus, if a high school diploma in any country is certified by the International Baccalaureate (IB) Office to be equivalent to the internationally recognized IB qualification, this would be considered an example of a QRF. QRFs can be pursued by each individual country and do not need the cooperation of more than one state. QRFs enable employers or institutions of higher education in any country to quickly establish standards for qualifications and facilitate employment and admissions to educational institutions. However, they are only effective on a large scale if the qualification in question is accredited by an international body.

164. In 2011, a decision *was* made to develop an ASEAN qualifications reference framework (AQRF) to support recognition of qualifications and promote worker mobility.[157] The concept was endorsed by ASEAN economic, education, and labor ministers in 2014 and 2015. The AQRF Committee was subsequently formed, which held its first meeting in 2017. Member states are required to create national qualifications frameworks that can then be referenced to the common AQRF.[158] The committee has since held six meetings, the most recent of which took place in May 2019. It is in the process of deciding on referencing guidelines.

165. While ASEAN has made some progress on recognition of qualifications, there is no Asia-Pacific–wide initiative to do the same. While this would be a complex task, the ASEAN experience can act as a guide on how the work can begin.

166. In addition to educational qualifications, language barriers can act as deterrents to migration, particularly for lower-skilled migrants not working in sectors where English is widely used. This is a larger issue and can only be addressed by strengthening English language skills across the region or encouraging learning languages of destination countries while still in the home country.

2. Portability of Benefits

167. Social protection systems vary significantly across Asia and the Pacific but, in general, most countries in the region do not boast comprehensive systems and/or broad coverage.[159] In many countries, pension and health benefits, maternity benefits, and even disability benefits are linked to contributory schemes and are typically only

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[154] See https://www.asean.org/storage/images/2015/October/outreach-document/Edited%20MRA%20Services-2.pdf
[155] Guntur Sugiyarto. (2016). Achieving Professional Mobility Within ASEAN. Op Ed. 6 May.
[156] Dovelyn Rannveig Mendoza et al. (2017). *Reinventing Mutual Recognition Arrangements: Lessons From International Experiences and Insights for the ASEAN Region*. ADB.
[157] See https://asean.org/our-communities/economic-community/services/aqrf/
[158] Guntur Sugiyarto and Dovelyn Rannveig Agunias. (2014). A “Freer” Flow of Skilled Labour within ASEAN: Aspirations, Opportunities and Challenges in 2015 and Beyond. IOM and Migration Policy Institute.
[159] See ILO and UNESCAP. (2020). The Protection we Want: Social Outlook for Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok. October.

accessible to people in formal sector employment. According to the ILO, only 39% of people in Asia and the Pacific are covered by at least one social protection benefit.[160] With regard to people who are covered by some form of social insurance or social protection, benefits are generally not portable across borders. Potential migrants may thus be deterred from taking on jobs in other countries even if these offer better salaries.

168. The worst-case scenario is when migrants do not have access to social insurance or protection benefits in destination countries and have to sign out of any benefits they may be entitled to at home. Limiting access to benefits for migrants and the lack of portability of the same thus constitutes an important disincentive to migration, particularly for skilled migrants.

169. Different destination countries in Asia and the Pacific have different policies with regard to migrant benefits. In Brunei Darussalam, for example, migrant workers do not have access to the country's old age and invalidity scheme, nor are they eligible for workplace injury benefits.[161] In Malaysia, migrant workers have access to provident funds, but the employer's contribution to the fund is 5% of wages for migrant workers, as compared with 12% for locals.[162] Thailand is relatively generous with social insurance for migrant workers and allows for portability of benefits, although this is often impeded by the lack of concomitant arrangements in countries of origin. Even in countries where benefits are offered, these normally apply to workers in the formal sector. Domestic workers and those in informal employment (in Asia and the Pacific, these are 60% of nonfarm workers)[163] are not covered. According to the ILO, seven ASEAN states provide some social security benefits to their nationals who work abroad. This is normally done through contributions to social security schemes in countries of origin.[164]

170. The EU's system of portability of benefits is often cited as a best practice in social security portability.[165] However, bilateral and multilateral agreements can achieve good outcomes provided they are clear about the legal regime that they intend to follow,[166] whether they allow aggregation or totalization of periods for insurance benefits, allow payment of benefits irrespective of where the worker lives, allow the worker to maintain acquired benefits, or share financial liabilities.[167] Currently, Asia and the Pacific does not have examples of such comprehensive regional systems, but some subregional forums, such as the CLMTV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar,

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160 See ILOSTAT at https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=19
161 See Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. Table 8.2.
162 Ibid. Page 257.
163 ILO. (2018). Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture. Geneva.
164 Marius Olivier. (2018). *Social Protection for Migrant Workers in ASEAN: Developments, Challenges, and Prospects.* ILO.
165 For details, see the EU Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems.
166 Examples of such agreements include ones between Germany and Türkiye, and France and Morocco to mention just two. These and other agreements are discussed in Robert Holzmann, Jacques Wels, and Pamela Dale. (2016). Assessing Benefit Portability for International Migrant Workers: A Review of the Belgium-Morocco Bilateral Social Security Agreement. *Social Protection and Labor Discussion Paper.* 1603. World Bank, Washington, DC.
167 Marius Olivier. (2018). Social Protection for Migrant Workers in ASEAN: Developments, Challenges, and Prospects. ILO.

Thailand, Viet Nam) group on labor cooperation have been in talks to devise appropriate systems.[168]

3. Addressing Information Asymmetry

171. Migration entails costs at the best of times, but these costs can be significantly compounded if migrants do not have access to information on labor markets in destination countries.

172. With regard to unskilled workers, recruitment agents and brokers, many of whom operate informally, are often the only means of identifying employment opportunities and then getting the necessary paperwork together to access them.[169] These agents tend to rely on contacts and information received by word of mouth, and their business depends on their guarding their sources of information. Add to that the fact that they are rarely subject to fee caps and may or may not be accountable to their clients. All these factors create a situation where the costs of migration remain high. Other than the cost of using middlemen, migration costs can also be driven up by home-country regulations. In Tajikistan, for example, having a passport made is expensive (highest cost of all Commonwealth of Independent States members) and 86% of migrants relied on friends and relatives to identify employment opportunities. As a result, many migrants face months of unemployment when they finally arrive at their destination, which, for the vast majority, is the Russian Federation.[170]

173. Reducing information asymmetry is an important way to reduce the costs of migration, assure the safety of potential migrants, and facilitate orderly migration. In the age of information technology, there are a variety of options to do this, from the job listings for five Asian countries that are provided on JobStreet.com,[171] to the Republic of Korea's Employment Permit System (EPS), wherein work quotas for low-skilled migrants are set annually for each sector of the economy and by country of origin.[172] All information on the immigration process into Republic of Korea, the legal status of foreign workers, benefits that they are entitled to, and language requirements is provided on the EPS website. While JobStreet.Com is an example of a market-based mechanism for regional employment advertisements, EPS is a fully regulated government system. There are other examples in Asia. Malaysia has, since 2016, been publishing a critical occupations list, which was developed in close consultation with the private sector and is useful for educational institutions and career planning as well as to inform the international labor market of the country's needs.[173] Two relatively successful and well-known initiatives in the Pacific region are Australia and New Zealand's seasonal worker programs which are highlighted in the box below.

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168 See, for example, https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/clmtv-countries-agree-framework-mobile-social-security-scheme-0

169 See discussion in Mauro Testaverde et al. (2017). Migrating to Opportunity: Overcoming Barriers to Labor Mobility in Southeast Asia. World Bank. Page 289.

170 ADB. (2020). *Strengthening Support for Labor Migration in Tajikistan: Assessment and Recommendations*. Manila.

171 https://www.jobstreet.com

172 See https://www.eps.go.kr/ph/index.html

173 https://www.talentcorp.com.my/clients/TalentCorp_2016_7A6571AE-D9D0-4175-B35D-99EC514F2D24/contentms/img/TalentCorp_CriticalOccupationsList_FullList_20190312.pdf

Box 4.3: Seasonal Worker Programs

In 2007, New Zealand introduced the Recognized Seasonal Employer Scheme, a temporary placement scheme for low-skilled positions, open to Pacific islanders. A year later, Australia followed suit with the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme. The programs target seasonal workers who can work in agriculture and horticulture, mainly during harvesting. The objectives of both schemes included aiding development in the Pacific and allowing workers to earn higher wages, albeit for limited time periods, than they could hope to get in their home countries.[174]

Although started at the same time, and with similar objectives, the two programs have had different outcomes, and the program has had more success in New Zealand than in Australia, with greater intake of workers and better work conditions.[175]

Data on the distribution of the stock of horticulture workers in the two countries shows that in Australia, 32% of temporary workers in the sector were local, 8% were workers who come in through the seasonal workers program, while the vast majority were backpackers (a local term for working tourists) or other migrant workers (some of whom may have been in the country illegally). In New Zealand, 55% of workers were local, 16% were seasonal workers, and only 29% were backpackers or other migrants.[176] From the year of inception of the seasonal worker scheme, New Zealand has had a significantly greater inflow of workers from the Pacific. In 2008–2009, New Zealand gave 7,617 visas under the scheme and Australia, for which this was the first year of the scheme gave 57. A decade later, New Zealand's intake had gone up to 11,102 and Australia's was just 6,166 and, only 2 years earlier, it was barely above 3,000.[177]

Australia's issuance of backpacker visas and information from employers shows that Australian employers in the horticulture sector generally prefer to rely on low-cost and informal sector workers. One reason could be the differing status of horticulture in the two countries. In New Zealand, the sector is strongly export oriented and requires a degree of skilled labor input for sorting, processing, and packaging. In Australia, the sector caters mainly to the domestic market and cost minimization is a major consideration. Australia offers a second year of work in any sector to those who have completed one 3-month stint on a working tourist visa, whereas New Zealand does not have such a generous provision. Australia attracts a significant number of backpackers and can more easily meet seasonal work requirements. Although backpacking visas are in theory open to everyone, in practice, the bulk of backpackers in Australia come from the UK, followed by Germany, France, and Italy.[178]

174. Governments can help by regulating or at least strengthening oversight of recruitment agencies that specialize in sourcing workers from other countries. While regulation costs can be high, sometimes simple systems are effective. Singapore, for example, publishes data on worker placement by recruitment agency in the Employment Agency Bulletin.[179] In the Philippines, the Overseas Employment Administration publishes lists of licensed recruitment agencies.[180] A study on the impact of providing information about the quality of work of recruitment agencies to potential migrants in Indonesia has just concluded three rounds of data collection.[181] The findings are awaited and should yield interesting results.

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174 John Gibson and David McKenzie. (2013). Development through Seasonal Worker Programs: The Case of New Zealand's RSE Program. *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper*. 6762.

175 Richard Curtain et al. (2018). Pacific Seasonal Workers: Learning from the Contrasting Temporary Migration Outcomes in Australian and New Zealand Horticulture. *Asia and Pacific Policy Studies*. May.

176 Ibid. Table 1. Curtain et al. assumed a labor market of 60,000 in each country based on official estimates.

177 Ibid. Table 3.

178 https://www.backpackerjobboard.com.au/job-news/where-do-backpackers-come-from/

179 https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-agencies/employment-agency-regulatory-framework

180 http://www.poea.gov.ph/services/recruiters.html

181 Simone Schaner et al. (2018). Empowering Female Migrant Workers to Access Quality Overseas Placement Services in Indonesia. Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. Information on the study is at https://www.povertyactionlab.org/evaluation/empowering-female-migrant-workers-access-quality-overseas-placement-services-indonesia.

V. MOVING AHEAD

175. This paper touches on many aspects of migration and provides an overview of the key issues, particularly in relation to economic and forced migration. As even a cursory reading will reveal, however, each issue would merit a treatise and each community's experience, whether as a place of origin or destination, requires a detailed case study at the very least. Similarly, there is a range of interventions that can be carried out by international development agencies, preferably in collaboration, to support safe and orderly migration, from ensuring emergency assistance and essential services to victims of forced migration to helping countries set up systems for establishing equivalence of qualifications for economic migration. Some key options for MDBs are discussed in this section.

A. Potential Role of Multilateral Development Banks

176. As mentioned in chapter 1, the MDB Coordination Platform on Economic Migration and Forced Displacement is the recognized forum for MDBs to refine the common framework on these issues for MDB engagement; advance cooperation on these issues; and ensure strategic coordination across MDBs, governments, and UN agencies.[182]

177. MDBs further delineated their commitments at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva in December 2019 (Box 5.1).[183]

Box 5.1: Commitments of Multilateral Development Banks with Regard to the Global Compact on Refugees

The MDBs reaffirm their commitment to:

1) Step up their work together and individually through a range of financing and policy instruments in accordance with each organization's investment and financing criteria and requirements.
2) Coordinate with each other and with core stakeholders on key issues on the ground in order to build on existing initiatives, better enable shorter lead times, and deliver better outcomes for host communities and vulnerable populations.
3) In large-scale and rapidly evolving contexts, provide rapid financing through dedicated financial instruments or sources that can help alleviate the strain on public services in host countries, and support livelihoods, inclusiveness and resilience for all. Examples of these financing instruments and sources include AfDB's Transition Support Facility, the AsDB's Emergency Assistance Loan Instrument, the EBRD's Refugee Response Plan, the EIB's Economic Resilience Initiative, Islamic Development Bank's Grant Facility to support countries with large and sudden intraregional migration inflows, IsDB through matching funds mechanisms and other channels, the World Bank IDA18 Sub-window for Refugees and Host Communities and the World Bank-administered Global Concessional Financing Facility, among others.
4) Promote and support the essential contribution of the private sector—inter alia through MDBs playing a facilitating role—in enhancing private sector participation in sustainable skills development and employment opportunities, SME and entrepreneurship support, as well as economic and social infrastructure and provision of essential services for host communities and target groups, including women and youth.

Source: Joint statement at Global Refugee Forum, December 2019.

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182 See the press statement issued at the time of formation of the platform: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/04/20/mdbs-launch-new-platform-to-coordinate-support-for-economic-migration-and-forced-displacement

183 Joint statement at the Global Refugee Forum, Geneva, December 2019. https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/multilateral-development-banks-pledge-step-support-forcibly-displaced-populations-global-refugee-forum-33318

178. As part of the same statement, the MDBs pledged to follow principles of good practice, including tailoring interventions to specific situations, fostering inclusive approaches that benefit host populations as well as migrant communities, taking into consideration the capacity and capabilities of partners working at national and local levels, and sharing information on the nature and impact of interventions.

179. The formation of the MDB Coordination Platform is a relatively recent phenomenon and it has been only a year since the commitments listed above were formalized. With COVID-19 creating havoc the world over in 2020, not much progress has been made on the MDB commitments as the focus has largely shifted to stabilizing economies and protecting livelihoods in a crisis situation. As things start slowly returning to normal, the MDB Coordination Platform is likely to take on a more active role.

B. Knowledge Gaps

180. Looking to the future, with MDBs potentially taking on a more active role on economic and forced migration, a key area of activity would be plugging the knowledge gaps. MDBs, which typically have more resources at their disposal than humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR. The IOM should work with MDBs to identify such gaps and then work on data collection and mapping exercises and further the research agenda.

1. Data Collection

181. Most of the credible data sources on migration have already been cited in this paper. These include the IOM's migration database; UN DESA's data on migrants as collated by the Population Division; the ILOSTAT, which deals mainly with economic migrants; the World Bank's and ADB's data on remittances; and the UNHCR's extensive data on refugees. A new and potentially useful database is the World Bank's Migration and Law Database introduced in December 2020, which documents the legislation in different countries regarding the rights of migrants and refugees. Yet another relatively new initiative is the UNHCR and World Bank data center on refugees, housed in Copenhagen and launched in October 2019. The Joint Data Center aims to consolidate data on refugees and maintain information databases on country-level systems regarding refugees and other displaced persons.[184]

182. While these are invaluable resources, most of the organizations mentioned are dependent on data collected and collated by national governments. There are a number of data gaps, as not many governments dedicate resources to collecting and updating data on migrants and refugees. This is particularly true for developing countries hosting refugees. After initial counts, often by UNHCR or other UN agencies, governments typically lack the resources to do a sustained follow up on numbers and characteristics of refugees. This remains true even if the situation becomes protracted, as many refugee situations do, and the refugee community begins to find space in the local economy and society. The lack of data does not allow for evidence-based policy making; the evidence simply is not there.

183. The international development agencies concerned with migrants in general and refugees in particular have identified a number of areas where more and better data is needed. In particular, the Global Migration Group has formed a working group

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[184] https://www.jointdatacenter.org

on data and research, co-chaired by UN DESA and IOM.[185] This, in turn, works closely with the World Bank's Thematic Working Group on Data on Migration and Remittance Flows. The group is part of the World Bank's Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD).[186]

184. Data on migrants in the population census. UN DESA recommends that member states, when carrying out national censuses, also collect data on (i) country of birth, (ii) nationality or country or countries of citizenship, and (iii) year of arrival in country (for foreign-born persons).[187] These are considered as core questions that help determine the stock of international migrants in the country and their length of stay. If possible, additional questions on return migration (previous stays abroad), places of birth of parents and so on can be included for richer data repositories to be created. This is important and useful for countries with significant migrant stocks. The disadvantage of collecting such data only through the census is that, while accurate, it will, for most countries, provide a once-in-a-decade picture. Nevertheless, it is the most accurate method of assessing migrant stocks.

185. Data on migrant flows through borders. All countries collect information on entries and exit on ports, whether seaports or for those entering by land or air. Such data is rarely stored, collated, or analyzed. In most countries, it is kept for a limited time and then destroyed. Data from borders is the most accurate way to check flows into and out of the country and can even document length of stay in the country or abroad. While collating and analyzing this data is an arduous task, not least because of the sheer volume, it is the best source for documentation of migration flows and can be invaluable for countries with significant seasonal and/or temporary work migrant flows. This form of data collection will, of course, not pick up irregular migrants.

186. Data on documented economic migrants. While some countries do keep records of migrant stocks, more detailed data on economic migrants, particularly in the formal sector, is key to formulating policy on migration. Thus, data on age, sex, educational qualifications, occupation and sector of employment, and reasons for migration would provide good insight into the determinants of migration and the opportunities afforded by the country concerned. This would typically require a large sample survey, designed to be representative of the migrant population.

187. The above data requirements are relatively advanced and require a dedicated effort on the part of host governments, supported by MDBs. There are also fewer complex data requirements that are crucial to the understanding of migration stocks and flows, which can be supported by MDBs.

188. Time series data. Data on migrants and refugees is often published sporadically, even when it is simply a count. Ideally, data on migrants and refugees should be updated every 3–5 years at least. This can be done either by using official sources on work permits and extended stay visas or, in the case of refugees, by updating records with the help of agencies like UNHCR that have experience in documenting forced migration situations.

189. Disaggregated data. Even when data is collected regularly, it may not be disaggregated. Disaggregation by gender and age is important to understand how

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185 https://globalmigrationgroup.org/working-group-data-and-research
186 https://www.knomad.org
187 UN DESA, Statistics Division. (2016). Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses. Chapter 4, Section 2.

migrants are interacting with the society and possibly contributing to the economy and to assess public service needs.

190. Data availability and data quality assessments. It is also possible that states or the private sector are collecting data on migrants or relevant to migrants but are not analyzing it as such. For example, mobile phone connections often require applicants to provide details of citizenship and cellphone companies store such data. Schools often require citizenship details of parents at times of enrolment. While not all such data sources are easily accessible, big data (for example on cellphone users) could be effectively analyzed to yield information on citizenship status as well as place of residence in the country. It would, of course, be crucial to use the data securely and avoid breach of privacy issues. Protocols will have to be developed for the appropriate use of the data.

191. MDBs should work in collaboration with the UN and IOM to first identify the key indicators that are important to track migrant stocks and flows and to understand the role of migrants in the economy and in society. Thereafter, they can consider allocating resources, whether financial or in terms of expertise, to support comprehensive data collection, storage, presentation, and analysis. This would be an important contribution to migration studies in general and the formulation of policy on migration in particular.

2. Research and Information Dissemination

192. While there is a wealth of research on migration in general, it is concentrated in certain areas, or applies to certain countries, generally those that have managed to maintain good datasets or have made an effort to implement migration policy. Within Asia and the Pacific, for example, there is relatively good data on migration within the ASEAN region but less on Central Asia or other regions. With regard to displaced populations, like the Rohingya in Bangladesh and other countries in southeast Asia, or the Afghan diaspora in Pakistan, there is a dearth of data and information on socioeconomic characteristics and livelihoods. Research is particularly needed on irregular or undocumented migration and can only take place through field interviews of stakeholders: law enforcement agencies, agents and/or traffickers, migrants, and their families. The MDB Coordination Platform would be a good forum to delineate a research program, preferably in consultation with governments; identify experts and data requirements; and find resources to carry out at least some basic, preferably multicountry studies.

C. Recommendations

193. A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now becoming clear that its impacts will continue to reverberate for the short to medium term. Policy making will be influenced to a significant extent by the degree to which COVID-19 affected a particular sector or region. While the effects of COVID-19 on migration are discussed in the next section, the recommendations below have been contextualized to account for the continued impacts of the pandemic.

194. Supporting improved data collection and dissemination and identifying research needs are important activities for the migration portfolio. These activities should preferably be coordinated with the UN, IOM, and other agencies closely involved in migration policy formulation and management of refugees. There are also some areas where ADB can focus in the short to medium term to work toward safe and orderly migration. There is a need to consolidate data for some pre-COVID-19 years and attempt to collate data for 2020–2021 to be able to compare trends pre– and post–COVID-19.

195. Livelihood strategies. ADB already works with governments in a variety of ways to promote growth, create jobs, and preserve livelihoods. All of this work is relevant to migration, in that security, stability, and access to economic opportunities are all deterrents to forced and irregular migration. Even for regular migration, most often economic migration, ensuring growth and stability serves to create an environment where potential migrants can make informed decisions on whether they want to avail themselves of opportunities in other countries and how they can proceed to do so legally. One potential promising strategy for promoting economic inclusion and sustainable livelihoods among migrant populations is through the Graduation Approach to Poverty Reduction. Pioneered by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) in 2002, the Graduation Approach delivers a holistic and multifaceted set of sequenced and timebound interventions designed to meet the complex and interconnected needs of hard-to-reach populations. Although the approach originally targeted the extreme poor, it has since been adapted in the context of displaced populations and refugees.[188] A coalition of partners, including the UNHCR, the World Bank Partnership for Economic Inclusion, and 13 nongovernment organizations (NGOs), for example, will be supporting 500,000 households consisting of refugees and host communities through the Graduation Approach from 2020 to 2025 across 35 countries, including in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.[189] ADB can help provide technical expertise to review the approach and suggest amendments in light of COVID-19, given the impacts of the pandemic on public health and livelihoods. Social protection may be a primary concern in the medium term until economies revive and begin to create jobs again.

196. In addition to piloting and providing direct support to programs such as the Graduation Approach, MDBs can also assist and work with governments and other partners to create an enabling environment to support migrants' rights, welfare, and income-generating opportunities through elements such as freedom of movement, access to quality health, education, social protection, vocational training, certification, financial and legal services, and adequate housing. There is a need to work with governments and health authorities to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccinations for all residents in the medium term, regardless of their migration status. These supporting elements are important not only in the context of refugees but also economic migrants, who remain vulnerable to economic, health, and environmental shocks.

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188 UNHCR, CGAP, Trickle Up. Economic Inclusion of the Poorest Refugees: Building Resilience through the Graduation Approach, *Brief.*

189 Poverty Alleviation Coalition. https://alleviate-poverty.org/about

Box 5.2: The Graduation Approach to Poverty Reduction

The Graduation Approach is an innovation in social protection that recognizes the multidimensional nature of poverty and builds on the foundation of social assistance with a holistic set of carefully sequenced and time-bound interventions tailored for poor households. These interventions, typically delivered over a period of 18-36 months, include:

1. Social assistance (cash or in-kind transfer)
2. Asset transfer with technical skills and livelihoods training
3. Support for financial inclusion and literacy
4. Social empowerment through psycho-social support and social inclusion for positive behavior change.

Pioneered by BRAC in Bangladesh in 2002, holistic Graduation programs have since been adapted and rolled out to varying degrees in more than 40 countries, with rigorous impact evaluations confirming not only positive benefits when the programs were over, but sustainable results long after program interventions ended. A multi-country study in India, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, and Peru by the 2019 Nobel laureates in economics, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, using the gold-standard randomized controlled trial (RCT) methodology found positive impacts of the program across a range of outcomes including household consumption, food security, asset values, livestock revenues, savings, women's empowerment, and physical and mental health.

The UNHCR has been adapting the Graduation Approach in the context of displaced populations and introducing innovations such as providing legal assistance, delivering context-specific skills training and workplace readiness training to facilitate refugees' transition into the labor force, exploring non-traditional vocational training with flexible schedules suited to refugees, and providing dedicated coaching, mentorship and psychosocial support for refugees to build their confidence and life skills. Evaluations of UNHCR Graduation pilots have demonstrated promising results. In Egypt, participants from the refugee and host community found jobs, established their own businesses, and observed an increase in average income per month up to 27% following the end of the program. Similarly, after promising results from a pilot project in Ecuador, the government has included Graduation as a core component of its national social protection programming. UNHCR Ecuador also decided to use a Graduation lens to completely transform planning for its wider refugee response, with Graduation programs being the response of choice for those living in extreme poverty who can pursue economic activities, ongoing support for those in extreme poverty who cannot work, and referral to government services for refugees who are better off.

Source: UNHCR, Poverty Alleviation Coalition, BRAC.

197. Remittances. Redirecting remittances to flow through regular banking channels, as opposed to informal transfer systems, is an important way to help countries achieve a degree of exchange rate stability and helps maintain foreign exchange reserves. ADB has worked with governments to combat money laundering[190] and to promote remittances for development finance by streamlining banking systems. Such efforts are all the more important in the wake of the increased vigilance of international bodies such as the Financial Action Task Force post 9/11. The international community is increasingly targeting money laundering and terrorist financing systems, and building capacity of the Asian financial sector to identify suspicious transactions is key to achieving compliance. ADB has helped member countries, including Pakistan and many Central Asian states, to conduct risk assessments, assess deficiencies in banking records, and train banking regulators in identifying suspicious transactions. ADB has financed the use of software for such purposes and provided technical expertise. Such efforts have helped redirect remittances through banking channels. More of such programs and technical assistance are needed in the medium term.

198. Diaspora bonds. Private investors have for some time been interested in bonds that fund enterprises that deliver environmental, social, and governance benefits. In

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[190] Including the Philippines, Mongolia, Bhutan and PNG. See https://www.adb.org/news/adb-boosts-support-governments-combat-money-laundering-asia

early 2020, an estimated 25% of funds under professional management were invested in such social bonds.[191] As mentioned in section II A.2, Israel has successfully developed a market in diaspora bonds; the Jewish diaspora the world over is encouraged to invest in infrastructure projects in Israel. In Asia, the market for social bonds has been relatively slow to develop but is fast gaining traction. By 2020, the Asian social bond market was about one-third the size of the European market.[192] The interest in social bonds has been revitalized because of COVID-19, with markets seeking to link private investors to projects that mitigate the effects of the pandemic. This renewed interest may be explored by MDBs, including ADB, to assess if diaspora bonds can be promoted as a part of COVID-19 recovery efforts.

199. Regional cooperation. This study has served to highlight how ADB member countries and subregional organizations vary significantly in how they have approached migration policy and how far they have gone in facilitating migration within regional blocs or in general. ASEAN, for example, has made some progress in developing QRFs to facilitate the flow of skilled labor. India and the PRC have successfully leveraged expatriate communities to invest in key sectors in their home countries and develop linkages with international markets. On the other hand, in much of West Asia (mainly the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation states), there has been no significant effort to develop a migration policy and, in spite of growing connectivity and plans for infrastructure alignment, there is little progress on facilitating the movement of labor. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, which have been managing protracted refugee situations, very different approaches have been applied, and the two countries have not learned from each other's experiences. ADB should consider working with think tanks and governments in the region to identify gaps in migration management in individual member states, as well as in subregional multilateral organizations, and provide technical assistance to analyze data and develop policy while learning from the experiences of others in the region. At the very least, successful initiatives in the region must continue to be documented and their details disseminated to member states.

200. Migration policy. Asian countries have, for the most part, not formulated policy on economic migration or developed human rights–centered responses to forced migration. These are areas where states can be encouraged to collaborate to develop regional frameworks and then, based on those, national policies. Governments need to decide whether migration will bring benefits to certain sectors of economy and, if so, how to attract migration for those sectors; and whether emigrants from their own countries can meet labor shortages in other parts of the world and, if so, how best to ensure that these opportunities are not missed. Governments should review the legal rights and social benefits they grant to migrants and see how these can be brought in line with international best practices. Governments need to decide on policy measures to stem irregular migration and criminal practices such as human trafficking. Lastly, in some countries, it is time to start thinking about the accommodation and reentry of returning migrants in the economy or ways to effectively engage the diaspora. The standardization and recognition of qualifications and portability of benefits, discussed in detail in an earlier chapter, is an element of migration policy. Access of migrants to health care, emergency and otherwise, and to adult vaccination programs is crucial in light of the experience of 2020.

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[191] ADB. (2021). Primer on Social Bonds and Recent Developments in Asia. Manila.
[192] Ibid.

201. Some Asian countries have addressed some or most of these issues (Malaysia, for example, has made some progress toward formulating a migration policy: the 11th Malaysia Plan for management of foreign workers), while others have not yet embarked on such a course (Thailand has not formulated a policy although it has a substantial stock of migrants). In general, this is an area where ADB can take the lead in supporting member countries to start devising appropriate frameworks.

202. Policy on refugees and forced migrants. With more and more refugee crises turning into protracted refugee situations, host governments need help in devising appropriate responses. These range from deciding on the legal status of long-term refugees, to enabling them to earn livelihoods, ensuring access to basic services and all levels of education, and devising protection regimes that enable them to effectively interact with law enforcement agencies. This is a complex task, given that many host governments continue to focus on repatriation long after refugees have settled in. ADB can provide expertise in this area and needs to invest in furthering data collection. There is also a need to improve context-sensitive programming to incorporate refugees and forced migrants.

VI. COVID-19 AND MIGRATION

203. As of the end of December 2020, almost 79 million all over the world had been infected with COVID-19, and over 1.7 million have died.[193] COVID-19 has impacted human beings like no other pandemic in the last century, given that it is just about a hundred years since the Spanish flu pandemic sputtered to a halt. While the effects of COVID-19 on health systems, economies, work protocols, and many other things will continue to be analyzed, perhaps for decades to come, it is also clear that the pandemic has had a disproportionate negative impact on vulnerable communities. Amongst these are migrants.

204. There are a variety of channels through which COVID can affect migrants. Perhaps the most immediate effect was how migration was curtailed, particularly in the initial months of 2020, as borders began to shut and refugee resettlement and asylum systems went into a prolonged hiatus. While borders have opened across Asia and economies have emerged from varying degrees of lockdown, travel continues to be risky. Migrants tend to be overrepresented in sectors that are hardest hit by the pandemic, including hospitality and domestic work. Temporary migration for agricultural work has been severely affected by COVID-19.

205. Housing conditions. Refugees and displaced communities and irregular migrants have been at risk, along with other vulnerable groups, as many are living in cramped, multigenerational households in camps with high population density. Estimated population density in Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, for example, is 40,000 persons per square kilometer, with some areas approaching 70,000 persons.[194] The first case in a Rohingya refugee camp was reported in May 2020.[195] As of December 6 2020, 363 cases were reported in the camps, along with 10 deaths.[196] As is the case in many communities though, these figures could be

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193 https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/

194 Assessment Capacities Project. (2020). COVID-19 Rohingya Response. Geneva: ACAPS. Seehttps://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/products/files/20200319_acaps_covid19_risk_report_rohingya_response.pdf

195 World Vision Bangladesh. (2020). Rohingya Refugee Response COVID-19 Report. Page 1.

196 WHO Bangladesh. (2020). Rohingya Crisis Week 49 Situation Report #35. Date of Issue: 8 December 2020.

underestimating the actual infection rates, given that people are typically hesitant to report to clinics with COVID symptoms, for fear of being forced into isolation in remote locations. In a survey done for a recent research paper in Cox's Bazar, almost a quarter of the 365 refugees interviewed reporting having recently experienced at least one of the three most common symptoms of COVID (fever, dry cough and fatigue).[197]

206. Practicing social distancing is difficult, if not impossible, in crowded camps or localities. Limited access to items of personal hygiene, particularly if they are dependent on aid agencies for supplies, can exacerbate migrants' vulnerability. Irregular migrants are at risk because they may be reluctant to seek help so as not to reveal themselves to the authorities. The vulnerability of victims of forced displacement may be worsened by poor health conditions, particularly if they have recently travelled in treacherous conditions.

207. Social protection. Around the world, governments have stepped up to provide social protection to the most vulnerable in these difficult times. Most of these programs are, however, geared towards citizens and require proof of citizenship. Relief efforts by charities and NGOs are, however, generally more inclusive.

208. Access to health care. Of the 25 countries from Asia and the Pacific for which KNOMAD's Migration and Law database reports data,[198] 6 (4 of which are in South Asia) did not allow migrants to access health facilities on the same terms as locals. A further six (three of which are in Central Asia) allowed this based on some conditions. Thus, half of Asian and Pacific economies for which data is reported do not allow migrants to use health facilities on the same terms as locals. This data does not refer to COVID-19 conditions, and it is to be hoped that migrants across Asia and the Pacific have not faced difficulties in accessing testing and treatment. Nevertheless, conditions of access could have affected how regular health care is accessed at a time when health facilities are stretched thin. More research and information on this is needed before drawing any conclusions.

209. Remittances. With some exceptions, most receiving countries are likely to see a decline in remittances of up to 20%.[199] This is not likely to occur due to a fall in stocks of international migrants in different countries but due to job losses and wage cuts. Remittance service providers have been hit by reduced hours and lockdowns, which can affect flows. This is particularly problematic for low-income migrants, who are less likely to use digital systems.

210. Unemployment. Conventional wisdom would suggest, and the experiences of the global financial crisis of 2007–2008 confirm, that migrants are more likely to lose livelihoods in a crisis situation than native populations. Figures from the EU show that the unemployment rate among foreign-born workers was 16.4% in 2009, compared with 11.1% for native-born workers.[200] And this was in a region with unrestricted labor mobility and which has been moving toward greater economic integration for decades.

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[197] Barua, Amit and Rutu Hitesh Karia. (2020). 'Challenges Faced by Rohingya Refugees in the COVID-19 Pandemic.' Annals of Global Health, 86(1), p.129.

[198] https://www.knomad.org/data/migration-and-the-law-database

[199] KNOMAD, World Bank Group. (2020). *COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens*. *Migration and Development Brief.* 32. April. Page 2.

[200] Ibid. Figure 1.2.

211. Some of the policy measures implemented in Asia and the Pacific to ensure protection of migrants during COVID-19 are as follows.[201] Thailand is providing free medical care for the first 72 hours of infection for migrant workers with valid work permits. Japan is providing a one-off unconditional cash transfer to all citizens, including foreigners who are legally resident in the country. The cash transfer is meant to cover, to some extent, economic losses for the crisis period. A similar cash transfer has taken place in Myanmar, covering vulnerable groups, including migrants who are resident in the country. The Philippines has responded with social protection for out-migrants. The country's Overseas Workers Welfare Administration has created an emergency fund targeted at Filipino migrant workers, which provides a one-time payment to workers who have been displaced due to COVID-19 and could not reach destination countries where they were to take up jobs. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are providing free testing and medical care to all residents.

212. Like previous pandemics in human history, the impacts of COVID-19 are likely to persist at least in the short and medium term as health systems and economies will take time to recover even after the virus runs its course or is controlled. It is too early to analyze its myriad possible impacts on migration, but this is an area of research that should be considered a priority for future migration research.

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[201] Information from ILO. (2020). Social Protection for Migrant Workers: A Necessary Response to the Covid-19 Crisis. *Social Protection Spotlight*. 23 June.

Annex 1: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Data on Migrants from Asia and the Pacific

	Number 000	*Share of Women %*	*Low Education %*	*High Education %*	*Rank*
Afghanistan	608	39.7	51.6	19.9	12
Azerbaijan	116	55.1	26.3	47	23
Bangladesh	686	43.1	34.4	38.1	9
Bhutan	67	50.9	58	10.5	25
Brunei Darussalam	14	56.2	12	62.2	32
Cambodia	292	55.5	44	21	16
PRC	4620	55.5	23.7	48.6	2
Fiji	197	53.1	20.6	33.4	20
Georgia	222	62.7	26.2	37.8	18
India	4826	47.3	16.3	64.7	1
Indonesia	365	56.2	17.8	46.4	13
Japan	704	62.1	7.3	59.4	8
Kazakhstan	1044	53.1	29.1	19.4	7
Korea, Rep. of	1787	57.1	9.9	57	5
Kyrgyz Republic	40	62.9	12.1	62.7	27
Lao PDR	254	51.8	37.5	23.8	17
Malaysia	332	54	12.4	60.5	14
Maldives	2	65.3	45.2	34.2	33
Mongolia	40	60.6	17.3	50.6	27
Myanmar	220	51.1	48.2	26.9	19
Nepal	308	44.2	19.8	46.4	15
Pakistan	1427	43.5	32.8	40.9	6
Papua New Guinea	43	51.3	17.3	46.3	26
Philippines	3549	62	13.1	53.3	3
Samoa	88	50.7	34.7	14	24
Singapore	156	57.5	14.4	56.2	22
Sri Lanka	682	48.2	34.5	33.7	10
Tajikistan	25	55.3	11.4	52.5	30
Thailand	610	71.9	34.4	34.1	11
Timor Leste	15	53.4	47.5	18.2	31
Turkmenistan	34	65.3	39.5	31.5	29
Uzbeikistan	186	57.1	19.8	46.4	21
Vanuatu	2	50.6	20.5	38.4	33
Viet Nam	2196	53.7	33	30.5	4

Lao PDR = Lao People's Democratic Republic, PRC = People’s Republic of China.
OECD. (2020). *A Global Profile of Emigrants to OECD Countries*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers No. 239. Annex Table A.2.

Annex 2: Inward Remittances in Asia and the Pacific

Migrant remittance inflows (US$ million)	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*	*2019*	*2020e*
Afghanistan	378	179	219	347	253	349	628	823	804	829	785
Azerbaijan	1,410	1,893	1,990	1,733	1,846	1,270	643	1,133	1,226	1,275	1,146
Bangladesh	10,850	12,071	14,120	13,867	14,988	15,296	13,574	13,502	15,566	18,363	19,758
Bhutan	8	10	18	12	14	20	34	43	58	57	54
Brunei Darussalam											0
Cambodia	557	611	855	1,003	1,103	1,185	1,200	1,295	1,433	1,525	1,446
PRC	52,460	61,576	57,987	59,491	62,332	63,938	61,000	63,876	67,414	68,398	59,507
Fiji	176	161	191	204	221	251	269	274	285	287	273
Hong Kong, China	340	352	367	360	372	387	399	437	425	451	335
India	53,480	62,499	68,821	69,970	70,389	68,910	62,744	68,967	78,790	83,332	75,916
Indonesia	6,916	6,924	7,212	7,614	8,551	9,659	8,907	8,990	11,215	11,666	9,835
Japan	1,684	2,132	2,540	2,364	3,734	3,325	3,830	4,443	4,369	4,374	4,189
Kazakhstan	226	180	283	341	401	294	384	560	618	506	458
Korea, Rep. of	5,854	6,602	6,589	6,475	6,574	6,464	6,524	6,526	7,125	7,374	7,495
Kyrgyz Republic	1,266	1,709	2,031	2,278	2,243	1,688	1,995	2,486	2,689	2,411	1,875
Lao PDR	42	110	203	170	188	189	189	243	239	285	271
Malaysia	1,103	1,211	1,294	1,423	1,580	1,644	1,604	1,649	1,686	1,659	1,410
Maldives	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
Mongolia	266	250	324	257	255	261	260	273	441	561	536
Myanmar	115	127	275	1,644	1,864	2,005	2,346	2,578	2,840	2,400	2,229
Nepal	3,464	4,217	4,793	5,584	5,889	6,730	6,612	6,928	8,294	8,250	7,392
Pakistan	9,690	12,263	14,007	14,629	17,244	19,306	19,819	19,856	21,193	22,245	24,136
Papua New Guinea	4	12	14	14	10	4	3	4	4	3	2

Migrant remittance inflows (US$ million)	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*	*2019*	*2020e*
Philippines	21,557	23,054	24,610	26,717	28,691	29,799	31,142	32,810	33,809	35,167	33,339
Singapore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Sri Lanka	4,123	5,153	6,000	6,422	7,036	7,000	7,262	7,190	7,043	6,749	6,681
Tajikistan	2,021	2,722	3,222	3,698	3,384	2,259	1,867	2,237	2,183	2,322	2,066
Thailand	4,433	5,256	5,657	6,585	6,524	5,895	6,270	6,720	7,466	7,077	6,086
Turkmenistan	35	35	37	40	30	16	9	4	2	1	1
Tuvalu	4	5	4	4							
Uzbekistan	2,858	4,276	5,693	6,689	5,653	3,062	2,462	3,374	3,689	4,150	3,320
Vanuatu	12	22	22	24	64	104	81	26	35	35	34
Viet Nam	8,260	8,600	10,000	11,000	12,000	13,000	14,000	15,000	16,000	17,000	15,686

Lao PDR = La People's Democratic Republic, PRC = People’s Republic of China.
World Bank. (2020). Extracted from Inward Remittance Flows. October. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data. Accessed on 3 December 2020.