



MIGNEX Background Paper

Migration-relevant policies in Pakistan

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List of acronyms

APPNA	Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North American
BEOE	Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CWA	Community Welfare Attaches
EU	European Union
FATA	Federal Administered Tribal Areas
FDI	foreign direct investment
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GoP	Government of Pakistan
ICMPD	International Centre of Migration Policy Development
IDP	internally displaced person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MOPHRD	Ministry of Overseas Pakistani and Human Resource Development
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
OEC	Overseas Employment Corporation
OEP	Overseas Employment Promoters
OPF	Overseas Pakistanis Foundation
PRI	Pakistan Remittance Initiative
PTI	Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

MIGNEX Background Paper

Migration-relevant policies in Pakistan

Pakistan has an extensive institutional landscape for migration management, yet it has struggled to meet demand for skilled labour in host countries and to protect the rights of Overseas Pakistanis. Irregular migration to Europe presents further challenges, while internal migration lacks attention in development planning.

Pakistan has a strong policy framework to promote labour emigration, channelling remittances through formal routes and encouraging diaspora engagement for national development.

Concerns exist around the diversification of skills and choice of destination country, as well as the reintegration of returnees.

Internal migration, specifically from rural to urban areas, is high but unplanned at the national and provincial levels.

About the MIGNEX policy reviews

This is one of ten MIGNEX Background Papers devoted to a review of policies in the ten countries of origin and transit covered by the project. The term **policy** can refer to many different phenomena. MIGNEX adopts a broad perspective and regards policy to include the existence and effectiveness of particular laws, common practices, development initiatives, policy interventions and the broader policy environment or framework. This inclusive definition encompasses the needs of the project's overall research.

Much of the analysis in the review involves policies that relate directly to migration and its link to development. The concept of **migration-related policies** includes both the migration policy environment and interventions

that seek to affect the development impacts of migration. It also includes policy and projects that might have large effects on migration dynamics, even if not presented under a migration heading.

Methodological note

This MIGNEX Background Paper builds on a systematic desk-based review undertaken in October 2020. Existing literature, policy documents and government reports were analysed and key experts were identified for interview. Overall, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted between 20 November 2020 and 15 February 2021. Following COVID-19 protocols, all interviews were conducted remotely. Thirteen interviews were conducted via Zoom, while two were conducted via telephone.

The research team constituted Ayesha Qaisrani, Dr Yunas Samad and Samar Rashid. Ayesha Qaisrani arranged the interviews based on her local network and knowledge of the relevant institutions in the field of migration. She led the interviews, while Dr Yunas Samad probed further based on the interviewees' responses. Samar Rashid took notes.

See MIGNEX Handbook Chapter 9 for further discussion on the fieldwork related to this policy review of the MIGNEX project.

Summary of main results

Pakistan has an extensive institutional landscape for migration management, with a dedicated federal ministry – the Ministry of Overseas Pakistani and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) – responsible for **Overseas Pakistanis**,¹ particularly in the context of emigration of labour. While an official policy document has not been approved yet, Pakistan has generally followed a pro-emigration stance, with institutional arrangements in place since the late 1970s. In the past decade (2010–2020), three efforts have been made to draft Pakistan's National Emigration Policy, however, the first two remained unapproved due to changing government priorities. The third attempt at devising a policy for overseas Pakistanis was made in 2017 and the draft is in the process of being approved currently.

While Pakistan relies greatly on its labour exports for remittances and employment, the country has struggled to diversify the skill level of labour going abroad for work. The majority of these workers are male and low-skilled, with occupations primarily in the transport (drivers, mechanics) and construction (masons, carpenters, plumbers, steel fixers and electricians) industries. The bulk of these emigrants are concentrated in the Gulf and the Middle East, which employs about 97% of Pakistanis abroad. However, this migration is temporary and labour workers are usually contracted for two to three years at a time. Many often renew their contracts, and sometimes even engage in circular migration. This is important to consider when interpreting the migration flow data from Pakistan as it can cause repeat counts of

¹ Official term used for Pakistanis abroad (which includes all persons of Pakistani origin, regardless of their immigration status in their host country), as per the official policy narrative.

migration (ILO, 2016a). Over the years, the skills composition has not diversified much in Pakistan, which means the country often struggles to meet the demand for highly skilled labour in emerging industries (ibid.).

Migration policymakers and relevant stakeholders realise this lacuna, and have therefore vocalised this aspect in discussions around the forthcoming National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis (Silk Routes Facility, 2020). The draft policy is concerned with four main objectives: i) promotion of safe, orderly and regular migration; ii) protection and welfare for Overseas Pakistanis and their families; iii) engagement of diaspora; and iv) reintegration of return migrants. Experts interviewed for this review opined that while the policy formation would not alter the existing trends too drastically, an official policy would form the basis of legislation that is essential to protect the rights of Overseas Pakistanis. The state has also been keen to increase and regularise the flow of remittances by offering low-cost remittance transfer mechanisms. However, the costs of these legal options are still generally higher and more time-consuming than the popular options of *hawala* and *hundi* money transfers, which have been declared illegal by the government.

Moreover, because the Gulf and Middle Eastern countries do not offer a pathway of naturalisation for emigrants, Pakistan is expected to experience an increased rate of return of emigrants who retire after their service. Therefore, the policy is also useful for offering guidelines and initiatives to reintegrate return migrants.

While the majority of Overseas Pakistanis emigrate through regular channels, a small proportion use irregular channels to reach certain destinations, specifically those in Europe. To some extent, this can be attributed to a culture of migration in certain areas in Pakistan and the restrictive legal options for low-skilled workers to enter European labour markets. A number of European Union (EU) sponsored programmes are in place in Pakistan in partnership with Pakistani government departments to enforce stricter border controls, to discourage irregular migration, and to create pathways for return and readmissions.

There is also a notable trend in internal migration within Pakistan, which is not backed by any policy planning. Wide inequalities in social development opportunities between rural and urban areas, coupled with a lack of sufficient employment opportunities in rural areas push many people towards the cities for better lives. However, urban planning cannot adequately cater to the needs of the growing urban population.

Emigration

Main policies

Pakistan is the second largest labour-exporting country in South Asia, which reflects the country's pro-emigration stance. In 2017, the MOPHRD finalised a National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis with technical support from the International Centre of Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) (Silk Routes Facility, 2020); however, this policy is yet

to be ratified. Draft versions of this emigration policy were also developed in 2008 and 2014, but neither were approved by the Cabinet.

While a policy gap persists, there are legal provisions in place and an extensive institutional structure responsible for promoting labour emigration and protecting migrants' rights. The foundations for this institutional approach were laid back in 1971 when the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE) was set up to promote labour exports in view of the rising labour demand and opportunities emerging in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The Emigration Ordinance and Emigration Rules were defined in Pakistan in 1979 (GoP, 1979).

The institutional set-up developed for Overseas Pakistanis has also undergone several changes over the last two decades. Prior to 2008, all matters related to Overseas Pakistanis came under the jurisdiction of the Department of Overseas Pakistanis, which was established in 2004 under the Ministry of Labour. In 2008, a sovereign Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis was created following the transfer of power from the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf to a democratic government. In 2013, with another change of power, the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis was merged with the Ministry of Human Resource Development to become MOPHRD. This federal ministry is mandated to operate in close collaboration with the provincial departments, labour organisations and international labour agencies and is the primary policymaking and coordinating body in relation to aspiring emigrants and Overseas Pakistanis (ILO, 2016). Since the devolution of powers in 2010 as a result of the 18th Amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan, labour emigration has come under federal jurisdiction; however, labour management, skills development and training are provincial subjects. Therefore, effective coordination between the centre and the provinces is essential according to the changing trends in the international labour market.

The institutional set-up relating to emigration largely focuses on four main aspects: i) promotion of emigration; ii) protection of rights of migrants; iii) formalising remittance flow and iv) diaspora engagement. More recently, MOPHRD has taken steps to enhance its focus on the reintegration of return migrants. To meet these objectives, MOPHRD operates via three main entities: i) the BEOE; ii) the Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC); and iii) the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF).

Private agencies – known as Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) – are registered with the OEC, which manages the placement of Pakistani labour abroad. The protection of emigrants' rights comes under the mandate of the OEC's agency called the Protector of Emigrants. These apparatus are guided by the Emigration Ordinance 1979 and the Emigration Rules of 1979 (updated last as of 2019).

Community Welfare Attaches (CWAs) are also appointed in Pakistani embassies abroad to serve as focal points for any dispute resolution or welfare-related issues that emigrants may face. Moreover, OPF is responsible for safeguarding the interests of the families of emigrants through a pension fund, vocational and educational services and housing schemes, etc., at reduced costs (ILO, 2016).

The existing policy gap has considerable consequences for the pre- and post-emigration situation of Pakistani workers. Although the 1979 Emigration Ordinance and Rules highlight the processes that guide the formal emigration mechanism, policy focus is required to further streamline this mechanism in view of the changing needs of the international labour market and local labour supply.

In 2009, in an effort to re-divert remittance flows from informal modes (including hawala and hundi) to formal channels, the Pakistan Remittance Initiative (PRI) was launched by the State Bank of Pakistan in collaboration with the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and the Ministry of Finance. The primary focus of this initiative has been to reduce transaction costs for the transfer of remittances, ensuring market-based exchange-rate regulation, increasing awareness regarding formal routes of remittance transfer, and declaring informal channels illegal (Jawaid, 2020).

Moreover, Pakistan is also a signatory to a number of international conventions that relate to labour emigration, including the Colombo Process² and the Abu Dhabi Dialogue.³ It is also a participant in the Budapest Process⁴ for devising a management system for safe and orderly migration.

More recently, in 2018, Pakistan also passed two laws related to undocumented migrants – the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2018 and the Prevention of Smuggling of Migrants Act 2018 – which focus on strengthening the border and law enforcement agencies to curb practices of undocumented migrants while at the same time protecting the rights of victims of human trafficking (GoP, 2018a; 2018b). The enactment of these laws was supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). In addition, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) is also operating an Integrated Border Management System (IBMS) at all FIA checkpoints to link various databases, including that of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to track undocumented migrants (FIA, n.d.).

Trends

Traditionally, Pakistan's export of manpower has largely been in the low-skilled sectors. From 1971 to 2020, 42.3% of labour emigration has been from the unskilled category, 51% has been from the semi-skilled and skilled category, while highly skilled and highly qualified emigration only constitutes 5.7% (BEOE, 2020a; 2020b). More recently, the policy and institutional narrative on emigration from Pakistan has focused on skills development in order to export more skilled labour to earn higher remittances. For this, MOPHRD through BEOE is in continuous liaison with the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission, the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) and the Skill Development Council to impart demand-based trainings and skill certifications that meet international standards (BEOE, 2016). The overall focus on skills development also follows a workforce nationalisation policy

² See <https://www.colomboprocess.org/>.

³ See <https://abudhabidialogue.org.ae>.

⁴ See <https://www.budapestprocess.org/>.

bias being introduced in the Gulf countries, particularly in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has driven large-scale overseas labour layoffs (Essomba, 2017). In response, Pakistan is looking towards new labour markets for which it needs to upgrade skills to meet the labour demands of skilled workers.

Moreover, safeguards and protection of the rights of intending and existing emigrants has also captured policy attention at both pre-departure and post-emigration levels. In the pre-departure phase, the involvement of unlicensed sub-agents and unregistered recruiters is a prime concern, as these individuals exploit intending emigrants with high costs, fraudulent documentation, no guarantee of jobs and, in some cases, even smuggling of labour (ILO, 2016b; Khan, 2020). Such emigrants are particularly vulnerable in host countries, as they are not registered with their home country to receive protection. Additionally, rising cases of xenophobia and prejudice also threaten the safety of emigrants in other countries. The appointment of CWAs was a response to the increased risk of exploitation of labour and the violation of labour rights (ILO, 2016b).

Impacts on emigration

Pakistan's decades-long pro-emigration policy stance is rooted in the objective of reducing domestic unemployment and increasing remittances through formal channels. Between 1971 and 2020, about 11.2 million registered Pakistanis have emigrated from the country, over 99% of whom are male (IOM, 2019; Khan, 2020). Data since 2008 show an upward trend in the number of registered emigrants from Pakistan, with a peak in 2015 when as many as 946,571 people emigrated (BEOE, 2020a). The emigration rate then declined until it rose again in 2019. The decline is associated with the workforce nationalisation measures adopted by UAE and Saudi Arabia, as well as the decrease in oil prices which slowed down the economies of GCC countries and thus reduced demand for labour (ILO, 2020). In 2020, emigration slumped because of global lockdowns to contain the spread of COVID-19.

As a result of the pro-emigration policy and bilateral agreements with the governments of GCC countries, 96% of emigration flows from Pakistan are towards the Gulf countries, while about 1% are towards other Middle Eastern countries (BEOE, 2019). More recently, Pakistan has also been looking towards the markets of Italy, Japan, Poland, Romania and South Korea to formulate recruitment opportunities for Pakistani labour (ILO, 2016). The focus so far has been on encouraging male labour migration, with limited incentives or initiatives directed at increasing female migration.

Although the magnitude of undocumented migrants from Pakistan is small compared to regular labour migrant flows, curbing undocumented migration has gradually risen as a policy concern in Pakistan, especially through EU-funded projects in the country. According to Frontex data, there were 10,015 illegal border crossings by Pakistani migrants into Europe in 2017, and numbers have declined over time. In 2018, there were 4,988 illegal border crossings, in 2019 there were 3,799 and in 2020 this fell again to 2,603. The majority of undocumented migrants are male, aged between 16 and 28

years, and they largely originate from central Punjab. A growing trend is now also being observed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, however (Frontex, 2021).

Impacts on development

Reliance on labour emigration as a means to reduce unemployment and poverty is inherently embedded in the development strategies of Pakistan. Both monetary and social remittances from labour emigrants are considered important contributors to the development of the country in the official discourse. Remittances from overseas Pakistanis constitute the second highest share in Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, after foreign direct investment (FDI). Between 2020 and 2021, Pakistan received record levels of remittances, despite looming fears of a remittance crisis brought about by the global economic slowdown in response to COVID-19. In July and August 2020, remittances were 31% higher than the same period in 2019 (Siddiqui, 2020). To encourage more remittance flows through official channels, Pakistan has been devising strategies to reduce the transaction costs and time for remittances. The PRI was launched in 2009 to achieve this objective.

Key incoherence across policies

Analysis of Pakistan's approach to labour emigration reflects a triple-win perspective: i) supplying labour to destination countries that are labour deprived, ii) reducing domestic unemployment rates and earning remittances through Overseas Pakistanis, and iii) bringing about benefits to migrants themselves and their families as a means to escape poverty (ILO, 2016b). While there is not stark incoherence across policies according to their design, their success is heavily dependent on external factors such as international demand for labour, shifts in foreign policies of destination countries, and regional and global economic growth outlooks, etc.

High costs of migration through sub-agents and recruiters and high transaction costs for remittances impede the development gains that Pakistan could otherwise accrue from labour emigration (ILO, 2016b). Such costs make it difficult for emigrants to remit back early on, and also may expose them to the risk of bonded labour if they are unable to repay their costs. Moreover, the dependence on sub-agents (who are mostly unlicensed) makes it particularly risky for vulnerable intending emigrants, who may fall into fraudulent traps and deceptive employment arrangements.

Complaints and redress mechanisms overlap, and the existence of multiple fora for lodging complaints can be confusing for individuals. While emigrants can reach out to CWAs and the Pakistani embassy in host countries for support, legal aid is not guaranteed under the Emigration Ordinance and Rules (ibid.) and CWAs have little capacity or authority to intervene in disputes. The overall effectiveness of the complaints and redress system can be gauged by the very few convictions secured for labour exploitation, breach of contract and forced labour (ILO, 2016b).

Interaction with development policies

While Pakistan does not have an emigration policy that is recognised formally and officially ratified, a number of other development policies and

strategies promote Pakistan's pro-emigration agenda. Indeed, Pakistan's general policy focus on skills development is geared towards improving its human capital for both domestic and foreign markets.

Pakistan's National Labour Policy was drafted in 2010 and focuses on skills development to meet employer demands (GoP, 2010). However, the policy paper was heavily criticised by analysts at the time as it did not reflect an in-depth understanding of the grassroots situation in Pakistan (RIAA Barker Gillette, 2016). Hence, the policy could not be finalised. Moreover, the lack of transferability of skills and trainings to international standards has been a major setback for Pakistani labour.

In 2009, Pakistan devised its National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) with the aim of bringing nationally imparted qualifications up to international standards. A programme was launched called Skilling Pakistan (ILO, 2020) and the National Skills Strategy 2009–2013 was developed in the same year to focus on enhancing demand-based skills for labour (NAVTEC, 2009). Various attempts have also been made in recent years to develop a labour matchmaking database that includes information on the skills and qualifications of labour-seeking opportunities at home and abroad. More recently, the National Policy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 2018, and the Skills for All Strategy 2018 are also largely geared towards meeting the needs of international labour demand (GoP, 2018c; 2018d).

The long-term development blueprint of Pakistan – entitled Vision 2025 – was launched in 2014 (GoP, 2014). When compared with the objectives of the Pakistani state to promote skilled labour migration, the emphasis of Vision 2025 on reducing brain drain appears to be contradictory at first glance. On the one hand, the state has pledged to enhance the certification and skills of labour to meet both domestic and international labour markets, therefore promoting emigration. On the other hand, however, Vision 2025 promises to provide local opportunities to the Pakistani labour force to decrease brain drain. Experts interviewed for this policy paper opined that both objectives can be achieved, yet patterns of emigration by skill level has largely remained the same with low-skilled workers dominating the proportion of emigrants. Moreover, Vision 2025 puts great emphasis on the importance of remittances and the need for increased remittance flows through official channels – thus reflecting Pakistan's long-term outlook of dependence on returns from emigrated labour.

Diaspora

Main policies

Pakistan's engagement strategies with its 9.1 million diaspora (Amjad, 2017) are rooted in its ambitions to acquire nationally oriented benefits in a transnational space (Qaisrani, 2020).

The official identity given to diaspora members is **Overseas Pakistanis**, which includes all person of Pakistani origin, regardless of their immigration status in the host country. More recently, the state discourse has also used

Non-resident Pakistanis as an identifier for the Pakistani diaspora and labour migrants (MOPHRD, n.d.). There are two types of identification documents that are offered to Overseas Pakistanis as a means towards symbolic nation-building: i) the National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP) for emigrants and holders of dual citizenship holders, and ii) the Pakistan Origin Card (POC) for ‘foreigners of Pakistani origins’ (NADRA, n.d.). Launched in 2002, these identification documents offer specific rights to diaspora members in relation to visa-free entry, long-term stay in Pakistan, and the right to open bank accounts and to invest in the country. However, these rights have certain restrictions compared to those offered to resident citizens of Pakistan, thereby differentiating between the benefits that the state offers to those outside of its territorial boundaries.

On the institutional front, MOPHRD is responsible for policymaking and dealing with all matters related to the diaspora. The MOPHRD (n.d.) website highlights the incumbent Prime Minister’s statement regarding Overseas Pakistanis as ‘... a most valuable asset for Pakistan as they have the brains, commitment and capital to help in [the] country’s development’. Within the jurisdiction of MOPHRD, the OPF is the key governmental body responsible for ensuring the welfare of Overseas Pakistanis. It also liaises with diaspora members to streamline their investment, remittances and skills exchange programmes. Other departments and institutions that also engage with the diaspora include: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NADRA and Pakistani Missions Abroad.

Pakistan does not have a specific diaspora engagement policy in place; however, several attempts have been made to formalise an official policy. In 2013, for example, a Pakistani Diaspora Policy Paper was drafted (GoP, 2013), but changes in political priorities meant that this policy was not ratified. Draft versions of the Emigration Policy and the National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis also promote the importance of engaging with the diaspora through concerted policy efforts (Silk Routes Facility, 2020).

Regardless of the lack of a ratified policy, Pakistan has continued to forge a relationship with its diaspora members. This has been particularly the case with those settled in developed countries, with ambitions of attracting investment, the transfer of skills and political influence. Initiatives have been set up such as Naya Pakistan Calling 2019, Roshan Digital Account and the Foreign Faculty Programme of the Higher Education Commission, while highly qualified professionals have been engaged in expert task forces related to policymaking, etc.

Trends

The Government of Pakistan has been making efforts to organise the Pakistani diaspora as a strategic partner in development. In the official discourse, Overseas Pakistanis are branded as ‘resources’ and ‘partners in development’ for attaining national goals (Amjad, 2017). The Pakistani Diaspora Policy Paper was drafted in 2013 with the objective of ‘examin(ing) how the diaspora can be fashioned, moulded and influenced to the advantage of the nation as a whole’ (GoP, 2013: 3). The paper is clear in its aim of ‘using’ the diaspora for national goals. This narrative continues in the

National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis (Silk Routes Facility, 2020), which contains a segment on diaspora engagement with the focus on achieving national development goals.

A number of policy initiatives have been taken at the state level to attract financial and human capital investment from the Pakistani diaspora. Investment instruments such as the Pakistan Banao Certificate (monetary bonds) and, more recently, the Roshan Digital Accounts for remote banking opportunities in Pakistan are some modes that are being employed to direct diaspora members' financial contributions.

In an attempt to attract knowledge transfer and create 'brain circulation' (Sajjad, 2011), Pakistan has also developed various initiatives to bring back qualified diaspora members to contribute to national human development. These initiatives include programmes such as the National Talent Pool and Naya Pakistan Calling, which focus on creating databases of highly qualified professionals of Pakistani origin who can be mobilised to return for national services and can be engaged in national decision-making processes (OPF, n.d.). The success of such programmes is questionable, however, as data between November 2018 and April 2019 show that only 650 people registered on the website (Express Tribune, 2019). There is no publicly available information on whether the registered individuals were later engaged by the government for any specific project.

Trends in Pakistan's recent history also show political motivations for diaspora engagement, with attempts to enhance people-to-people engagement to improve Pakistan's image, particularly in the west (Kugelman, 2012). For this, the state considers the 'socio-spatial' position of diaspora members in order to engage with them accordingly. For instance, the government has strengthened its efforts to forge cordial associations with high-profile diaspora members in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) who occupy important positions in state offices (Akhtar, 2017; Pakistan High Commission UK, 2016). Besides such 'nation-branding', engagement with politically active diaspora members is also designed for lobbying purposes. The Pakistan High Commission in the UK has been actively involved in promoting Pakistan's stance on Kashmir through diaspora members who are part of the British Parliament (Pakistan High Commission UK, 2016).

A renewed sense of commitment among the diaspora to contribute to their homeland has also been felt in recent years. This can be attributed largely to the Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf (PTI)'s political mobilisation of youth in the run up to the general elections of 2013 and 2018 through heavy social media campaigning. The PTI's win in 2018 is known to have instilled optimism among diaspora members to not only consider investment, but also return to Pakistan (Aziz, 2018).

Impacts on development

The state of Pakistan considers diaspora members as strategic development partners. The last official long-term development plan for Pakistan, Vision 2025, counts on diaspora members to achieve the growth and development objectives set out in the plan (GoP, 2014). Going a step further, Vision 2025

aims to involve the diaspora in the ‘management and governance’ of the country. This is reflected in practical terms in the incumbent government inviting diaspora members to be part of the government through high-profile posts created specifically for them and by offering them ministerial powers. The most relevant example is that of the Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for MOPHRD, who holds dual nationality for the UK and Pakistan and who was a resident of the UK before returning to Pakistan to assume his role within the government.

Besides a steady flow of remittances, however, contributions by Overseas Pakistanis in investment, transfer of skills and technology, and lobbying has been ad hoc, at best. Their contributions to development can be recognised at particular times of national emergency, when their philanthropic contributions are significant for rehabilitation and reconstruction. For instance, most recently, the Prime Minister created the COVID Relief Fund, primarily appealing to the local population and the diaspora to contribute towards the relief of Pakistani people. Of the total PKR 4.84 billion collected through the fund, PKR 1.06 billion came from the Overseas Pakistanis (Dawn, 2020a). Another example is that of the Association of Physicians of Pakistani Descent of North American (APPNA), who contributed substantially to the COVID-19 relief efforts through funds, food drives and medical instruments (e.g. oxygen cylinders, personal protective equipment, etc.), but who also regularly hold free medical camps in underprivileged areas of Pakistan (APPNA, n.d.).

Key incoherence across policies

There are two examples of incoherence across policies related to the diaspora. One is the state’s incoherent discourse on highly qualified diaspora members in referring to their emigration as brain drain, but at the same time relying on them for investment, remittances, skills transfer and lobbying due to their strategic position in the west. This is also reflected in the discourse on emigration where the state wants more skilled people to emigrate to earn higher remittances, while also looking upon brain drain as a development issue to tackle by enhancing the local development outlook. While in principle this approach is not necessarily incoherent – as both domestic employment and inflows of cash and knowledge eventually help the domestic economy – from an implementation perspective it requires the state to decide if the skills development programmes it introduces are designed to respond to the needs of the domestic labour market or to international labour demand.

Another incoherence is the degree of rights awarded to Overseas Pakistanis in the political system of the country, and how these rules are interpreted to suit the needs of the government. For instance, as per the Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951, Overseas Pakistanis with dual nationality are barred from contesting in elections, assuming high official posts and from joining the military (GoP, 1951). However, there have been several instances where dual citizens have assumed high official posts, including de facto ministerial positions, and even the position of the Prime Minister during one of the military regimes (Zaidi, 2017).

Interaction with development policies

As mentioned above, Pakistan's long-term development plan, Vision 2025, has a short section that focuses on diaspora engagement for national development and their involvement in the governance system of Pakistan (GoP, 2014). This reflects the state's conscious effort to actively engage the diaspora for their financial as well as technical contributions to the country.

In the education sector (and specifically in higher education), qualified academics among the diaspora are often invited as professors in Pakistani universities. While in 2019, Pakistan launched the Pakistan Diaspora Health Initiative to provide a forum for healthcare professionals among the diaspora to share their expertise and knowledge with the Pakistani healthcare community (The News, 2019). The initiative is a partnership between the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and MOPHRD. Moreover, the health sector of Pakistan regularly engages with self-organised diaspora associations in health, such as APPNA and the Association of Pakistani Physicians and Surgeons UK (APPS).

Transit migration

While transit migration is not a key policy concern for Pakistan, a marginal number of people do use Pakistan as a transit state before embarking on their journey elsewhere. This is mostly relevant in terms of irregular migration or people smuggling, with people from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Afghanistan using the Pakistan–Iran–Turkey route to reach the shores of Greece. In certain cases, these transit migrants may have some legal documentation to enter Pakistan and may then use the irregular route to reach other destinations. More information on these migrants from Myanmar, Bangladesh and Afghanistan is given in a later section of this paper, on Immigration.

Return migration

Main policies

In Pakistan, return migration has received adequate policy attention until recent times. While there are a variety of reasons for return migration of Overseas Pakistanis, emerging policy discourse largely focuses on two aspects: i) reintegration of returning labour migrants, particularly through an economic aspect; and ii) temporary return of high-profile diaspora members to engage in the development process (particularly in the education sector). The latter is, however, largely on an ad hoc basis rather than through proper policy planning. An emerging stream of focus is the return of detained, undocumented emigrants or those who have overstayed their visas in destination countries. It is estimated that about 11,000 Pakistanis are imprisoned abroad, of which more than 5,000 are held in GCC countries (Dawn, 2019).

Matters concerning return migrants largely fall under the ambit of OPF; however, other departments are also involved when countries engage in

bilateral or multilateral agreements, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and MOPHRD. Currently, OPF is in the process of establishing a ‘one stop shop’ for return migrants through a Facilitation and Reintegration Centre for Pakistani migrant workers with support from Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, the German Agency for International Cooperation). But data on return migrants are scattered between different agencies, and therefore no formal estimate exists on the number of returnees (ICMPD, 2020; Shah et al., 2020). Up until a recent initiative by MOPHRD to develop a data portal for registration of returnees in a post-COVID-19 scenario, no effort has been made to document information on returnees.

Labour market reintegration initiatives largely revolve around employment matching in Pakistan or re-employment abroad. An underlying assumption emerging in the official narrative around return migrants is how to utilise these individuals for national development through their entrepreneurship. The focus is therefore on providing returnees with support to establish their own businesses using their savings and offering low credit loans and vocational training. However, many returning migrants are not in a position to initiate their own enterprises as the high cost of living abroad, often in menial jobs, does not allow them the chance to save. Additionally, most returnees worked as employees in host countries, rather entrepreneurs, and therefore they may have limited inclination towards setting up a business.

To attract highly qualified members of the diaspora to return and contribute to national development, the policy narrative invokes their ‘duty’ to their homeland and offers financial incentives (ICMPD, 2020). Conversely, policy dialogues also highlight the difficulties experienced by returning diaspora members (whether permanently or temporarily) in terms of conducting financial transactions or lodging complaints. Thus, discussions on return migrants are also concerned with ensuring ease of doing business and investment in Pakistan (Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, 2013). Policy initiatives such as Naya Pakistan Calling and the National Talent Pool, both mentioned earlier, are also tools to engage with highly qualified Overseas Pakistanis, in pursuit of the human development aspects of national goals.

Tied to return migration policymaking is the theme of repatriation of undocumented Pakistani migrants. Pakistan has been a member of the EU-funded Budapest Process on managing and counteracting undocumented migration since 2010. It also recently signed an agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020 to accept the undocumented migrants who are deported from their borders (Dawn, 2020b).

Trends

Overseas Pakistanis return for a variety of reasons. This may include voluntary return on completion of tenure or for personal or family reasons (lifestyle-related return), job-market shrinkage and deportation, etc. (OPF, 2017).

Overseas Pakistanis who travel as labour migrants to the Middle East eventually have to return to Pakistan as these countries do not offer naturalisation and permanent settlement mechanisms for overseas workers.

Their contracts are often for two to three years and, unless these migrants find other work opportunities while in the host country, they have to return to Pakistan at the end of their contract. Circular migration is also quite common, when migrants find new opportunities abroad on their return to Pakistan and therefore migrate again (World Bank, 2019).

The focus on reintegration of return migrants picked up pace as the labour market in the Middle East started shrinking. This was particularly true in Saudi Arabia, where even before COVID-19 a nationalisation policy for the labour market reduced opportunities for foreign workers. The economic slowdown brought about by COVID-19 may further decrease the employment space for foreign workers in the Middle East.

At the same time, policy changes that impact labour demand in other parts of the world have also made the Pakistani authorities concerned for the economic and social reintegration of labour migrants (OPF, 2017). For instance, South Korea introduced their Employment Permit System, which only allows for temporary migration and thus encourages high rates of returnees.

On the other hand, Overseas Pakistanis who have permanent legal status in countries that allow naturalisation often return to Pakistan for personal reasons. Lifestyle migration is a popular choice for diaspora members who are settled in North America, the UK and mainland Europe as a form of cultural immersion for their families. These returnees often do not settle in Pakistan permanently and eventually return to the countries where they are naturalised. Some may even adopt a lifestyle of splitting their time between Pakistan and their country of residence, sometimes influenced by the socio-political environment in host countries (Bolognani and Erdal, 2017). Pakistan's policy initiatives for these temporary return migrants are often financially driven, offering them opportunities to open bank accounts and invest in the country.

Impacts on return migration

The policy focus on reintegration has had limited impact on returnees. One of the main limiting factors is the lack of a proper database of returnees and of the skillsets they possess. In addition, while the policy narrative tends to focus on reintegration, no comprehensive plan exists to offer special incentives or facilities for returned migrants. Consequently, most returnees end up re-migrating in search of new economic prospects. Diaspora members who are invited to participate in the development process of Pakistan through official appointments often return to their host countries on completion of a contract or they exhibit circular migration trends rather than permanently returning to Pakistan.

Impacts on development

Returning labour migrants bring with them skills and savings to invest in Pakistan, and upward social and economic mobility has been observed among the families of return migrants. Evidence shows that many returning migrants invest in small businesses or extend existing family enterprises,

while their donations to further religious causes are also noteworthy (Akhtar, 2018).

The contributions to development made by qualified emigrants and diaspora members are more prominent. For instance, APPNA often hosts free medical camps in remote areas of Pakistan, while professors from international universities often return to teach or conduct research in Pakistani universities either permanently or temporarily. Among many others, one prominent example is that of Professor Abdus Salam, who returned to Pakistan after his education and career in the UK and served as the Chief Scientific Officer during the then government. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1979 for his contribution to the subject and spearheaded the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in Pakistan (Dawn, 2018).

As shared by experts interviewed for this review, many of the students who go abroad to study also return back to Pakistan to find employment and to contribute actively to Pakistan's development process with their internationally certified skills. Recently, the culture of social entrepreneurship has been made popular by Pakistani students returning from abroad. In particular, digital educational resources developed by returning Pakistani students have proved vital in developing Pakistan's official remote education response during COVID-19.

Key incoherence across policies

Notable incoherence emerges around the narrative on the return of highly qualified diaspora members. On the one hand, these individuals are considered to be 'strategic assets' because of their socio-spatial position in other countries and the stream of benefits they can accrue for Pakistan because of their particular position in society. On the other hand, in public addresses state officials urge these people to come back to the country to contribute more actively to the development process. However, some experts suggested that these two, apparently opposing, objectives may still be achieved through a balanced policy response.

Reintegration of returning labour migrants needs further attention too and to be prioritised through a proper action plan. When labour emigrants return, the state does not offer them any benefits, such as retirement plans or social welfare. However, an effort is underway currently to amend the Employees Old Age Benefit Act 1976 to include Overseas Pakistanis within its scope.

Interaction with development policies

Return migrants often play an active role in the health and education sector through their time and skill investments. Moreover, prominent experts in development fields are actively consulted during policymaking processes. Many of the incumbent Prime Minister's Special Advisors have spent years of their lives abroad, having international careers. These advisors hold ministerial powers and spearhead policies in their respective sectors while in position. One recent example is that of the former Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Health, who led the country's health response to COVID-19

since outbreak to September 2020. The current Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue has also had a prominent academic career, teaching in leading American universities before returning to Pakistan to join politics.

Immigration

Main policies

There are four main pieces of legislation that pertain to immigration to Pakistan (GoP, 1926; 1946; 1951; 1952):

1. The Naturalisation Act of 1926
2. The Foreigners Act of 1946
3. The Pakistan Citizenship Act of 1951
4. The Pakistan Citizenship Rules of 1952.

As per the Citizenship Act of 1951, four categories of people are eligible for acquiring Pakistani citizenship: i) foreign women married to Pakistani nationals; ii) Commonwealth citizens who transfer PKR 5 million worth of foreign exchange; iii) persons holding a naturalisation certificate under the Naturalisation Act of 1926; and iv) minors of Pakistani citizens (below 21 years of age). Citizenship is also awarded on the basis of birth and descent (children born to Pakistani parents abroad) (GoP, 1951).

However, despite these legislative provisions, refugees – who comprise about 2 million Afghan refugees (registered and unregistered) plus asylum seekers from other countries such as Myanmar and Somalia etc. – are not eligible to attain citizenship in Pakistan. Pakistan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1954 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (UN, 1951; 1954; 1961). Both the Citizenship Act of 1951 and the Citizenship Rules of 1952 exclude refugees and stateless persons from attaining a Pakistani identity. Even the right of citizenship by birth as ascribed in the Citizenship Act of 1951 does not apply to refugees. This ineligibility for citizenship, even if they have spent most of their lives in the country, constrains refugees' access to formal employment and services.

However, Pakistan is part of a Tripartite Agreement signed in 2007 between the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which was renewed in 2016 (UNHCR, 2018).

The Foreigners Act of 1946 guides the entry and stay of non-Pakistani nationals in the country (GoP, 1946). Article 14 D of this Act, introduced through an amendment in 2000, allows for the registration of undocumented immigrants in the country through a specially designed institution called the National Aliens Registration Authority (NARA). In 2015, NARA was merged with NADRA.

Matters related to immigration fall under the mandate of the Ministry of Interior under the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports, while registration of immigrants falls under the ambit of NADRA. For Afghan

refugees in particular, the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) hosts the office of the Chief Commissioner of Afghan Refugees, which coordinates with international humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR for the welfare and management of refugees in Pakistan. All provinces have their own Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees (CAR) for coordination purposes.

Trends

Historically, due to its porous borders on both its eastern and western sides, Pakistan has received many immigrants over the years, particularly from India, Bangladesh and Myanmar from the east and from Afghanistan and Uzbekistan from the west. In the last few decades, however, the eastern border with India has been fenced, which has limited population flows to a large extent, and the securitisation of the western border has also reduced cross-border movements.

The immigration policy landscape has deep relevance in terms of migrants and refugees mainly from conflict-ridden countries, particularly Afghanistan (IOM, 2019). Pakistan has the fifth largest refugee population in the world based on registered Afghan refugees (IOM, 2018). As of 2020, about 1.4 million Afghans hold Proof of Registration (PoR) cards in Pakistan. Added to this the number of unregistered Afghan refugees makes Pakistan the country with the third largest refugee population globally (IOM, 2019). However, registration services such as PoRs for Afghans are not available for refugees from other countries such as Bangladesh and Myanmar etc. (Shah et al., 2020).

The inflow of Afghan refugees towards Pakistan started in 1979 during the Soviet War. This movement of people fleeing from Afghanistan was helped by historic social networks established between Afghans and those residing in Pakistan's western border areas. Indeed, the history of migratory flows between Afghanistan and Pakistan dates back to long before the establishment of borders between the two countries. Especially among the areas around the 1,500-km long border, social and economic networks between the people are strong and there is a regular inflow of Afghan nationals, albeit temporary in most cases (Yousef, 2013). This first wave of refugees was also supported by the Government of Pakistan and the international humanitarian community. In the 1990s, another wave of Afghan refugees was observed as a result of the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Since the turn of the century, more focus has been placed on the repatriation and return of Afghan nationals, about 60% of whom have spent more than 30 years in Pakistan without attaining a Pakistani identity (IOM, 2019). Pakistan has actively promoted the return of Afghan refugees through the Voluntary Repatriation Programme as part of the Tripartite Agreement with the UNHCR and the Afghan government. This agreement was initially made in 2003, but later reaffirmed in 2019. However, the repatriation scheme has been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic (APRRN, 2020).

Impacts on immigration

Although Pakistan does not share statistics on immigration publicly, permanent ‘immigration’ from Afghanistan to Pakistan can be related to the inflow of 3 million Afghan refugees during the Afghan–Soviet War in the 1980s. These refugees were expected to return to Afghanistan after the war; however, constant volatility in the security situation and then later the American occupation in Afghanistan not only led to their stay, but to the displacement of about half a million additional Afghans who sought refuge in Pakistan (IOM, 2019). Approximately 58% of these Afghan refugees reside in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 23% in Baluchistan, 12% in Punjab, 5% in Sindh and 2% in Islamabad (ibid.).

In addition, estimates from 2017 show the presence of about 247 Somalian refugees, 63 Yemeni, 48 Iranian and 129 refugees from other countries (IOM, 2019). Other immigrants include people from Bangladesh, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Sri Lanka, Palestine and Syria. Pakistan has also experienced an influx of Rohingya Muslims over the years, who have been declared stateless in Myanmar. According to some unofficial estimates, there are about 400,000 Rohingya Muslims currently residing in Karachi (Latif, 2020). These stateless persons, who travel through Bangladesh and India, have settled largely in Karachi, but official estimates on their number are not disclosed. Thousands of Uyghur Muslims have also migrated to Gilgit-Baltistan following their cultural and religious persecution in Xinjiang, China (Jaffrey, 2015).

More recently, there has been a trend in the arrival of Chinese workers and businesspeople to Pakistan after extensive Chinese investment in Pakistan through the Belt and Road Initiative. While these workers are engaged in infrastructure projects, many Chinese citizens who have come to Pakistan have opened restaurants, salons and language centres in Islamabad, while many others are also exploring trade opportunities (Express Tribune, 2017). About 71,000 Chinese people came to Pakistan in 2016, of which 27,596 were reportedly given visa extensions to stay in the country for longer (ibid.).

Impacts on development

Generally, the contributions made by immigrants and refugees are not considered significant in Pakistan. A study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2018) found that about 38% of employed Afghan refugees were working as non-agricultural day labourers 17% were running small businesses, 14% were working as skilled labour, 8% as taxi/rickshaw drivers and 7% as agricultural day labours at that time. The main skillsets possessed by male Afghan refugees are for carpet weaving, driving and the repair of solar, wind and UPS systems, while the main skillsets possessed by female Afghan refugees are as beauticians and for handicraft, fashion design and tailoring (UNHCR, 2019). Their contributions to development are not widely recognised and their participation in the labour market is politicised, with fears that immigrants and refugees take jobs away from Pakistani people. Moreover, many Afghan refugees have also been stigmatised as they are seen as a threat in the midst of rising security concerns.

The inflow of Chinese nationals is generally perceived to be contributing positively to the development of Pakistan as investments by Chinese entrepreneurs add to the FDI in the country and boost local employment in Chinese enterprises set up in Pakistan (Express Tribune, 2017).

Key incoherence across policies

The main incoherence with regards to immigration relates to legislative structure, and in particular Pakistan's citizenship regime according to which the children born to refugees and asylum seekers are ineligible to attain Pakistani citizenship. This is despite the fact that the Citizenship Act of 1946 allows attainment of Pakistani citizenship through birth. Lack of a national identity disqualifies many eligible Afghan refugees from attaining formal employment opportunities in the public and private sector in Pakistan (UNHCR, 2018). Although the incumbent Prime Minister has pledged to provide citizenship to Afghan refugees born in Pakistan, there have been no tangible updates on the matter (Kaifee, 2020).

The management of Afghan refugees dominates the policy narrative, while there is relative silence on the case of refugees from other countries. As per the UNHCR, all other refugees are declared to be 'illegal aliens' in Pakistan and are thus officially barred from attaining an education and healthcare, and from participating in economic activities (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 1999). However, a significant number of these 'illegal refugees' (especially unregistered Afghan refugees) have been able to acquire Pakistani identity documents through illicit means and thus access public services.

Interaction with development policies

From an FDI point of view, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under the Belt and Road Initiative can be perceived as having an effect on immigration trends into Pakistan, particularly through the investment of Chinese citizens capitalising on business opportunities in Pakistan.

Internal migration

Main policies

Currently, internal migration within Pakistan is not governed by a specific policy, hence, such movement is often referred to as rather 'unplanned'. However, the non-existence of a formal policy may itself be deemed as a 'policy of having no policy'.

Particularly when considered in terms of rising urbanisation, the lack of a formal policy on internal migration absolves the state from having to provide public amenities to match the needs of the increasing population, while creating space for the private sector to commodify basic utilities (Gazdar, n.d.). Consequently, planning has been replaced by 'private projects' (Hasan, 2016). A prime example is Karachi, which attracted migrants from across the country in the 1960s when Pakistan started focusing on industrialisation. Institutional and political mediation was used to guide who

would be encouraged to come to Karachi, from where, and for what kind of jobs. As expected, the process became too political and, combined with a divergence from the classical industrialisation route, internal migration planning never took place again.

At present, the general governance narrative regarding internal migration is tilted towards ‘curbing’ rural-to-urban movement of people by focusing on rural development and disincentivising migration to big cities. Large urban centres are perceived to be over-crowded and inadequately equipped to offer basic services to their burgeoning populations. There is an observed rise in the creation of urban slums, as well as rising urban poverty despite positive empirical evidence between urban growth and economic development (UNDP, 2019). Therefore, the provincial and local governments are geared towards improving infrastructure in rural areas and creating employment opportunities in intermediate cities and rural areas to discourage migration towards cities (this trend is further explained in a later subsection on Interaction with development policies).

Moreover, the government exercises certain kinds of unstated policy instruments to regulate and appropriate people in different locations and jobs. For instance, through the use of domiciles and identity documents, people are made eligible or ineligible for certain government jobs: some provincial vacancies are only available to legal residents of the province, or district, which are based on domicile documents.

Trends

Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, there has been a general rise in the urbanisation rate, which is attributed to not only natural population growth, but also to the increasing trend of rural-to-urban migration. Pakistan has the highest urbanisation rate in South Asia, and it is expected that almost half of the population will be living in urban areas by 2025 (ibid.).

A gendered analysis reveals that women dominate the patterns of internal migration, but a closer examination shows that these movements – both rural to rural and rural to urban – are largely undertaken for family unification purposes such as marriage. In contrast, migration resulting from other push and pull factors such as for economic pursuits, educational purposes, aspirations of city life and climate-related migration (including due to environmental factors) are largely undertaken by young men (Salik et al., 2016).

A 2018 study conducted in semi-arid rural regions of Pakistan shows that the majority of rural migrants move towards the district capitals based on the proximity to their hometowns. The second largest group move towards the urban metropolis of Karachi in Sindh (Ishfaq et al., 2017). Since Karachi is the industrial and business capital of the country, it attracts huge inflows of people every year who are searching for employment opportunities. An earlier study by Mahmud et al. (2010) also validates the fact that internal migration flows in Pakistan are largely directed towards provincial centres.

Displacement is frequently observed in different parts of the country, pushed by natural and humanitarian crises. For instance, in 2019 alone, 15,000 new disaster-related internally displaced persons (IDPs) were

recorded in Pakistan by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, with the total number of IDPs resulting from conflict reaching 106,000 (IDMC, 2019). In the 2008–2019 period, the number of conflict-led IDPs peaked in 2014 as a result of a military operation against terrorism in Northern Waziristan, before declining in subsequent years. Disaster-related IDPs reached a peak in 2010 because of massive monsoon floods that affected 20 million people, leaving around 11 million homeless (ibid.).

Impacts on internal migration

Despite the lack of a formal policy on internal migration, there is still a rising trend among the population to move towards big cities. It is perceived that as long as there are inequalities in services and economic opportunities between rural and urban areas, a steady flow of population movement will be observed from rural areas to urban centres. Hasan (2016) predicts that migration to Karachi – especially of the landless rural population from southern Punjab and interior Sindh – will continue in the coming decades because of the shifts in rural areas from agricultural to cash economies and the changes in cropping and marketing systems.

Impacts on development

Cities continue to be the engine of growth in Pakistan, contributing 55% of gross domestic product (GDP) (UNDP, 2019). As stated earlier, currently there is no integrated model of planned internal migration to support national development. In earlier years, when there was a focus on industrialisation, rural-to-urban migration was considered within the planning process. However, internal migration planning has not received due attention in the face of increased contributions from the services sector, and a rise in the commodification of basic utilities such as water, electricity, transport and health etc. by the private sector. High rents in cities have made housing inaccessible for many low- and lower-middle-income groups, giving rise to an increase in informal settlements. Spatial expansion of cities has resulted in blurred boundaries between urban and rural areas, and has led to a rising number of peri-urban localities. More recently, mega infrastructure projects, such as housing schemes, malls and mass transit lines, have uprooted and displaced the poor and lower-middle class who were already living in a precarious state.

Key incoherence across policies

Reliable statistical evidence is limited on internal migration within Pakistan. While a population census is a great tool for measuring population movements across administrative boundaries, it is not regularly conducted in Pakistan. Even after the 2017 population census was conducted by the Government of Pakistan (GoP, 2017), data on migration trends were not shared publicly because it was expected that the results would display a change in the ethnic composition of various provinces (or provincial capitals), and that they could disturb electoral constituencies and may lead to ethnic and linguistic conflict.

Moreover, while the policy discourse focuses on reducing the incentives to migrate to cities by equalising the opportunities available in both urban and

rural areas and by providing affordable housing in cities to reduce the spread of urban slums, new housing schemes designed to attract upper-middle and high-income households are being developed at a fast pace. These housing schemes, along with major development projects, often take over agricultural lands and therefore further dwindle agricultural prospects, which form the backbone of the rural economy (Hassan, 2018). Recently, the government devised a new housing policy – the National Affordable Housing Policy – directed towards facilitating the poor in rural, urban and peri-urban areas (Rizvi, 2018). The policy offers fiscal and regulatory incentives for developers of low-income housing. However, implementation has so far fallen short of the promises made in the policy for the provision of affordable 10-lac houses in the first year since the government came to power in 2018.

Interaction with development policies

Internal migration patterns are influenced by development policies on areas such as health, education and industry. The Government of Pakistan offers free healthcare across all parts of the country and provides free education up to middle school level (for children between the ages of 5 and 16 years, up to grade 10) (Hunter, 2020). Both healthcare and education are provincial matters under the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan. However, the quality of service varies across the country, with standards falling especially in rural areas with millions deprived of access to facilities.

For instance, estimates show that the public healthcare system only caters to 30% of the population and that 70% seek private healthcare services (Kumar and Bano, 2017). Similarly, the quality of education provided at rural public schools is far from satisfactory. Many school buildings are deemed ‘ghost schools’ in rural Pakistan, particularly in conflict zones, meaning that they exist on paper but are not operational (Saeed, 2018). Consequently, to access a higher quality of social services, rural households who can afford to migrate towards cities in search of better services.

Provincial governments are focused on improving rural infrastructure to discourage rural-to-urban migration. One key consideration in Pakistan’s development plans is to create industrial setups in rural areas to generate rural employment. However, most of these plans have yet to be completed or implemented and thus their impact cannot be quantified.

Moreover, the National Climate Change Policy (GoP, 2012) and the Framework for Implementation of National Climate Change Policy (GoP, 2013) categorically include curbing rural-to-urban migration as part of their objectives. This reflects the federal government’s outlook towards internal migration.

Externalisation of EU migration policies

Main policies

Pakistan became a participant of the Budapest Process on migration under its expansion for the Silk Routes Project on Migration Management in 2013.

The ICMPD, which serves as the Secretariat for the Budapest Process, operates within Pakistan in close collaboration with various government departments. ICMPD's main partners in Pakistan are the MOPHRD and the FIA under the Ministry of Interior.

The ICMPD serves as the key coordinating body for the facilitation of dialogue between sending countries (Pakistan) and receiving countries in the EU for devising effective migration management policies. Under this umbrella, it has been operating in close collaboration with MOPHRD to develop a migration policy for Pakistan, and with the FIA to improve Pakistan's border management practices to discourage irregular emigration from Pakistan. The mandate of its service in Pakistan includes capacity-building, policy development and research.

Moreover, the ICMPD's partnership with the OPF reflects the EU's priority of developing a readmission and reintegration mechanism for returning Overseas Pakistanis. EU funding has been utilised to develop a Facilitation and Reintegration Centre at the OPF, and while discussions about a specific reintegration policy are on the table, there has not been any concrete development in this area as of yet.

The EU has funded various projects with other UN agencies for migration management. The International Labour Organization (ILO) works closely on EU-funded projects to govern labour migration from Pakistan. One such project is the South Asia Labour Migration Management Project that operated between 2013 and 2016 (ILO, 2013), and the follow-on REFRAME project that has been operational since 2016. The REFRAME project, or the Global Action to Improve the Recruitment Framework of Labour Migration, aims to 'improve migration outcomes for migrant workers, as well as for countries of origin and destination' (ILO, 2017). Both of these projects claim to focus on protecting the rights of migrant workers to promote safe migration, building the government's capacity to protect their employment and recruitment services, and discouraging irregular migration, human trafficking and migration smuggling.

The EU also funds the IOM for migration management, specifically focusing on return and readmission of irregular migrants who are deported from Europe. For this, the IOM collaborates with several government authorities including the Ministry of Interior, NADRA, the FIA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Immigration and Passport Office, etc.

Trends

EU interventions in Pakistan are rooted in two externally oriented policy goals, more recently articulated in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum (EC, 2020a). These goals are: i) strengthened partnerships in countries of origin; and ii) stricter and more robust border management. These external policy outlooks are matched with firmer internal policies related to responsibility sharing and resource distribution (Kirişci et al., 2020).

Initially, before adopting an external outlook to migration management, the priority of the EU was to establish repatriation and return agreements with sending countries, including Pakistan, so that governments accepted the undocumented migrants who were to be deported from EU borders.

However, the EU faced resistance from countries of origin on an approach solely focused on return. Specifically, in 2015, the Return and Readmission Agreement in place with the EU was abrogated by the Government of Pakistan when a number of Afghan deportees, carrying Pakistani identification documents, were sent to Pakistan. As a result, the EU decided to redirect its approach towards building the capacities of the national government to control irregular migration from its borders. In order to do this, EU funding in Pakistan has been used to carry out awareness campaigns regarding the perils of irregular routes of migration and to facilitate migration through regulated routes (that are mainly aimed towards the Gulf, instead of towards Europe). Two Migration Resource Centres were established in Lahore and Islamabad in partnership with MOPHRD and the Labour Department in Punjab as information centres for prospective migrants, with plans for expansion to other cities. At the borders, the government employs the Integrated Border Management concept based on capacity and technology sharing initiatives introduced by the EU, which allows for increased regulation of those crossing the borders using national registries and computerised population databases.

It is likely that, in the future, the EU could extend its Talent Partnership approach towards Pakistan in an attempt to create new safe and legal pathways for the emigration of skilled labour and professional workers to meet the demands of EU economies. This direction is assessed from the New Pact on Migration and Asylum; however, how these Talent Partnerships will be implemented remains to be seen (Dempster and Clemens, 2020).

Impacts on immigration, emigration, return migration and transit migration

The impact of EU funding on actual emigration trends may not be significant yet. The ICMPD (2019) claims to have supported about 150,000 outgoing and prospective migrants between 2016 and 2019. However, more prominent impacts may be observed in terms of policy development and capacity-building of border management forces. The latest version of the National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis, led by the ICMPD, is currently awaiting approval. Impacts on emigration and return migration may be evident once the policy has been ratified by the government, although one government official was of the view that the policy may not drastically influence the trends already in place.

The impact of the Facilitation and Reintegration Centre at the OPF is also hard to measure in tangible terms. While a job portal has been developed for returnees to match their skills to employment vacancies, data are not available on whether these matches have led to actual job placements.

With regard to return migration and readmission, recent data show that approximately 19,480 Pakistanis in Europe received an order to return in 2020, of which 1,969 people returned effectively. Moreover, as of September 2020, as many as 12,500 first-time asylum seekers from Pakistan were given negative decisions.

Impacts on development

Currently it is difficult to gauge the direct impact of the EU's externalisation policies on development in Pakistan. However, it has been speculated that irregular migration trends may decrease over time, due to the EU's involvement in strengthening the policy landscape related to migration and its focus on capacity-building of border management agencies, combined with investment in rural development for job creation and skills enhancement. At the same time, considering that irregular migration trends are largely from districts that are comparatively better off (Gujrat, Mirpur, Sialkot, Mandibahuddin) with better economic opportunities than many other districts across Pakistan, such livelihood-oriented strategies may not inhibit the culture of migration. Managing irregular migration does not merely depend on creating restrictions and tighter security, rather it should also be coupled with increased opportunities for safe and legal routes for migration, which is currently lacking for aspiring migrants with European destinations in mind.

Key incoherence across policies

Although the bulk of migrant outflows from Pakistan are towards the Middle East – largely through regular channels – the majority of the foreign-funded migration management projects run by the ICMPD, IOM and other UN agencies are concerned with irregular migrants, potentially going to Europe.

The main point of incoherence is that while EU interventions in Pakistan aim to control irregular migration and to convince the Pakistani authorities to accept deported, undocumented migrants from EU borders, it has not taken into account the 'culture' of migration that exists in certain areas in Pakistan. Therefore, to ensure that migration takes place through 'safe and legal routes', such routes need to be increased and made more accessible to potential migrants. Moreover, part of the EU's interventions in Pakistan should also include initiating bilateral agreements with EU countries for labour export. Specifying labour skills would help Pakistan to train its labour according to need and it would help the respective EU countries to meet their labour shortages in a particular sector.

Moreover, the EU's interventions regarding safe recruitment and employment options will only bear fruit if they are matched with targeted effort in destination countries, particularly within the GCC, where labour rights are largely violated. A strong regulatory system needs to be in place in receiving countries, where the international community can put pressure on these destination states to ensure the desired outcome of labour rights protection.

Interaction with development policies

Apart from projects that specifically focus on migration, the EU–Pakistan partnership is also directed towards other development objectives. Official allocations show that 54% of the EU budget is on rural development, which may act to inhibit rural–urban and international migration in the long run by offering quality services and better livelihood options in rural areas. However, this development approach to curb migration overlooks the

culture of migration that exists in certain areas, and also assumes that a development-led migration trend will not emerge (i.e. more migration as people's socioeconomic status improves). This links to the EU's second largest budget stream towards education and vocational training, which constitutes 31% of the total budget directed towards Pakistan. About 15% of the EU's budget is spent on good governance, rule of law and human rights protection, which if it drastically helps to improve the security and governance landscape in Pakistan, may also reduce international migration (EC, 2020b).

Main development policies

The selected policies

A range of development policies are likely to influence Pakistan's internal and international migration patterns and trends. For the sake of this discussion, three policies are discussed below that have the highest potential to affect migration.

Firstly, the National TVET Policy (GoP, 2018c) has been rated by experts interviewed for this review as having the highest impact on migration trends. The Kamyab Jawan Program is a national-level, youth-focused scheme that offers financial grants, loans and vocational training opportunities to enhance the entrepreneurial skills and gainful employment opportunities for youth. Hunarmand Pakistan (Skills for All) is an initiative under this programme that aspires to enhance the technical capacity of youth by offering training and capacity-building opportunities in conventional and emerging fields (The News, 2021).

Secondly, some administrative changes in recent years may also affect migration patterns in the medium-to-long term. In 2018, the Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), adjacent to the Afghan border, were merged with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the 25th Constitutional Amendment, leading to the conversion of some tribal areas into districts. This step was taken primarily to mainstream the region, while also improving law and order of the area (Noor et al., 2018). Following the merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the provincial government has planned a package of reforms to induce investment and spur economic growth in the region. Interventions are planned in the social sector, including health, education and technical training, as well as for improved governance in the region. Investments are also planned in the infrastructure, minerals, agriculture, trade, transport and light engineering sectors (Ali, 2020).

Thirdly, programmes that focus on agricultural development and rural entrepreneurship are expected to reduce the trend for economic migration. The government announced the Agricultural Emergency Programme, worth PKR 290 billion, specifically in response to locust infestation witnessed by Pakistan in 2018 and 2019, as well as in response to the dire impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns on agricultural marketing. In principle, the Programme focuses on productivity enhancement plus development of the non-farm rural sector. Moreover, progress on the implementation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the CPEC in priority areas in Faisalabad, Rashakai and

Thatta may also influence movement of some population groups through industrial employment generation.

Interactions with migration-related policies

Both the Kamyab Jawan and Hunarmand Pakistan programmes have the potential to influence migration; however, the direction of impact may be different. Creating opportunities for youth to build start-ups may discourage international migration as people find gainful economic opportunities within Pakistan. But at the same time this may induce internal migration towards areas with better infrastructure as people try to ensure that their businesses thrive and they have increased market access. While the Hunarmand Pakistan initiative may boost the capacity of youth to be employed domestically, it may also encourage young people to opt for international migration with their enhanced skills.

Over the last two decades the FATA region has witnessed scores of security-related military operations. These have led to large-scale displacement of people, many of whom moved permanently to other areas of the country, particularly in the larger cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Besides this displacement from conflict-prone areas, under-resourced social services have pushed people out towards other areas in the country in pursuit of better living standards. With improvement in the socioeconomic outlook of the region, out-migration may decrease and a return of IDPs is likely to be observed in the coming years.

Additionally, investment in the rural economy may discourage economic migration induced by lower agricultural productivity, climate change-related impacts and shortage of non-farm employment opportunities in rural areas.

Examples of impact on migration

The importance of skills diversification is mentioned in all policy-related dialogue and documents on emigration, including the forthcoming National Emigration and Welfare Policy for Overseas Pakistanis. Initiatives such as Hunarmand Pakistan may help Pakistani labour acquire better employment prospects internationally, thus leading to higher remittance flows and better household welfare.

FATA (now Newly Merged Districts) has been one of the poorest regions of Pakistan, with limited economic and social development opportunities for the tribal population and high levels of unemployment (Noor et al., 2018). On top of this, conflict has wreaked havoc in the region and displaced thousands of families over the years. By the end of 2019, most displaced families had returned to the region, albeit to a weak socioeconomic setting (Levine, 2020). The reforms package aims to mainstream the Newly Formed Districts with national policy and includes incentives for business developers and investors, which will create jobs for local people (Noor et al., 2018). Local youth are expected to find gainful employment opportunities, therefore lowering incentives to migrate. The rehabilitation and reforms package may take time to bear fruit, however, and, as such, any impact may not be visible immediately.

The impact of investment in the rural economy on migration decisions may be determined by the interaction of different factors. For instance, some experts interviewed for this review opined that improving the quality of education in rural areas without matching it with decent economic opportunities would spur more out-migration from rural areas.

Any additional information related to COVID-19

An enhanced effort and focus on the return and reintegration of migrants has been observed in Pakistan with the onset of COVID-19. Three key elements are of note here: i) ensuring safe return of stranded Pakistanis and laid-off Overseas Pakistani labour; ii) inclusion of poor returning migrants in emergency cash transfer programmes; and ii) registration of returning migrants in a recruitment database.

Official estimates show that about 304,000 migrants returned to Pakistan through 500 special flights arranged by the government (Express Tribune, 2020). About 95,000 have registered with a special data portal developed by the OEC for returning migrants. The objective of the data portal is to match returnees with employment opportunities in Pakistan and overseas. However, it is too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative due to the uncertain economic situation impacting job availability.

A number of specialised initiatives are in the pipeline to encourage returnees to engage in entrepreneurial activities such as skills development programmes, initiatives focused on reskilling and recognition of skills obtained abroad, and provision of low-interest loans to start businesses and enterprises, etc. (Abbas, 2021). Yet, it is difficult to determine the success of these initiatives without sufficient publicly available data on the number of beneficiaries. Moreover, special requirements regarding COVID-19 vaccination type in different destinations was also highlighted by interviewees as a major concern to revive migration flows. Experts expressed the opinion that, due to a global economic blow experienced by almost all destination countries, the demand for labour may be low in the coming years, which may in turn affect the emigration of Pakistani labour. Interviewees were optimistic about the trends picking up pace once the impact of the pandemic slows down, however.

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