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A Continent on the Move Asian Migration





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Introduction

Asia is on the move. The world's most populous continent has been undergoing a dramatic transformation for some time. Thanks to the development of infrastructure and provision of new means of communication, a large part of the Asian population has access to information and knowledge for the first time and has become more mobile. Yet the consequences of economic growth and globalization also have a negative impact. Industrialization and climate change are leading to a loss of space and arable land. People in rural areas in particular are losing their livelihoods and are forced to leave their home. Violent conflicts are driving forces behind flight and expulsion, contributing to major migration flows within Asia and between continents.

The magnitude of these movements is illustrated by the graph on the back cover. It will quickly become apparent that the strongest flows are toward the Persian Gulf, as the search for better-paid work is one of the main motivators of migration in Asia. People from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines are willing to cope with frequently poor working conditions and long separations from their loved ones in order to send money to their families. The migrants remit huge sums to some of Asia's poorest countries, and the amounts continue to grow from year to year. For the economies of their home countries, these funds can be as important as the income from exports. The World Bank reported in 2014 that worldwide remittances had grown by 5 percent to \$582 billion as recently as October.

In Bangladesh, climate change is a major driver of migration. Rising sea levels and the increase in extreme weather events

are direct threats to the southern regions of the country. According to Saleemul Huq and Stephanie Andrei, the consequences of this profound insecurity include migration to areas less affected. Migration tends to be seasonal, either to neighboring districts or to the sprawling capital of Dhaka. This trend will not change without a comprehensive government strategy for dealing with the consequences of global warming.

Migration overcomes borders – and it can also disrupt entrenched traditions. In some regions of India, discrimination against female offspring has led to a significant surplus of men. As a consequence, brides are recruited from distant states. In her conversation with Caroline Bertram, Indian sociology professor Ravinder Kaur sees this practice as a sign of social change that is gradually breaking down the many rigid rules relating to marriage in India. Unfortunately, however, this development is doing nothing to change the general lack of state support for India's women.

Khen Suan Khai is a member of the Chin minority in Myanmar. He describes the discrimination against ethnic minorities in Myanmar that continues to drive many Chin to flee to Thailand and Malaysia as «structural violence.» Although Myanmar began an unexpected process of democratization in 2010, the country still has a long way to go toward a peaceful coexistence of its ethnic groups and their equality in self-determination – a state he refers to as «positive peace.»

Migrants fill the gap where local workers are not available or unwilling to accept poor working conditions. One such case is the Thai deep-sea fishing industry. One of Thailand's most important export sectors,

its products can also be found in Germany's and Europe's grocery stores. Thai trawlers working the open sea exploit workers from the neighboring countries Cambodia and Myanmar. As victims of human trafficking, they become modern slaves of the fishing industry. The Cambodian Prum Vannak documented his incredible tale of suffering in pictures – his drawings can be seen in this issue. Researchers Supang Chantavanich and Samarn Laodumrongchai explain the background of the working conditions in the Thai fishing industry.

Migrants do not always leave their home countries in search of work. In China, the more than 260 million people who moved from the countryside to the cities have contributed to the country's economic growth in recent years. Despite cautious reforms, they still do not enjoy the same privileges as officially registered urban residents and thus do not have access to many public and social services. Three such migrant workers tell of their personal experiences in China.

How has the experience of migration changed the thinking of those who return to their homeland? Pakistani journalist Imtiaz Gul explores this issue, highlighting how Pakistani migrant workers return from Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates as religious radicals. Wahhabism, a strict Saudi interpretation of Islam, is being brought home by migrant workers and is now making inroads in the southern Asian country long dominated by Sufism. Wahhabi preachers in mosques and religious schools funded by millions of dollars in donations from the Gulf are additional drivers of this development.

In neighboring Afghanistan, the experience of war, expulsion, and flight has been anchored in the collective consciousness for more than thirty years. And while the conflict has not yet been resolved, international troops are withdrawing. Susanne Schmeidl illustrates how many Afghan women today consider their options should they need to leave their homes again.

The articles in this issue can only illuminate individual aspects of the numerous forms of migration in Asia. Hundreds of millions of Asians are on the move. While many people in Asia are enjoying new freedom and mobility, the most common drivers of migration are the poverty, conflicts, and environmental problems that remain major challenges for Asian societies. There is no denying the global dimension of the issue, however, when people leave their homes to work in the factories that produce cheap products for our Western markets. We in Europe share a humanitarian responsibility for refugees and for the consequences of migration on political and social stability in the home and destination countries. While Europe today is mainly debating its responsibility and political position toward refugees from Africa and the Near and Middle East, we hope to include the developments in Asia in these considerations and to underscore the global dimension of the migration phenomenon.

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Existential Uncertainty

In Bangladesh arises a new «culture of mobility»

Saleemul Huq and Stephanie Andrei

Saleemul Huq is a Bangladeshi scientist. He is the Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (<http://www.icccad.org>) based at the Independent University, Bangladesh. He is also a Senior Fellow at the International Institute for Environment and Development (<http://www.iied.org>) based in the United Kingdom. Before joining IIED, he was Executive Director of the Bangladesh Center for Advanced Studies, which he founded in 1984. Dr. Huq was a Coordinating Lead Author of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Working Group II, which focuses on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation.

Stephanie Andrei is a researcher at the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (<http://www.icccad.net>) and currently lives in Dhaka, Bangladesh. At ICCCAD she coordinates loss and damage research as well as the Asia Pacific Forum on Loss and Damage (<http://lossanddamageforum.org>). She also recently completed her Masters in International Migration and Public Policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her research interests include environmentally-induced migration, analyzing the migration-development nexus, planned migration, approaches for addressing loss and damage and livelihood security.

Bangladesh is one of the countries most affected by the rise of sea levels caused by global warming. This and the increase of extreme weather events force millions to migrate to safer grounds, mostly within the country. But migration also has economic motives, and it may be just a temporary strategy to improve one's livelihood. While this emerging «culture of mobility» could be an opportunity for the government, which has taken the first steps to let Bangladesh adapt to climate change, too little progress has been made toward a comprehensive strategy that includes migration as a means to cope with global warming.

It has been known for decades that increasing global temperatures will exacerbate pre-existing vulnerabilities and create greater inequity, especially with regard to developing countries. Even though climate change is a global issue that requires global cohesion, its impacts are local and responses must be tailored to the affected populations.

For many households, migration has been employed as a response to reduce losses and damages from adverse climate impacts, especially in countries like Bangladesh where sea level rise, salinization, flooding and extreme weather events have become common threats to livelihoods. It has been predicted that a sea level rise of 45 cm will lead to a loss of 15,668 km² of land and will affect 5.5 million people (Poncelet, 2010). While the timing and impacts are uncertain, it has been estimated that this could occur by 2050. Such an impact will inevitably increase migration flows, but whether this will be voluntary or forced is unknown.

Forced migration due to environmental stressors may be prompted by a number of different circumstances. Most obviously, fast-onset events such as cyclones and flash floods – which are set to increase in variability and intensity due to climate change – will test communities' abilities to cope with little or no preparation. Without sufficient adaptation measures, some households may be forced to flee. Forced migration may also ensue when existing measures fail (maladaptation). This contrasts with voluntary migration, which might include seasonal and temporary migration schemes. Such decisions are made over a period of time; they are considered household investments and are made with respect to other options. Voluntary migration requires planning and is adaptive in the sense that it gives households an additional source of income.

Trends and patterns of migration

Migration is caused by a diverse range of factors and remains particularly difficult to generalize for Bangladesh's population of 155 million people. Furthermore, it is important to note that not all migration can be considered adaptive. In the context of Bangladesh, there are several forms of movement that have been taking place over the last decades. These include seasonal and permanent migration, labor and irregular migration, voluntary and forced migration, and domestic and international migration. While some forms may overlap, migration has predominantly taken place internally and to urban areas, with a heavy bias toward Dhaka, the capital city. More often than not, however,

migration has been a strategy by households to help diversify their livelihoods and improve their incomes (de Haan et al., 2000).

Dhaka is the world's fastest growing megacity. With just over 10 percent of the country's total population living in the capital city (UNSTATS, 2013), migration to urban zones has become common and will continue as long as variable weather creates negative pressures for agriculturalists in rural communities. This is reflected in the fact that the population growth rate has been approximately 1.3 percent, while the urban population growth rate has been nearly three times this rate (Ibid). Migration generally occurs due to a combination of both «push» (conflict, natural calamities, diminishing resources, etc.) and «pull» (economic and kinship) factors. As the economy continues to grow, economic pull factors are likely to increase, drawing people to major cities as well as abroad.

The climate change-migration nexus

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) broadly defines environmentally-induced migration as including «persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad» (IOM, 2007: 1–2).

For a country experienced with the impacts of global warming, the connection between climate change and migration is

not a novelty. Previous research has linked migration to environmental stressors, such as rainfall variability, food security and livelihood vulnerabilities in several countries around the world, including Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2012; Jäger et al., 2009). Since these stressors follow a seasonal pattern, a common observation has been that rural households with lower credit or saving constraints have adopted temporary migration strategies to relieve the burden of variable weather conditions that lead to crop yield reductions and economic losses.

Dhaka is the world's fastest growing megacity, with over 10 percent of the total population living in the capital.

Seasonal migration has been the most common strategy for households in Bangladesh. Movements may occur over short distances or internationally, but, considering that the latter requires planning and a household investment strategy, short-distance migration remains most common. Kinship networks have been a crucial factor in helping to facilitate such forms of movement. For this reason, what is now emerging in Bangladesh can be better understood as a «culture of mobility,» whereby migration has created a chain reaction throughout communities (Findlay and Geddes, 2011).

Prospects for international migration from Bangladesh

At present, international migration from Bangladesh remains dominated by labor migrants eager to work in countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Such work is usually temporary since migrants often cannot meet the requirements to naturalize in the receiving country. Employed through agencies, these labor migrants have the opportunity to develop their skills and provide their families with additional income through remittances they send back home. Since the investment to go abroad is quite high, such a strategy seems less useful as a response to shocks such as food shortages or flooding (Black et al., 2008). However, this new form of labor migration is flourishing. Better employment prospects, recruiting agents and social networks have greatly improved the «pull» factors for individuals interested in seeking employment abroad.

Today, remittances are Bangladesh's second-biggest source of foreign income.

While migrants are predominantly males from rural areas, and the work is considered low-skilled, females have also started exploiting these migration routes, however this process remains almost undocumented. These migrants have helped remittances to become the country's second-biggest source of foreign income following the garment industry. Remittances reached 10.5 percent of gross domestic product in

Bangladesh in 2011 and in all likelihood will continue to rise over the next years. Despite the benefits for the economy as a whole, the living and working conditions of migrants once they arrive in their host countries have been issues of grave concern.

Climate change and adaptation challenges

Forced migration in Bangladesh has been an unfortunate reality for millions of people across the country. Approximately two-thirds of the population lives in areas less than five meters above sea level, and devastating cyclones along the country's coastline have occurred roughly every three years. One of the largest cyclones, Bhola in 1970, killed up to 500,000 people and left many more displaced. The migration that results from such spontaneous natural disasters escalates due to the failure of households to adapt. While cyclone Bhola is an extreme case and more recent cyclones have not led to such a high number of casualties, the main challenge for vulnerable coastal communities lies in the availability of resources.

Available resources determine how households are able to cope with and recover from losses and damages associated with extreme weather events, whether or not these are directly related to climate change. Without resources, maladaptation is likely to ensue, or adaptation may not take place altogether. With increasing sea level rise and salinization, the challenge for rural communities in Bangladesh to adapt to more variable and severe weather is a pressing one. Yet, the number of adaptation measures needed in the coming decades is dependent on mitiga-

tion ambitions today: If developed countries continue to fail to see the urgency of mitigating their greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation measures may turn out to be futile.

The challenges associated with this kind of migration are two-fold. On the one hand, if such migration is not planned, it potentially risks the wellbeing of migrants (Oliver-Smith, 2009). Such individuals may lack resources and networks and would use migration as a last resort. These migrants are merely surviving and are unable to adapt to a change in climate in the long term. On the other hand, if adaptation fails, individuals who get left behind are forced to cope with extremely challenging conditions. As demonstrated, rising salinity levels in the coastal district of Satkhira have disproportionately affected the poorest due to their inability to invest in adaptation tools and techniques. Some of the existing measures mentioned included saline-resistant cultivars and adjusting and repairing existing irrigation practices. Other non-farming measures respondents have mentioned include changing eating habits, adopting non-agricultural income generating activities and migration. Such individuals face a further disadvantage since they might also lack the resources to temporarily migrate to safe zones in a time of crisis.

A need for addressing the adaptation and mitigation challenge

While the government has taken a proactive response by developing the Climate Change Trust Fund and Climate Change Resilience Fund in recent years, planned

migration remains an abstract concept with no clear strategy. The Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan that was developed several years ago by the previous government attempted to create a comprehensive strategy for tackling the effects of climate change. Although initially the document did not call attention to the possibility of migration due to climate change, this item has since been included in the revised version of 2009. This demonstrates a change in the government's perspective on migration as a reality in need for adaptation, however there has been little progress towards a comprehensive migration strategy. Further research is needed to understand the dynamics between climate change and migration so that strategies to deal with this reality can be developed effectively.

Climate change will put additional strain on what is already a precarious situation.

Bangladesh faces a great challenge ahead with regards to domestic migration. Not only will climate change place additional strain on existing socio-economic vulnerabilities, but it has also become clear that without adaptation, the loss and damage incurred will be unprecedented. Poor mitigation ambitions alongside insufficient resources to help countries adapt to the future impacts of climate change have already led to catastrophic events and will continue to do so if efforts are not strengthened.

At the local level, communities are being forced to adapt quickly in order to prepare for worsening climate conditions. It will be important that such change be transforma-

tive rather than incremental in order to better ensure the sustainability of practices in the long term (Huq, Roberts and Fenton, 2013). It will also be important for the government to focus on education so as to improve the skill sets of Bangladeshis and encourage out-migration, not as a necessity but rather as a choice for households and individuals. Planned migration provides an opportunity for transformative adaptation, but research must be improved so as to better recognize this potential and assist the government in making decisions that not only improve livelihoods but also ensure the sustainability of adaptation practices.

Since the engagement of individual countries to commit to policies that could slow down the progress of global warming has remained low, many developing countries face a difficult future. ■■■

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Brides for India's North

About cross-regional marriage migration

Interview with Ravinder Kaur by Caroline Bertram

Declining sex ratios due to decades of discrimination against women in certain parts of India have left many men unmarried. As marriage remains a social obligation in Indian society, desperation has led to an increasing number of cross-regional and cross-cultural marriages which challenge the rigid marriage systems and the notion of caste. States like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are particularly affected by a lack of women, and in the last decades informal networks have facilitated the migration of brides from eastern and southern parts of the country to these northern states. The women, usually from poor families, migrate far and cross borders of caste, culture, language and ethnicity – sometimes even religion. Driven by skewed sex-ratios on the one hand and poverty on the other, cross-regional marriages ignore many of the principles engrained in traditional marriages. Controversy over whether cross-regional marriages represent a form of human trafficking or merely a social reaction to a demographic challenge dominates the public debate.

Caroline Bertram: Professor Ravinder Kaur, you have conducted extensive research on a phenomenon in India known as cross-regional marriages. What are the characteristics of cross-regional marriages, and how do they differ from conventional forms of marriage in India?

Ravinder Kaur: In most parts of India, especially in the north, the norms of (arranged) marriage predetermine the move of women from their natal homes to their husbands' family home post-marriage. The possibility and cultural acceptability of the marriage between two people and their respective families are defined by exogamy and require the marriage outside of one's own *gotra* or clan but within the same caste. Data from the latest round of the National Sample Survey (NSS 2007-8) show that 91.2 percent of rural women and 60.8 percent of urban women migrated for marriage.

Whereas in most normative marriages in north India spouses usually come from different villages – but from within the same region – there is an upward trend of marriages which are arranged from a long distance and across state, cultural and linguistic borders. In the states of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in particular, there have been increasing cases of marriages in which women have been «imported» from eastern and southern parts of the country. These marriages cross borders of caste, culture, language and ethnicity – in some cases even religion. They have been the focus of my academic research in the last ten years. To understand the driving factors of this trend, demographic patterns, and how these marriages are arranged, need to be carefully studied.

Professor Ravinder Kaur teaches sociology and social anthropology in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Delhi. Her areas of research are kinship, family, marriage, anthropological demography and social change in India. She is continuing to research various dimensions of the gender imbalance in India and its social consequences. She has recently co-edited a book «Marrying in South Asia: Shifting Concepts, Changing Practices in a Globalising World» with sociologist Rajni Palriwala. She hopes to publish her book «Strangers as Spouses: Skewed Sex Ratios and Marriage Migration in India» in the near future.

Caroline Bertram works as Program Coordinator at Heinrich Böll Foundation's India office in New Delhi, India.

In the mentioned states, patriarchal norms prevail and skewed sex ratios are the result of many decades of a preference for boys. The natural consequence of the discrimination against girls before and after birth is that e.g. in Haryana only count around 877 women per 1,000 men, according to the latest census taken in 2011. This demographic imbalance has left many desperate men unmarried. In Haryana, a union formed by unmarried men even took to the streets at the beginning of the 2014 general elections to demand candidates to provide them brides in return for their votes.

In India, marriage predominantly remains a social obligation and important for social adulthood, as courtship and premarital relationships are socially not allowed, although this is slowly beginning to change in urban areas. Marriage combined with the practice of dowry still determines the social status of families, and those who remain unmarried become socially excluded. This explains the desperation with which men in areas that lack women choose to look for women in faraway parts of the country like Kerala, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Odisha – or even beyond country borders – in Bangladesh and Nepal.

Who are the men and women who marry outside of their caste and their linguistic and cultural limits, and what drives them into these marriage arrangements?

This phenomenon is a very distinctive type of marriage migration, and it is very much defined by poverty on the one hand and the skewed sex ratios on the other. The men are from all castes, generally less well educated, with little or no land, agricultural laborers or jobless youth who are unable to find wives due to their lack of social status and high marriage competition in areas that lack women. Many of them are comparatively older than their wives – they have tried and failed to find a wife for many years – and some are physically challenged. In the absence of social security and old-age provision systems, reproduction and a family become a natural survival strategy. In their desperation, these men's families mostly do not demand a dowry from the family of the cross-region bride.

The women who migrate long-distance for these marriages usually come from very poor families, for whom the mere cost of the dowry poses an existential threat. They usually come from areas where the sex ratio is more or less equal, but their families are unable to meet the local dowry demands. Some have been married before and have left their marriage due to a broken relationship or desertion, and their chances to remarry in their own community are very low, since separated or divorced women remain stigmatized in the marriage market. Once a woman is married off into another family, it is extremely difficult for her to return to her natal family, primarily because it would bring shame on the family, but also because she would be a financial burden and another family member to feed. For many, a cross-regional marriage is the only and most economical option to secure their existence.

For the families of these women, a cross-regional marriage of their daughter can be a real economic relief. Many such families that I have met have several daughters; therefore the financial burden can be very high. They have heard of states like Haryana and Punjab, which are known to be rich agrarian states with higher per capita income. So they assume that a more prosperous life may await their daughters there.

How are these marriages organized?

Ethnologists have studied cross-regional marriage migration since the 1980s, although it may have been practiced even long before, as sex ratios in the areas mentioned have been skewed over the last century or more. By studying individual cases of such marriages it becomes evident that the migrant women themselves organize for more women from their communities to migrate as brides to the areas where women are scarce. This is what we call «chain marriage migration»: A woman, for example from Assam, has migrated to Haryana, and seeing other men seeking brides in the new community, she encourages women from her natal community to also migrate long-distance for marriage. It is by no means easy for these women from faraway places to settle and integrate in their new homes, where language and the customs can be extremely different. By arranging for other women from their own community to marry a man in the same village and thus avoid the dowry, they are also building a community for themselves in their new home, far away from their old home and support structures. At the same time, these women who act as go-betweens also get the opportunity to visit their homes, which they would usually either not be able to afford, or their husband's family would not allow.

As go-betweens, they arrange a cross-regional match and often also organize the wedding. They do not, however, operate like formal agents and also do not earn any money in the process. The money involved merely covers their travel costs into the regions to find potential women and to cover the costs of the wedding ceremony.

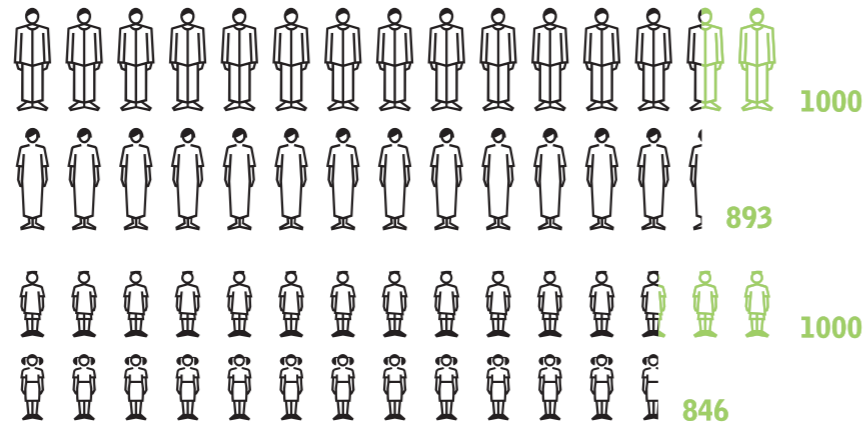
Unmarried men in states like Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh usually get to know about the possibility of this kind of cross-regional marriage by word-of-mouth. In some places these marriages have become very visible and relatively common practice. The commercial marriage migration that takes place through male agents is still not widely developed and has little in common with the kind of formal marriage agencies that arrange matches for men in South Korea, Taiwan or Singapore with women from less developed Southeast Asian countries. These agencies handle everything from passports and visas to language and cultural training of the women. In India, on the other hand, cross-regional marriages are largely informally organized.

Are there cases of human trafficking – or are most cross-regional marriages taking place on the basis of mutual consent between bride and groom?

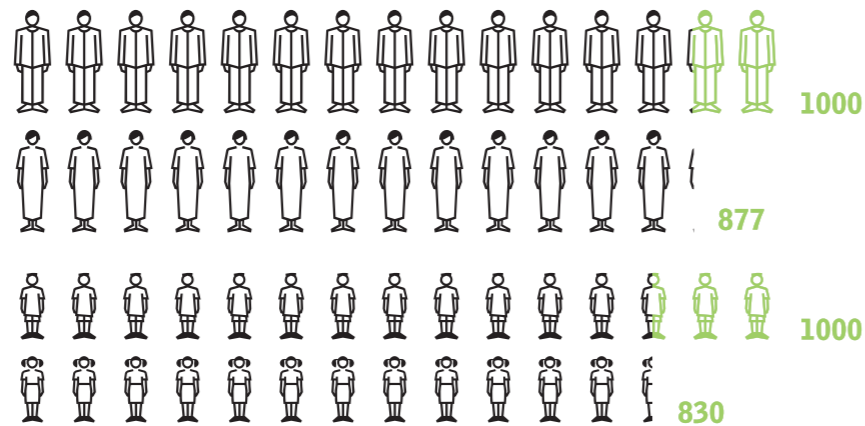
Cross-regional marriages have, in recent years, received increasing public attention in India, but the rhetoric that is being used in the reporting is quite diverse and there seems to be a great difference in the perception on this issue. There are some scholars and human rights reporters who have labeled these marriages as bride-buying, human trafficking, and even sexual slavery and condemn it as a form of commodification of women.

Although I agree that there are individual cases in which these allegations apply and that these women face multiple vulnerabilities, I generally look at cross-regional marriages more as a social phenomenon that is unfolding in front of our eyes due to demographic challenges and which may even, in the long run, challenge the rigidities of marriage systems in India. There are so many different types of marriages, and labeling cross-regional marriages as bride buying would be too simplistic. At some level, all arranged marriages are a sort of economic transaction; the concept of dowry, for example, should ideally be termed «groom price» as it guarantees the bride's family a good

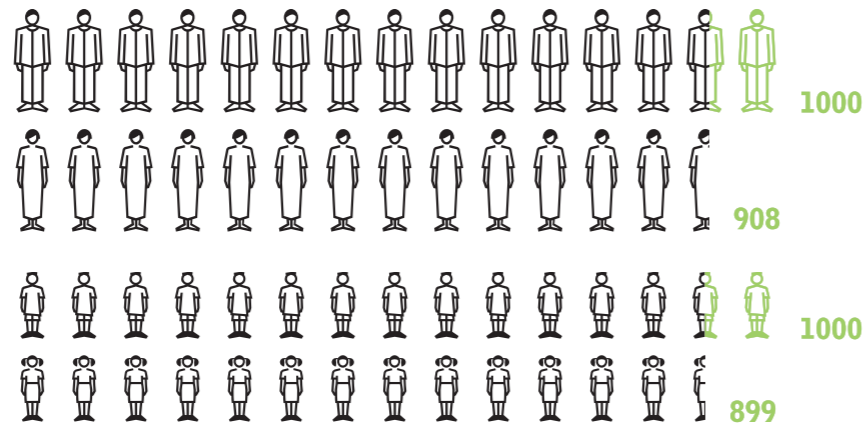
Punjab



Haryana



Uttar Pradesh



Gender ratio
Number of women and girls per 1000 men and boys (children aged 0-6)

A field study on the impact of sex ratio on the pattern of marriages in Haryana by Drishti Stree Adhyayan Prabodhan Kendra covering over 10,000 households revealed that over 9,000 married women in Haryana were brought in from other states. In Haryana, one in every five males would stay unmarried unless he imported a bride from outside the state. Currently, many districts in the state have 5-6 out-of-state brides.

Source: Impact of sex ratio on pattern of marriages in Haryana. Field study by NGO Drishti Stree Adhyayan Prabodhan Kendra, 2010.

groom for their daughter, relative to how much money they pay. So in a sense, men are also selling themselves in the marriage market, if we choose to look at it that way.

I strongly disagree with the claim that bride buying is the main problem here, because that would naturally imply that the family of the bride, her brother or any other guardian would receive money in the exchange. In the decade of my research, I have come across only very few such cases. Instead, the money involved is commonly spent on the expenses of the go-between, i.e. previously migrated women who organize the match.

There are cases of trafficking by male agents who have entered the picture over the last decade or so. These male agents find girls on demand for men who fail to find brides themselves, and if one match does not work out, the girl may be passed on to some other man, where she may or may not settle down. There have been such cases, and they indicate a worrying trend towards the commercialization of women. There have also been cases of women who have been drugged at a railway station in West Bengal or in New Delhi to suddenly find themselves in a place like Haryana, far away from their homes. This commercialization of the bride trade is the dark side of cross-regional marriages. There have been some opposite cases in which brides were in cahoots with the agents and, after a short stay with the groom, ran away with the household valuables.

What is your assessment of these marriages, especially the situation and status of the women involved?

There are many who view the women who engage in a cross-regional marriage as victims of human trafficking or sexual slavery. I do not wish to downplay the vulnerability that these women face, but I think it is important to put these marriages into perspective. If we talk about cross-regional marriages as sexual slavery, then the same potentially could apply to a large number of Indian marriages, since there is to date no law in India that criminalizes rape within marriage.

Normative arranged marriages in India often face similar issues; hence I suggest that we must look at it from more than just one perspective. In normative marriages as well as in cross-regional marriages, the wife is the one who leaves her own family circles to join her husband's, and, in any case, she will need time to adapt to her new surroundings. She is in a new community and enters at the bottom of the family hierarchy, often being used as a servant and only steps up in terms of status once she has given birth to a son. Unfortunately that is the harsh reality of many, if not most women in India, especially in these areas in the north.

The marriage experience for women in a cross-border marriage is definitely bound to be more strenuous: These women have crossed the borders and boundaries of caste, religion, region, language – basically their whole culture. Their entire identity is compromised. The women, in their role as a wife, are faced with many expectations from their families, who have primarily «imported» them to serve as another help in the household and on the farm. The gender roles in north India are still very rigid, and men refuse to help around the house, as they are looked down upon if they do so-called female tasks. The workload on many of these women is extreme, and I believe the cross-regional marriage migration always also reflects a form of labor migration. The women are providing productive labor, reproductive labor, sexual and emotional labor and domestic labor. Unfortunately the various dimensions of what women provide in a marriage are not highly valued.

In my time as a researcher, I have seen how women have adjusted and settled into their new lives over time. In my observations, I have noticed what a difference the level of education of the women makes on how they handle the transition. Women with some level of school education – especially visible in the case of women from Kerala – have been shown to gain a standing in their new families much faster than uneducated women, who on average remain at the receiving end of the family hierarchy for longer. Poorer women face greater hardship and may be often reminded that they have been «bought» and are thus «owned» by the family they have been married into. In a family, if several sons are unmarried, the mother may ask the bride to sleep with all the brothers – we call this fraternal polyandry or wife-sharing by brothers – and I have come across some instances of this phenomenon.

Women find it very hard initially to adjust to the system of *ghung-hat* or face veil which is foreign to them and they find the wheat-lentil diet very different from their rice-fish diet. However, if women strike up good relationships with their husbands and mothers-in-law and learn the local language, they settle down fairly well. Once they have children, they feel committed to their new marital homes however difficult things may get.

Given the distance to their natal families, women in cross-regional marriages have the great disadvantage of lacking autonomy, due to the absence of their families or any other supportive networks. Where can they go and get help if they are being mistreated by their new families? Cross-regional marriages have become very common in many areas, especially in Haryana, but to date there has not been any effort to establish support structures for these women. I believe that this responsibility lies with the state and I have addressed this issue with the Haryana Government and spoken to the Minister for Women and Child Welfare in Delhi; however, thus far, no one has really paid attention. There is a lot of advocacy that still needs to be done. ■■■

Longing for a Better Life

Chin Migration from Myanmar to Malaysia and India

Khen Suan Khai

The Chin people constitute one of the ethnic nationalities in Myanmar whose members, have for many years, left behind the unstable economic situation, political dictatorship and widespread poverty of their home country. They have migrated to neighboring countries – mainly Malaysia and India – legally and illegally, longing for safety and a higher standard of living and the prospect of resettling in a third country. But it was not only economic reasons that prompted the Chin people to leave their homeland. While political and human-rights abuses in Chin State are obviously grave, the more basic issues concern the distribution of resources, as well as freedom and equality.

Migration and political changes in Myanmar

Since 2010, Myanmar has undergone political reforms that could prove to be the first stage of a gradual transition to democracy. However, Myanmar still has a long way to go before it can be called a full-fledged democracy. Critical problems of ethnic discord remain unresolved. Undeniably, the cease-fire agreements arranged by the administration of President Thein Sein with the ethnic national revolutionary groups have received significant international attention.¹ Some believe that Myanmar is on its way back to the democracy that it lost sixty years ago. On the other hand, longtime Myanmar watchers agree that a lasting resolution of ethnic conflicts requires more than forging cease-fires or a mere absence of war, i.e. «Negative Peace.» Myanmar needs to go further to

ensure «Positive Peace» – the presence of the conditions for a just and sustainable peace, including access to food and clean drinking water, education for all, safety from physical harm, and other inviolable human rights, as well as «Positive Freedom» – the freedom to control and direct one's own life instead of being acted upon. Only this will guarantee justice and equality at all levels (economic, social, and political) and the shared democratic use of power, the lack of which has been prompting the involuntary migration of people from Myanmar.

Facts about Chin migrants and refugees

Myanmar is among the top seven countries of origin of refugees, and there are more than 400,000 Myanmar refugees (UNHCR, 2013).² In Malaysia, there are approximately 50,000 irregular migrants from Myanmar according to UN statistics (UNHCR Staff, 2013).³ Concerning Chin irregular migrants, there are some 300 Chin asylum seekers in refugee camps in Thailand, and more than 30,000 refugees and around 10,000 asylum seekers from Chin State in Malaysia according to UNHCR statistics. In India, there are around 8,000 Chin refugees in Delhi and many more in Aizawl, in the Indian state of Mizoram, who cannot reach Delhi where the UNHCR is stationed. Since early 2000, many Chin refugees have been resettled to Europe and North America.

The main reasons why such a sizeable share of the population of Myanmar is seeking refuge in foreign countries are the lack of freedom, justice and equality at all levels (economic, social and political) and

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the undemocratic use of power. The ethnic nationalities along Myanmar's peripheries have spent more than half a century fighting the Burmese regime for autonomy and equal treatment. Until the root causes of the problems are addressed, there will remain an exodus of refugees and irregular migrants from Myanmar.

The situation of Chin migrants in Malaysia

People from Myanmar have been migrating to Malaysia since the early 1990s. Among irregular Burmese migrants in Malaysia, the Chin people make up approximately 50 percent. Going to Malaysia is less dangerous than going to Thailand, as Chin migrants in Malaysia are not directly deported back to Myanmar due to the lack of a shared border, and it is possible to re-enter Malaysia through bribery. The existence of a migration network also plays a key role in assisting Chin people to migrate to Malaysia, as networks to other countries are less well developed (Massey, Douglas S et al., 1993).⁴

Illegal migrants travelling from Myanmar to Malaysia must either pass through Thailand or travel by sea, usually with the help of smugglers or human traffickers. They have to pay large sums of money to smugglers to take them across the borders of Myanmar to Thailand and Malaysia. The migrants have on occasion encountered difficulties such as being fired upon by Thai and Malaysian border police and being shipwrecked on the way to Malaysia.⁵

Even though India, especially northeastern India, is the first logical destination for the Chin – not just geographically but also culturally and in terms of language – it is not the preferred target country because it is too insecure. Migrants can be deported directly to Myanmar at any time, while Malaysia just transports the irregular migrants to the Malaysia-Thailand border, where they can find ways to bribe police and border agents to let them return to Malaysia. The economic situation and resettlement options to third countries are also more attractive in Malaysia than in neighboring countries. The level of risk involved in migrating from the western border areas of Myanmar to Thailand and Malaysia is the same, making Malaysia the preferable destination for the Chin.

Malaysia does not grant legal work status to either irregular migrants or refugees. As the largest irregular migrant population

from Myanmar, hoping to find safety and protection and dreaming of resettlement in another country, irregular Chin migrants are in a risky situation and under constant threat of incarceration. The paramilitary volunteer corps Volunteers of Malaysian People also known as RELA Corps (Ikatan Relawan Rakyat), which was founded in 1972 under the 1964 Emergency (Essential Powers) Acts and intended to help maintain national security, is responsible for rounding up illegal immigrants. The RELA Corps possesses powers beyond those of the regular police force, such as arrest without warrant and search and seizure (Project MAJE, 2007).⁶ Even though international organizations have been urging the Malaysian government to ban the RELA Corps since 2007, the government still supports it, although the bounty which was previously paid out for each illegal immigrant arrested has now been cancelled.

Detained irregular Chin migrants are usually deported via the Malaysian-Thai border at Golok. To facilitate their re-entry into Malaysia, they pay bribes of 2,000 to 3,000 Malaysian Ringgit (about \$600–900) to officers at the border when deported. Many report that those unable to pay bribes to the authorities are trafficked from the border to work on fishing boats in Thailand or in the commercial sex trade (WCRWC, 2008).⁷ It is a serious concern that the fate of deported children whose parents were sold to Thai fishing boats and brothels following deportation is often unknown. Children and teenagers may be particularly vulnerable during this stage, especially if they are separated from their parents. People actually disappear during this process.

To survive in Malaysia, Chin irregular migrants are generally relegated to the informal work sectors. Their illegal status leads to job insecurity, with no compensation or life insurance fund, as illegal workers are not entitled to benefits from the Employee Provident Fund or Social Security Fund. Chin irregular migrants are constantly at risk of workplace raids by immigration officials. Because jobs in the informal sector are unstable, this problem eventually affects all migrants, who at times have to depend on each other and support each other for survival. For some migrants, relatives and friends who have resettled to third countries provide support in times of need.

The Chin community internally handles problems among the irregular migrants that cannot be referred to the authorities.

Religion-based fellowships and community-based groups such as the Chin Refugee Committee and the Alliance of Chin Refugees, which themselves are composed of irregular migrants, are the most effective support groups that make life in Malaysia a little easier. Irregular migrants who are sent to detention centers have faced critical situations because of lack of adequate access to healthcare, unsanitary environments, risk of disease and possible death. It is of great concern that even babies and small children are put in detention centers with their parents.

While Malaysia is a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), without legal protection and legal status, irregular Chin migrant women remain extremely vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Lack of legal status makes migrant women more vulnerable to abuse in the home, at the workplace and in detention. Gender-based violence occurs frequently, mostly perpetrated by employers sexually harassing women on the job and refusing to pay them if they protest. Because migrant women are unable to report and file complaints with the relevant authorities without disclosing their immigration status, employers often act with impunity. However, not working at all increases women's dependency on community members, spouses and neighbors, which also increases their risk of abuse.

The situation of Chin migrants in India

Chin irregular migrants and refugees also face plenty of problems in India. Approximately 80,000 Chins, both economic migrants and asylum seekers, live along the Indo-Myanmar border in the Mizoram hills in India, adjacent to the Chin Hills. Since India is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol, there is no procedural mechanism for providing official protection or benefits to refugees living in India. Therefore, India deals with asylum seekers on an ad-hoc basis. Some 8,000 Chin people enjoy protection by the UNHCR in New Delhi, but most Chin asylum seekers cannot afford to travel to New Delhi from Mizoram, where the UNHCR is not operational. Once registered, they are required to remain in Delhi, where it is difficult to make a living and assimilate culturally. Competing for very limited resources with the local poverty-

stricken population also puts Chin refugees in a very tough situation. NGOs and rights groups helping the refugees have reported that some UNHCR staff members keep telling the refugees off the record to return to Myanmar, ignoring the fact that refugees should decide themselves when to go home and, if they are made to go home, should be able to return with dignity and safety.

Sexual harassment of Chin refugee women – as for many women in India – is one of the top problems, with more than a hundred reported cases since the early 1990s. More than 50 percent of the rights abuses against Chin in India are related to sexual assaults by locals. While victims are able to identify the culprits in many cases, intimidation of both the victim and the police by locals has ensured that not a single rapist has been punished to date. Although health care is accessible at local hospitals, there is ongoing racial discrimination against the vulnerable Chin refugees. Many Chin refugee children are not satisfied with the education centers run by the UNHCR in cooperation with the implementing local partner Don Bosco Ashalayam (DBA), as a large number of students is taught by one person and students of various ages placed into a single class. The UNHCR in New Delhi has made attendance of government schools mandatory, but this policy has not provided education for the refugee children since classes are taught in Hindi and English. In terms of livelihood and employment, even if long-term visa and work permits can be arranged, the Chin still will be vulnerable to discrimination in terms of wages, work hours, exploitation, and sexual harassment due to their lack of education, language and vocational skills.

Future pathways

The Chin people's migration is neither forced nor voluntary. Structural violence pushes the Chin to migrate from Chin State. It will be hard to stop the process of migration from Chin State in the near future as the push factors which influence the Chin continue to exist. The best alternative in the short run is to provide a safer environment in Malaysia, India and Thailand. To reduce the rate of migration to other countries in the long run, Myanmar needs to have a stable rule of law that protects its own people socially, economically and politically.

The economic situation is just one among many serious push factors. Undoubtedly, what Chin people really need is Positive Freedom – the freedom to control and direct their own life, and the right to consciously make their own choices, create their own purpose and shape their own future. There is also a need for Positive Peace – the presence of conditions for a just and sustainable peace, including access to food and clean drinking water, education for all, safety from physical harm and other inviolable human rights.

To achieve a long-term solution and stop irregular migration and flows of refugees from Myanmar, the newly-civilian government needs to publicize and put into effect steps to address the root causes of conflict through political means. The government must develop economic and social infrastructure for Chin State and the Chin people in a systematic and equitable way. The passing of laws that guarantee the fundamental rights of religious minorities and ethnic nationalities in Myanmar is crucial in this regard. The government must collaborate with community-based organizations, scholars and experts in relevant fields to make policies and laws that guarantee sustainable development in Chin State.

It is essential that governmental groups and implementing partners safeguard the rights and wellbeing of refugees and help realize long-term solutions, voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement to third countries that will allow the refugees to rebuild their lives in dignity and peace. The refugees should not be repatriated by force until the root causes of migration in their country of origin have been addressed. ■■■

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Poorly Paid and Without Rights

Migrant workers in Thailand's fishing sector

Supang Chantavanich and Samarn Laodumrongchai

The recent *Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report 2014* by the US Department of State downgraded Thailand to Tier 3, which is the lowest rank. The report noted significant exploitation of migrant workers hired in the fishing industry and the inability of both the Thai state to protect those workers and the Thai criminal justice system to prosecute traffickers.

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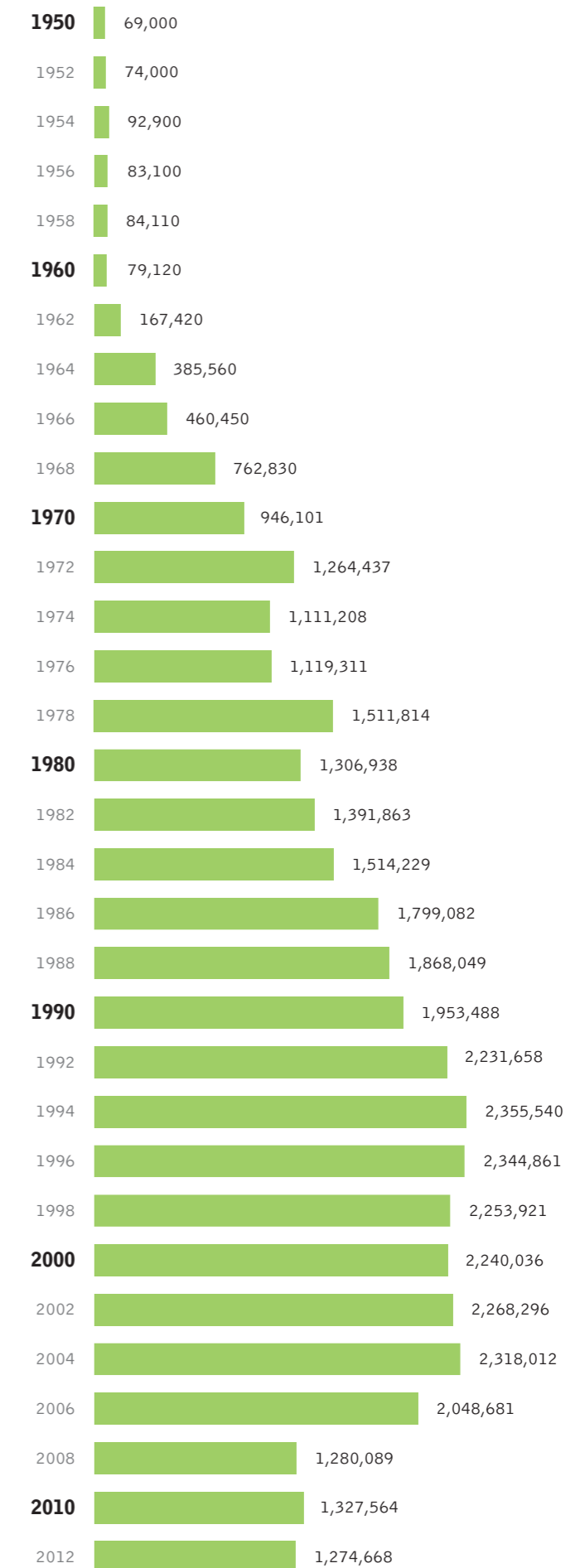
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The fishery sector plays an important role in Thailand's social and economic development. The sector experienced remarkable growth over the course of the last four decades due to the deployment of new fishing instruments and the development of facilities and infrastructure. In 1999, Thailand became the world's leading exporter of edible fisheries products (FAO, 2009). In terms of the total value of fish exports, Thailand is ranked third globally after China and Norway, constituting a \$7 billion industry (FAO, 2012b, p. 71). However, there are limitations in the regulation of the fishery sector because of a dated legislative framework, unclear and inadequate delineation of territorial jurisdictions and insufficient resources and capacities for authorities to effectively carry out their mandates. As a result, the industry has over-exploited marine resources and has been implicated in widespread exploitation and abuse of workers, including forced labor and human trafficking. As sea fishery is a sector of production which is difficult to access due to its physical location, inspections for good labor practice and governance have been almost impossible because of the lack of manpower and equipment, as well as a dearth of awareness and political will on the part of the state.

Since the late 1980s, the fishery sector has seen changes in the structure of employment and working conditions. The Thai workforce has been less attracted to the fishery sector as a result of a major typhoon in 1989, declining profits due to a sharp decrease in the catch per unit of effort (CPUE), as well as rising fuel costs (Panjarat, 2008) and improving education levels. This gap in the labor market emerged simultaneously with expanding structural differences in population demographics and economic development between Thailand and neighboring countries, transforming the fishing industry's labor force from exclusively Thai crews to primarily irregular migrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia. Even with its heavy reliance on undocumented migrant workers, Thailand's fishing sector has been unable to satisfy its demand for fishermen. In 2008, the Federation of Thai Industries estimated a shortage of 10,000 workers in the fishing and fish processing industries (Mirror Foundation, 2011). In 2012, the National Fisheries Association of Thailand (NFAT) estimated that 50,000 fishermen were required to address the shortages in the sector. Despite the reduced growth of the industry over the last decade due to smaller catch sizes and higher fuel prices, demand for labor remains high. Meanwhile, there is an insufficient supply of workers willing to work on fishing boats because of poor pay and tough working conditions. The shortage is a key factor leading to deceptive and coercive labor practices, and even forced labor and human trafficking within the sector. Because fishing boats are not tied to a particular port or province, it is very difficult to obtain accurate statistical data and stock assessments to support effective

management and regulation of Thailand's fisheries. For fishing in both domestic and international waters, Thai fishing boats are required to obtain a registration permit from the Marine Department in Bangkok, which provides a tool for monitoring their movements into and out of port. In addition, the Immigration Department is responsible for checking that fishing crews headed for international waters have proper documentation, including passports and seaman's books. In practice, however, systematic registration and inspections do not take place (Mirror Foundation, 2011). Sources within the Royal Thai Marine Police have estimated that there are approximately 50,000 fishing boats operating out of Thai ports. However, only about 20,000 have completed the Marine Department's registration process (Robertson, 2011, p. 14).

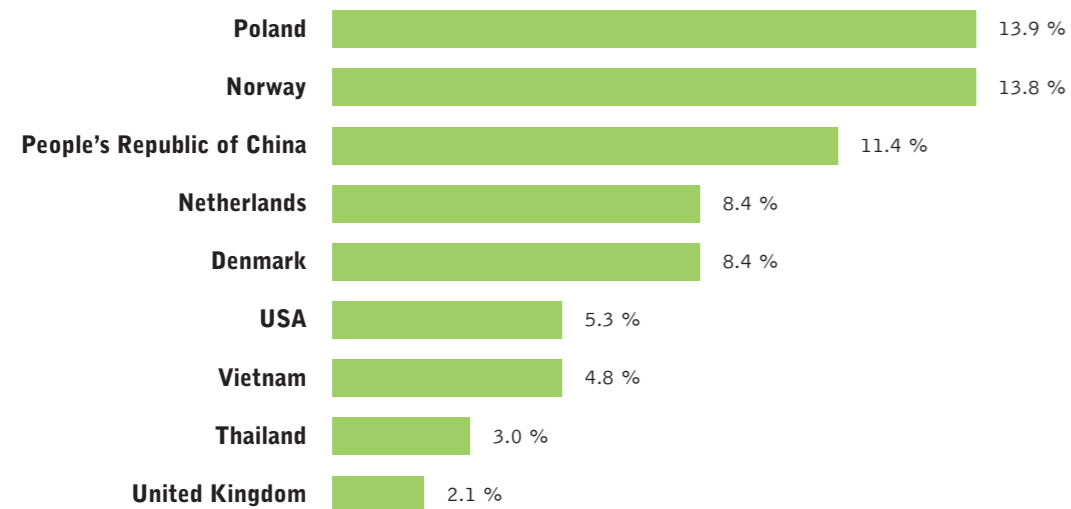
In 2013, The Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) examined employment practices and working conditions in Thailand's fishing sector in cooperation with ILO. It was found that most of the migrant workers in Thailand's fishing sector are Burmese and Cambodian nationals. More than half of the fishers had no documents. Most migrant fishers are therefore irregular migrant workers. The study confirmed



Fisheries production in Thailand, 1950 to 2012

These figures are for fish only, caught in marine fisheries, not for crustaceans, mollusks etc. Figures are in metric tons.

Source: FAO, Fisheries Statistics, Global Production Statistics, <http://www.fao.org/fishery/statistics/global-production/en>



German fish imports

Above are the most important source countries for fish in Germany based on import volume. These figures do not, however, make a distinction between fish caught or merely processed in the respective countries. Poland, for example, smokes a considerable volume of salmon for the German market, while China fillets fish for German frozen-food producers.

Germany imports nearly two million tons of fish valued at €3.5 billion annually. 59 percent of the fish originates outside of the EU.

Source: *Fischwirtschaft Daten und Fakten 2012*, Fisch-Informationszentrum e. V., Hamburg, www.bis-bremerhaven.de/sixcms/media.php/631/Daten_und_Fakten_Fischwirtschaft%202012.pdf

that there are cases of child labor, forced labor and human trafficking in the fishing industry as stated in the US TIP Report. However, the scale of the problem is not as large as suspected. Most laborers in the fishing boats still want to do their work and continue their livelihoods as fishermen. Nonetheless, the issue of exploitation must be addressed in a timely and professional

manner by policymakers. The important measures that Thailand needs to implement immediately are to reduce hazardous work at sea, to strengthen labor inspections in the fishing industry to preclude the exploitation of laborers, and to register all migrant fishermen so that they can be afforded full labor protection. In addition, Thailand must seek cooperation with countries of origin and those in whose waters Thai vessels operate. The recent exodus of more than 200,000 Cambodian migrant workers from Thailand is just an example that reflects the lack of cooperation between the countries of origin and destination in jointly handling labor migration. Another significant measure would be to revise outdated laws and regulations in the fishing industry that impede its own good governance. Thailand is now at the crossroads of economic productivity on one hand and political development and transparency on the other. With the recent military coup that followed protracted conflicts in the country the challenges for Thailand are now coming to a head. ■■■

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Three Years on the High Seas

The case of Prum Vannak

Manfred Hornung

In 1989, Typhoon Gay wreaked havoc in the Gulf of Thailand. As a result of the severe storm, 200 fishing boats sank and hundreds of Thai fishermen, mainly from the poorer regions of the Northeast, died or went missing. Driven by fear, the national labor supply in the Thai fishing sector virtually collapsed almost overnight in the wake of this unspeakable tragedy. Boat owners were forced to seek alternatives in the region. They began to fill the gaps left by the absence of the Thai workforce with migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. Since then, the Thai fishing industry has grown considerably, and with it the hunger for migrant labor. Criminal networks of brokers, often in collusion with the authorities, continue to secure the constant supply of trafficked human beings to the Thai fishing sector. This is the story of one Cambodian fisherman whose case stands for those of thousands of other men in many villages around the country.

Background

I first met Prum Vannak at the end of December 2009 in the police station of Mukah, a small coastal town in the Eastern Malaysian province of Sarawak on the island of Borneo. At the time I was working for the Cambodian NGO LICADHO, which, with the assistance of a network of partner organizations in the region, was trying to assist Cambodian fishermen who had been trafficked to the Thai commercial fishing fleet. Many of the Cambodian fishermen forced to work on Thai

long-haul trawlers in the South China Sea «jumped ship» after having spotted land off the coasts of Sarawak, Sabah or Brunei, following months of exploitation and abuse on the high seas. These men literally attempted to swim to their freedom and, what they all hoped for the most, expeditious and formal repatriation to their families back in Cambodia. Instead, what awaited most of the fishermen who were fortunate enough to reach the shores was being re-trafficked to oil palm plantations in Sarawak or «repatriation» through established networks of brokers who extorted money from the victims' families in collusion with the authorities. In that context, the case of Prum Vannak was nothing out of the ordinary. LICADHO and its partners had received hundreds of similar case notifications over the years. Yet, to some extent, the case of Vannak turned out to be rather exceptional.

Life in Cambodia

Vannak had spent his childhood and adolescence in Kampong Thom province after the end of the Khmer Rouge regime during, what he called, the time of «Vietnamese occupation.» He remembered having received his first pencil from a Vietnamese soldier when he was a kid. He had always liked to draw. Since his parents could not afford schooling for him, they sent him to live with his grandmother, who supported him throughout his primary education. At the age of 14 he left his home and started to travel around Cambodia, sleeping in pagodas. He became a monk and later joined the army. After his time in the army, he travelled to the town of Siem Reap to study the ancient stone reliefs

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in the nearby temples of Angkor Wat, and subsequently learned the craft of stone carving. For some time, he was trying to make a living as a stone carver, which did not earn him enough to support a family. In the meantime he had married, and at the age of 29 he was soon to become a father.

Worried about his family's financial situation, and short of money to cover the expenses to be incurred by the birth of his first child, Vannak left his home in June 2006 in search for temporary work along the Thai-Cambodian border. He knew this region quite well, since he had worked there before as a seasonal laborer. He told his wife, who was seven months pregnant at the time, that he would return before the birth with the much-needed cash. However, to his great disappointment, no work was available at the time he arrived. In that difficult situation, he was approached by a villager who told him that he could help him find a farm job just across the border in Thailand. A broker was called to arrange the transfer.

Trafficked across the border

Vannak reported that he was smuggled across the border at night-time in a large group consisting of men, women and children. On the Thai side, a number of pick-up trucks were waiting for the group. Vannak remembered that the people were «stacked like firewood» onto the loading areas of the trucks, before being covered by a tarpaulin. The car was driving the entire night, deeper into Thailand. This was the first time Vannak realized that something was terribly wrong.

When the truck finally stopped, a group of younger Cambodian men, among them Vannak, was taken to a house, where they were locked up together in one room. The house was heavily guarded and no one was allowed to leave. After a short while in captivity, Vannak and some of the other men were given seaman clothes and were escorted to a nearby harbor area, where they were forced to board a fishing trawler. At this time, Vannak was unaware that he had been taken – like many other Cambodians before him – to a guarded compound in the Thai province of Samut Prakan used by traffickers to sell their human booty to the Thai long-haul fishing fleet. At this point, Vannak only knew that he was in serious trouble with no chance to escape, yet still oblivious to the fact that his ordeal would last almost four years.

The trawler left the port shortly after and travelled to its fishing grounds in the South China Sea. On Vannak's boat were twelve crew members of various nationalities, including Burmese, Thais and Cambodians. The captain, the boat engineer and the crew foreman were all Thai nationals, and they carried guns.

Exploitation on the fishing trawler

Vannak had to endure various patterns of abuse and exploitation aboard the vessel. He was beaten by the captain. He had to work even when sick. There was no medicine on board for the seamen. The crew had to constantly attend to the two nets that were brought out at intervals on each side of the boat, then unload and process the fish.

During down-times, the men were forced to mend the nets or do repair work on the trawler. The crew rarely had more than three hours of rest per day. The threat of violence, beatings and other forms of degrading labor conditions characterized Vannak's entire time on the trawler, aggravated by the fact that he never received any payment for his work.

Since his fishing trawler was regularly approached on the high seas by what Vannak called bigger «mother ships» which took the catch to the fish processing facilities along the Thai coast, while supplying his boat with food, water, diesel and fresh crew, Vannak never stood a chance to leave his floating prison. His pleadings with the captain to allow him to leave on one of the mother ships were answered by beatings with a rod made of a stingray tail. The first opportunity to escape came after three years on the trawler.

Escape and re-trafficking

In August 2009, his boat was anchoring close to a clearly visible coastline. Vannak and another crew member decided to try their luck and escape, although they were completely unaware of the exact location of the boat. To minimize the risk of getting caught, they agreed to «jump ship» at night-time. They marked a spot on the side of the ship facing the coastline and secretly prepared two empty plastic containers as flotation devices. It was pitch-dark when they plunged into the sea. Vannak said that he was in such a state of panic that he forgot how long it actually took them to reach the shore. The next morning, the two escapees were spotted on the beach by a group of men

who took them to the nearest police station. At this point, Vannak learned that they were stranded in Sarawak, Malaysia. At the police station he tried to indicate to the officers that he was from Cambodia and that he wished to return home. Sometime later, several men in civilian clothes entered the police station and started to talk with the officers. Vannak and his friend were taken away by these men in their car. They dropped them at an oil-palm plantation, where Vannak and his friend were forced to work. At the plantation they met several other former fishermen from Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand who had jumped ship as they did. A new round of trafficking and forced labor had just opened up for Vannak.

The return

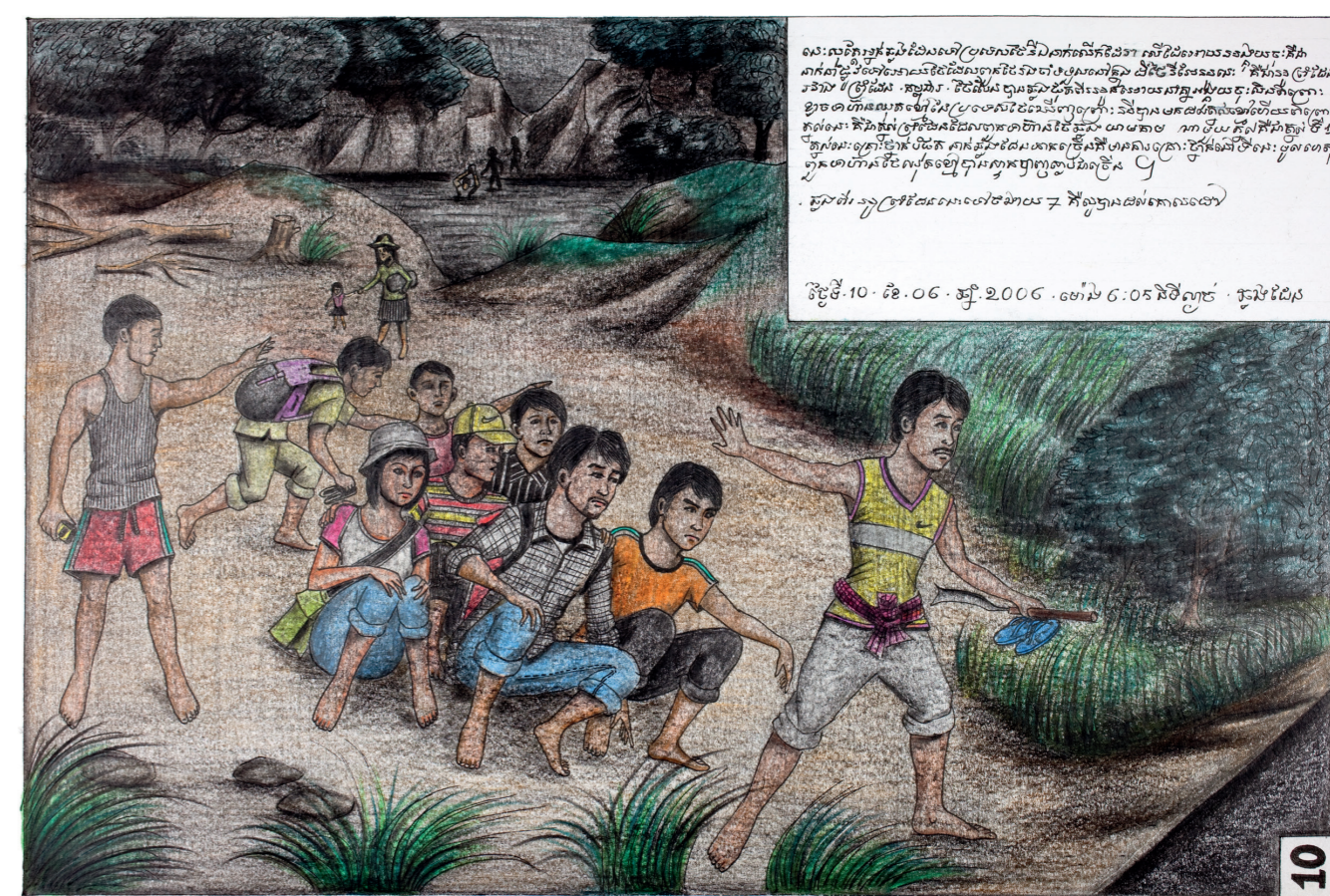
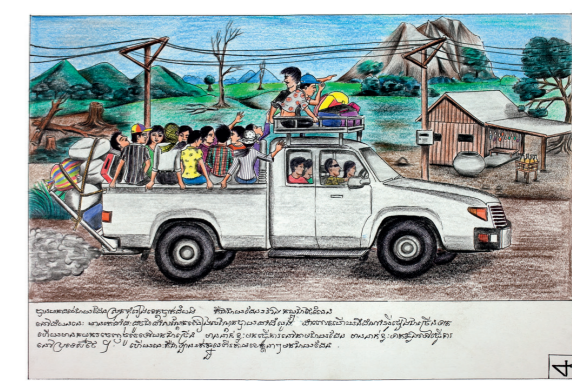
In late November 2009, a fight broke out on the plantation. Vannak and a fellow Cambodian were attacked with a machete and suffered severe head injuries. Being unable to work and of «no value» anymore, the plantation manager approached the police to turn Vannak and his friend in. At this point, the police authorities in Sarawak informed a Malaysian civil-society organization known to assist foreign migrants in distress. This organization, a network partner, immediately notified LICADHO of the cases. This was the time when we traveled to Mukah to meet with the police authorities, Vannak and the other man to build their cases and lobby for their repatriation. On these trips, we made efforts to visit as many police stations and detention centers in Sarawak as possible, and usually encountered dozens of other Cambodian

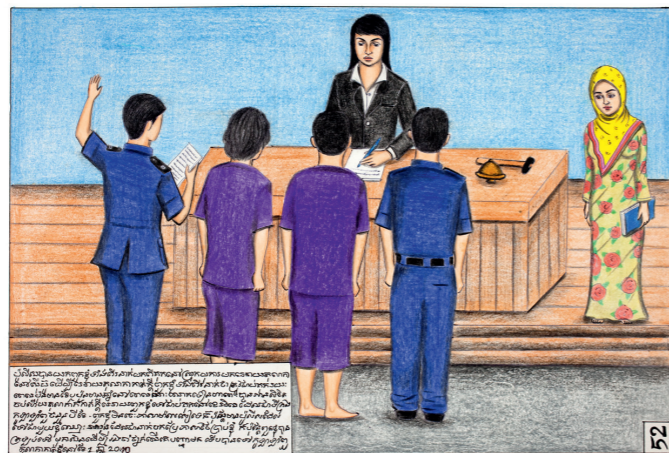
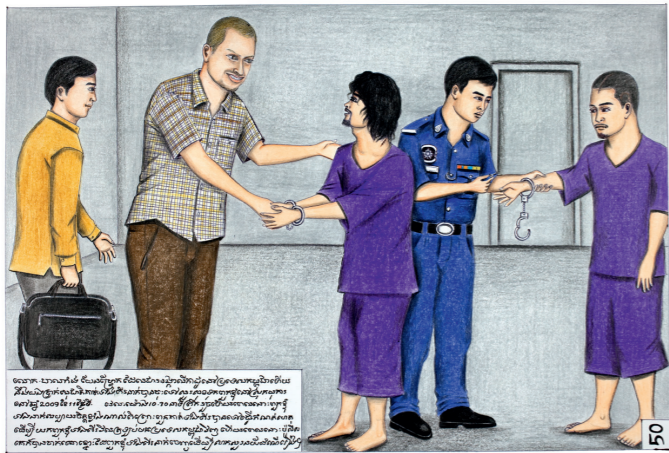
fishermen trapped in the same situation. It is important to note that at a regional level, Malaysia's 2007 Anti-Trafficking in Persons Bill (ATIP-Bill) ranks among the most advanced pieces of legislation in terms of victim protection. Unfortunately, the ATIP-Bill is rarely applied by the Malaysian authorities that routinely turn to the punitive sections of the more rigid Immigration Law in dealing with cases of trafficked foreign fishermen. LICADHO's role under the given circumstances was to prepare case files and convince the authorities to repatriate the Cambodian fishermen under the protective provisions of the ATIP-Bill in lieu of sentencing them to prison terms and caning them under the Immigration Law.

Even more importantly, besides the legal efforts, the role of the civil-society networks is to ensure that the police and immigration authorities in both Malaysia and Cambodia have to expect regular outside scrutiny of the handling of individual cases. Having a case file as trafficking victim, including a proper name and an individual case story, simply means a higher level of protection for these men. What usually happened after the «illegal Cambodian migrants» had served their respective sentences – in most cases three months imprisonment and one stroke with a cane – was that they were approached in Malaysian immigration detention centers by brokers who cooperated with the authorities. These brokers told the detainees that they would only be able to return home if their families in Cambodia bailed them out. Once the brokers had the contact details of the families, they informed a member of their traffick-

ing ring in Cambodia who approached the families for the money. This system worked fairly well. After the payment of the ransom, the repatriation occurred usually within one week. At the time I was working on these cases, the per-capita «release rate» for a Cambodian fisherman in Malaysia stood at roughly \$400, which was an enormous amount of money for a rural Cambodian family. In many instances, the extortionist schemes led to new rounds of indebtedness, forcing another family member into insecure migration to make up for the loss. Through their interventions, LICADHO and its partners hoped to at least break the vicious cycle of multiple re-trafficking and prevent that the families of the trafficking victims had to pay a ransom for the return of their loved ones.

Vannak eventually returned home in the spring of 2010 after long and drawn-out repatriation procedures. For the first time he saw his daughter who was born two months after he had left his home in 2006. His talent as an artist helped him to deal with his traumatic experience. He began to draw his story. Through his powerful images, starting with his family, the people around him gradually began to understand what it really meant to be a slave laborer on a fishing boat. Vannak continued to advocate for the rights of migrant fishermen with the help of his original artwork, reaching ever wider audiences. In recognition of his tireless efforts in the fight against human trafficking, Vannak received an award by the US State Department in June 2012, in a ceremony presided over by the then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. ■■■





Two Hundred Sixty Million

Migrant workers in China

Millions of migrant workers are now living in China's cities. They have substantially contributed to the country's immense economic growth, but now, 35 years after China's reform policy was introduced, they are being left behind by well-educated urban dwellers who enjoy higher incomes and improved living conditions. The following introduction outlines the social and political situations of Chinese migrant workers; the subsequent interviews explore their circumstances in greater depth. Three personal and exemplary stories vividly illustrate the current living and working conditions of Chinese migrant workers.

China's unprecedented economic growth over the past 35 years would not have been possible without the millions of people who flocked to the country's economic centers as cheap labor. Internal migration in China is mainly labor migration. The migrant workers, or *nongmingong* – literally, «peasant workers» – leave their poor rural home regions in search of higher incomes and better job opportunities outside the agricultural sector. In the cities, they mostly work in factories, on construction sites, in the service sector and in the catering industry. The workers make a significant contribution to poverty reduction in their home regions through remittances from their income.

According to figures published by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, there were approximately 269 million *nongmingong* in 2013, 2.4 percent more than in the previous year. About 166 million of them are employed outside their home region.

The average income of migrant workers has risen steadily in recent years. According to official statistics, it was 2,290 RMB or approximately \$368 in 2012 (11.8 percent more than in the previous year), and 2,609 RMB or approximately \$418 in 2013 (13.9 percent more than in 2012). At the same time, however, the cost of living in cities is increasing. Rents alone now account for around 50 percent of the total cost of living. Inflation-driven price increases are a further burden. The wage increases have thus had little effect in terms of improved living conditions or increased purchasing power.

The Chinese government has reformed its labor laws in recent years. However, because migrant workers are still mostly employed informally, the situation has not fundamentally changed for them. Only a few have legally binding employment contracts, and the social protections guaranteed by law continue to be denied to the majority. They also rarely have effective means of suing for back wages and compensation in the event of an occupational accident.

Furthermore, the *hukou* household registration that has been in place since 1958 has led to a strict, institutionalized distinction between the urban and the rural populations. China's migrant workers may have lived and worked in cities for many years and still only be in possession of a rural *hukou*, thus excluding them and their families from many public and social services. According to official figures, in 2013 only 15.7 percent of migrant workers had pension insurance and only 17.6 percent had health insurance. In addition, children of migrant workers do not have the same educational opportunities as children with an urban *hukou*.

A reform of the *hukou* system has been a topic of discussion for years, both in government circles and among scientists, intellectuals and the media, and reform experiments are being conducted in selected pilot regions. Municipal administrations often resist these developments out of fear that they will not be able to raise the additional resources for the integration of migrant workers. Fundamental structural reforms to eliminate the existing social and legal injustices thus have yet to be put in place. Nevertheless, the debate is beginning to pick up again. In late July 2014, the State Council announced comprehensive reforms and a relaxation of the previously strict distinction between urban and rural *hukou*. It will initially be abolished in smaller towns in particular. Restrictions on migrant workers will remain in place in the cities, however.

Material differences and injustices are only one aspect of the issue. A further one is the social discrimination frequently faced by migrant workers in the cities. City dwellers frequently harbor prejudices against migrants and look down on them, prompting migrant workers to see themselves as second-class citizens. A further debate revolves around the second generation of *nongmingong*. Often these young people were born in a city and consider themselves urbanites. In most cases, they feel no connection whatsoever to the rural home regions of their parents. However, because they have only a rural *hukou*, they do not have the same opportunities and access to public resources as registered city dwellers.

The extensive urbanization plans announced in the third plenary session of the 18th National Congress of the Commu-

nist Party, as well as the recently published *hukou* reform plans, must also be accompanied by comprehensive reforms of the social security system and the educational sector. These preconditions are essential to successfully integrating migrant workers, lessening existing injustices and countering a polarization of the population. ■■■

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«When I'm not working, I'm sleeping.»

Dong Jianzhuang, age 57, Beijing, Haidian District, on a construction site on the campus of Peking University (May 2, 2012).

Excerpts from interviews with migrant workers

While there are numerous publications, research projects and analyses on the topic of migrant workers in China, those directly affected are rarely given a voice. The following excerpts from three interviews previously published in Chinese in 2012 and 2013 appear here with the kind permission of the publisher: three personal stories of people explaining their reasons for moving to the city, the challenges they face there and their hopes for themselves and their future.

I first met Mr. Dong at the entrance of a construction site operated by Beijing Chengjian. He wore a blue worker uniform and stood at the gate... He told me that he had worked in many different places in the past years. During this time, he had closely observed the particular ways in which migrant workers are being treated: «One thing is the same almost everywhere: People have prejudices against migrant workers.»

Hello, Mr. Dong. How long have you been in Beijing, and how did you get here?

Dong Jianzhuang: I've been here three months. A relative gave me a reference. The head of this construction company is from Henan Province, as I am. He has lived in Beijing for a very long time, however. Most of the workers on this construction site are from Henan.

What is your main job?

I guard the entrance to the construction site and make sure that the company's property is safe. I'm also generally responsible for safety and keeping unauthorized persons off the construction site. Everyone on the site must wear a hardhat, for example, on account of the dangers posed by the large machines. Visitors are also not allowed to smoke. Furthermore, I register the incoming and outgoing earth-moving equipment in the evenings.

What about your working hours? How long are you usually here?

A colleague and I guard the entrance around the clock. We alternate in four shifts a day. The first shift begins at 6:00 a.m. and goes until noon. The following shifts go from noon to 6:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m. to midnight, and from midnight to 6:00 a.m. So we both work twelve hours a day.

Is the work exhausting?

Yes, the work is very strenuous and the working conditions are bad. The earth-moving equipment and other machines make a lot of noise. The air is also very dusty. Our boss expects us to stand while we're on duty. But sometimes we're so tired that we simply need to sit down

briefly. In the months that I've been working here, I have never been able to rest properly. My health has already suffered a great deal, and my body can no longer keep up.

How do you spend the time in which you are not working?

When I'm not working, I'm sleeping. I don't have time for other activities. With the stressful work and the shifts, I simply need to sleep. I never really feel well-rested. Before I came to Beijing, I always planned on going to Tiananmen Square to see the portrait of Mao Zedong, but I still haven't had the time to do so. Even my family is hoping that I'll still manage to get there sometime. Before I leave Beijing, I really must go there.

What has impressed you most about Beijing?

To be honest, I'm very disappointed. Before I came here, I thought that the people and the atmosphere would be very interesting. But when I arrived, I realized that the people here are not unlike us villagers. There really aren't any great differences. We live in an era shaped by business. Making money is the only thing that matters, and every means is justified. I've found that many people who are not from here get scammed.

Some people call you «new city residents,» «migrant workers» or «external workers.» How do you feel about these different names?

I don't care what they call us. Beijingers are Beijingers, migrant workers are migrant workers. The Beijingers see us the way they want to see us. They're prejudiced against us and look down on us. As newcomers, we can't afford to make trouble. We put up with it for as long as we can.

How much do you earn?

We gatekeepers were recently given a raise to 2,100 RMB [ca. \$342] per month. We live in a shack on the construction site; we have to cover our own food and other expenses.

Do you receive bonuses for working weekends and holidays?

When we work on weekends, we get just as much as any other day; we don't get weekends. For May 1, my colleague and I get an extra 300 RMB [ca. \$48] holiday pay. But the people working in the project office get 600 RMB. Others received even more. We gatekeepers get the least. That's not equal treatment.

What do you mean by that?

We don't work any less than the people in the project office, yet our wages and holiday pay are different. Anyone who is well connected with the boss gets more. The officials also earn more. What's more, people have to work here for at least two months before they become eligible for holiday pay. Yet many workers are here for only 50 days, and so they didn't get anything for May 1.

Do you receive your wages on time?

We usually get our money on the tenth of the month. My employer retained 900 RMB [ca. \$143] from my first month's wages, though, and I don't know if I'll ever get it back. When I started working here, no one told me that they would be retaining part of my pay. Something similar happened to a colleague of mine. In his case, they kept a whole 20 days' worth of wages, and he doesn't know if he'll ever see that money.

If you have to pay for your own food, where do you go to eat?

Some of us go to the Peking University cafeteria; that costs about 500 to 600 RMB a month. I can't afford it, though, so I mostly cook for myself in my shack. Two other colleagues and I chip in to buy rice and vegetables. That costs me about 300 RMB a month.

What do you spend your wages on otherwise?

Earning money is not easy. It simply slips through my fingers. Apart from the 300 RMB that I spend on food, I buy only everyday necessities. I can save about 1,500 RMB [ca. \$240] a month and send the money home. Normally, I don't buy anything. I can't afford it. I don't smoke and I don't drink alcohol.

Health insurance for migrant workers

On March 20, 2012, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Human Resources and Social Security issued a statement on «questions pertaining to basic health insurance for employees in Beijing.» It stipulates that as of April 1, 2012, all migrant workers without exception who enter into an employment relationship must be accepted into the City of Beijing's health insurance for urban workers.

Do you know about the regulation stating that migrant workers must be provided health insurance?

I have never heard of it. We don't have health insurance. Anyone who gets seriously ill has to go home for treatment because the costs are lower in rural areas than in Beijing.

Do you get reimbursed for the cost of medicines?

No, not so far.

Have you ever had a checkup?

No, they don't offer them for free. And how are we supposed to pay for a checkup out of our own pockets?

Do you have a contract with this construction site?

No, the boss didn't say a word about that. I haven't signed anything and I'm not sure what the point of that would be.

How long do you want to stay on this construction site?

That's hard to say. Basically, it's no longer that difficult to make money in my home region. When I reach the point where I can no longer handle this job physically, I'll go back there.

During the interview, Mr. Dong could not resist asking repeatedly, «What's the point of me telling you so much? Will it improve our difficult situation? Will the injustices stop?» I do not know who could give a positive response to this question. None of the other migrant workers I met were as concerned about the fate of their colleagues as Mr. Dong. His interest in social issues went far beyond what I have previously encountered in people with his educational background. ■■■

Just a tiny contribution

Wei Chen, Tongzhen, Yulin, Jia County

Wei Chen was born in Tongzhen, Yulin, Jia County. In 2006, during his third year of middle school, he decided to drop out, believing he was not made for learning. Wei Chen, an only son, comes from a poor family. He had little choice but to embark on the search for work, following a relative who worked at a construction site in Inner Mongolia. For eight years he worked there as a backhoe operator.

Wei Chen spent the first half year in training, after which he built roads with his construction crew. He learned how to operate backhoe loaders, dumpers and road rollers, and how to give instructions. When the road project was completed in 2008, Wei Chen's construction crew was not hired for any follow-up projects due to the financial crisis, and he had to turn to other companies. At a new construction site, he worked around the clock with only a few breaks for one year. When the construction was completed, he went to Wushenqi, where he worked in road construction for another three years. Over the years he was able to save 130,000 RMB [ca. \$21,200].

When Wei Chen looks back on those eight years today, he believes he wasted his youth. They were eight years in a monotonous, desolate region. It was like living in a black-and-white film, he says – no colors, only desert.

No longer suited for city life

Wei Chen, who is now 26 years old, finally returned to Yulin to start a family. After all the time he spent in Inner Mongolia, he soon realized he would not be able to do anything truly substantial with the 130,000 RMB he had saved, nor was he particularly suited for his new life in the city... «The years in the construction crew left their mark on me. The work there had to be done with great precision. In today's society, however, it is very difficult to get ahead with that approach. Appearances are all that matter here; the entire society is a giant bubble. I earned a lot with hard work during those eight years, but in hindsight it was all in vain... I've been living off my savings since returning to Yulin. I am looking for a job, but at the same time I'm trying to be as relaxed as possible and find something that I really enjoy.»

When asked whether this lack of orientation is common among his peers, he replied that many others feel the same and would simply take life one day at a time. «A few of my school friends have had children and are constantly thinking about how to make money. If they cannot work because the kids are sick, they face a loss of earnings. If it turns out they need a doctor, the financial pressure is even greater. If it were up to me, I would not marry.»

Difficult integration in the city

Wei Chen also shared his views on the topic of reintegration in the city: «In the long term, there is no alternative to getting used to the city because you can no longer live in the country. It's simply not possible to make a living in agriculture, and nothing works anymore in the villages. There are hardly any schools, and the children do not get a proper education. Things are somewhat better in small towns. The villagers have since come to terms with the changes and are moving there, even if the cost of many things is much higher in small towns.»

A few of Wei Chen's friends work in smaller towns as waiters or cooks, and although they have a steady income it is not enough for even a modest living. Service workers rarely earn even 1,800 RMB [ca. \$287] per month. While wages are said to have increased over the past two years, prices have also soared. For all practical purposes, wages have not increased. «A few years ago, you could fill a shopping basket with 2 RMB, but today you can spend 200 RMB [ca. \$29] and the basket is still half empty. As before, peasants and migrant workers are still on the lowest rung of the ladder.»

During the interview, Wei Chen initially did not have any direct answers to several questions about his future. It was not until the end of the conversation that he emphasized several times that his ideal life would be in the service of helping others. In reality, Wei Chen and his generation of young villagers have already made their honest, unconditional contribution to society – one that can be seen in their sacrifices. ■■■

A young mother who sells socks

Xiao Zhang, Beijing, Chaoyang District,
in the area of Daitou (April 6, 2013)

Daitou is a densely populated, somewhat run-down residential area in southeastern Beijing at the Fourth Ring Road. Nine years ago, residential towers suddenly sprouted like mushrooms, multiplying at an absurd pace. Today, thousands of people inhabit several hundred tower blocks. Apart from the three bus stops, the evenings are liveliest in an area in which hawkers jostle to make a bit of money. One of them is Xiao Zhang. Her «stand» is tiny: no more than a white square of cloth spread out on the grass by the roadside – and on it, a hodgepodge of colorful socks. Unlike other vendors who noisily vie for customers, Xiao Zhang seems to have no great enthusiasm for selling her socks. She would rather play with her young son.

Your child is really nice. Is he your only one?

Xiao Zhang: I have another son, but I sent him home to go to school. He's a bit older. His father and his grandmother are taking care of him. This is Xiao Bao. He has just entered preschool.

Where are you from?

I come from Cangzhou in Hebei Province.

Have many people left your hometown seeking work?

There are rich and poor people in the country, and there's no need to leave if you can make a living. People who have to leave their home have it tough. We used to have a lot of land, about 10 mu [6,700 m²], which belonged to the family of my mother-in-law. Later, a couple mu were requisitioned, partly for road construction, or because some huts were to be built there. I don't know exactly, because my mother-in-law's family farms the land, and we're not involved in the field work. That kind of work isn't really worthwhile these days. You can hardly call it an income; on the contrary – in the end it costs you money. That's why no one wants to work in the fields in my hometown anymore. There's also a factory, but it doesn't offer many jobs.

And when did you come to Beijing?

2009. That's a long time ago now.

Why did you choose Beijing back then?

The man who fixes cars next door is the father of my son Xiao Bao. He's been here quite a few years, and I followed him. He's not so alone when I'm around. I don't exactly know why he went to Beijing back then. He's not really good at anything, so he fixes cars. His monthly income is extremely low, and everything he earns goes toward the family. Back when Xiao Bao was very young, I took care of him. Now that he's older and is in preschool, I don't have much to do. So I'm selling this stuff here to earn some money for school.

How much do you earn in a month?

Not much. If many people come by, I earn a few dozen RMB per day. Yesterday, for example, I made only 20 RMB [about €2.40]. If I sell this pair of socks here for around 20 RMB, that leaves me a profit of only 5 or 6 RMB.

Do you make around 1,500 RMB a month?

Are you kidding? How can I earn 1,500 RMB [ca. \$240] in a month? I make just over 50 RMB [ca. \$8.10] a day in the best-possible case, and even that is almost impossible. There are also days when I don't even make 10 RMB [ca. \$1.60]. The day before yesterday was one of those days: I made only a couple RMB. Same thing yesterday. How do you think that would work?! I also have to be flexible to take my child to preschool and pick him up again. I'm basically a single parent. How would I take care of Xiao Bao if I had a regular job and had to work weekends, or if I didn't get time off when he's sick? I don't have grandparents nearby who could take care of him. So it's better to do it this way. If I'm too busy, I don't even come here. Otherwise, I simply take my child with me, take care of my day-to-day business, and then have a little money for the family.

Do you live nearby?

I live in that building just across the street, in the basement.

Isn't it dark and cold? Especially now that the heating has been off for two days?

I can't afford a real apartment. The room in the basement costs 600 RMB [ca. \$95] a month, and I have to pay 500 RMB in school fees for my son. There's nothing left over. When Xiao Bao isn't home, I'll just warm up a couple of *mantou* [steamed buns] for myself. If he's around, I'll sometimes cook something. In any case, I have to save on food. Even if I had a real job, I probably wouldn't earn much more.

Do you feel that you're sometimes treated unfairly?

If you're a street vendor, nothing can happen to you if you have money, influence, and a big stand. But when people like me spread out their wares, we have to leave whenever the *Chengguan* [城管, municipal law enforcement officers] show up. If we don't, they immediately confiscate our wares and don't return them. And that's fair? No, it's not. Look, over there – they know someone in the *Chengguan*. They can have such a big stand and nothing happens to them. But they take our stuff and don't return it. They can't imagine the lives of ordinary people like us who don't have a job or an education. It's okay as long as you don't have children. Then it doesn't matter whether you have a bit more or a bit less. But with children, you have to make enough money to feed them and still save for school.

How do you feel about the *Chengguan*?

The *Chengguan* are real bandits. When they show up, it doesn't matter where you hide your wares. They simply take whatever they want. If you don't want to give it to them, they'll claim you're obstructing their work and confiscate the stuff. What can you do? We ordinary people don't stand a chance in conflicts with the authorities. We have to do what they say. They have already taken away all of my things twice and not returned them. One woman from our village once had all of her things taken away – wares that she had just bought for 500 RMB [ca. \$80]. She was left with only 100 RMB, but she needed that to pay the fine.

What are your plans for the future?

My plans for the future? To wait until my child is a bit older. It's pretty hard for people like us – without an education, with a child – to find work.

You've been here for so many years now.

Do you have anything else other than these hardships?

We're uneducated. I'm not really sure how to put this differently. The rich have their way of life, and the poor have theirs. Fair or unfair, good or bad, that's just the way it is. I still have to earn a bit of money for my two children so they can have a better future. In the village, you would simply get married and get a house from the man's family. It's different in the city. I just want to earn a bit of money for my children – it doesn't matter how. ■■■

Coming Home with another Islam

Returning labor migrants from Gulf countries and their ideological baggage

Imtiaz Gul

Pakistani migrant workers who leave home for better economic opportunities in the oil-rich Gulf countries frequently return after a few years. However, the Wahhabi ideology they were exposed to abroad has a profound effect on their personal outlook. This article examines the impact of those returning workers on Pakistani society, politics and religion.¹

In the wake of the oil boom of the 1970s, waves of illiterate, unskilled and poor Pakistani laborers rushed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other Gulf countries in hopes of better economic prospects. While most benefitted economically, many were also influenced by the «true Islam» as preached by the puritan reformist Muhammad Ibn Wahhab in the 18th century. Migrant workers in Saudi Arabia in particular are exposed to this brand of Islam commonly known as Wahhabism. Wahhabis are opposed to Sufism, reject shrines and avoid visits to graves.

The ideological influence of the Arabs is both attractive and toxic, particularly for illiterate or semi-literate workers who lead a very hard life in the Gulf region and are always seeking relief from their rigorous routines.² A prosperous economy, better overall standards of living in the Gulf states and the luxurious life of the locals certainly make an impression. Furthermore, as all of the Gulf states are staunch followers of Salafi and Wahhabi thought, they actively promote this brand of Islam. It therefore takes little persuasion for the migrant workers to be counted to the same creed.

The terms Salafi and Wahhabi are used interchangeably. People in Pakistan follow Deobandism as a matter of course and have

no rational inclination toward the mixed notion of religious theology Deobandism offers. Salafists exploit this fact with their strong intellectualism and formalism.³

Pakistani workers

Of the four million Pakistani overseas workers, nearly 94 percent are concentrated in the Gulf countries. The bulk of them – i.e. about 80 percent – are located in KSA and UAE. 30 percent of these migrant workers are currently from the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).⁴

The population of KPK is 22.326 million.⁵ Inspired by the Sufi ideology of mysticism and theosophy, «the Barelvis – followers of Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi, who started a movement to defend Mystic thoughts of Islam in 1920 in Bareilly, India – used to dominate the KPK/FATA.»⁶ Deobandis (followers of the Islamic reformist movement started in 1866 in Deoband, northern India), who reduced Sufism to asceticism and theosophy to acumen,⁷ are now gradually outnumbering the Barelvis through the work of missionaries (Tableghis). Deobandis have gained considerable political influence in society. The Wahhabi philosophy is making its mark on society for two reasons: the close association of workers in Saudi Arabia and the influence of political Islam through Al-Qaeda's pan-Islamist ideology that resonates with numerous Muslims across the globe.

Although they reject Sufism, asceticism and theosophy, the literalist, strict and puritan Salafists-Wahhabists are also making strong inroads in other parts of Pakistan. Saudi Arabian-influenced Wahhabi-Salafi

Islam is proliferating in large parts of central and southern Punjab as well; besides tens of thousands of migrant workers from those areas working in the Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, more than 1,500 Deobandi-Salafi seminaries, largely represented by the outlawed Lashkare Taiba and Jaishe Mohammad, draw over \$100 million in donations from the Gulf countries, according to a former US diplomat, Bryan Hunt (revealed in Wikileaks).⁸

The November 2008 dispatch by Bryan Hunt, the then-principal officer at the US consulate in Lahore, said «those (official and private) sources claimed that financial aid from Saudi Arabia and the UAE was coming from «missionary» and «Islamic charitable» organizations ostensibly with the direct support of those countries' governments.»

Once indoctrinated, these workers collect donations intended for building mosques and seminaries. The traditional channel of Salafi and Wahhabi influence into Pakistan are the overseas Pakistanis working in the Arab countries who return with their conservative Salafi tendencies.⁹

Once back home, these workers consider it their religious duty to imbue their families and friends with the «spirit of true Islam.» The impact can be ascertained in interactions with different segments of the society like a labor returnee in Peshawar who now runs a restaurant and asserts: «Arabs know Islam better than we do.» Imran, a native of Malakand Division, holds the view: «The Salafis are so ideologically knitted together that they even don't pray at other mosques and try to reach their specific mosque; most are the labor returnees.» Shams Mohmand, a senior journalist based in Peshawar, says: «In Charsada

they were able to convert a Deobandi missionary, Haji Fida Muhammad, who runs a seminary now.»

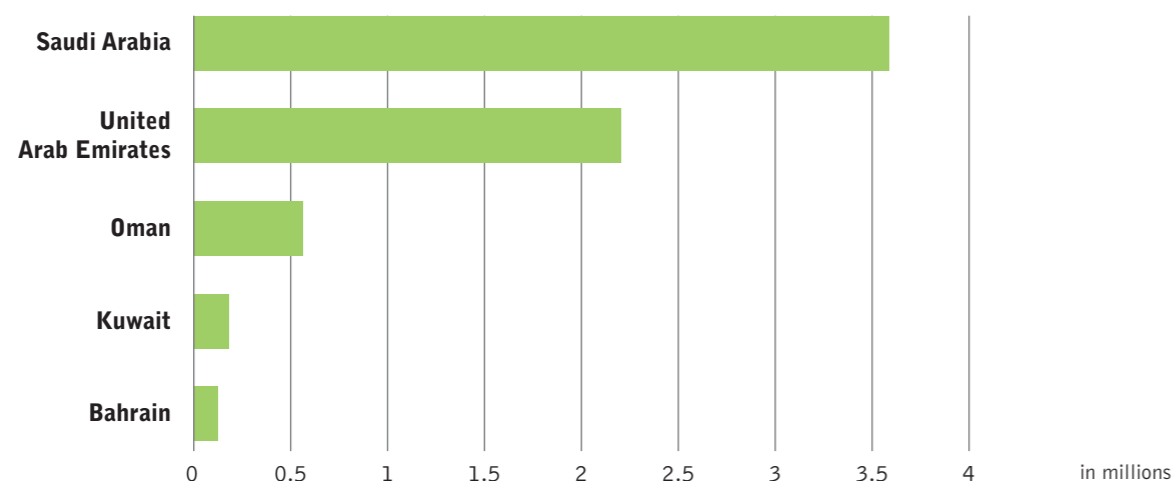
In FATA meanwhile, Wahhabi Arabs, Central Asians, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)¹⁰ and other jihadist outfits opposed to Deobandism play a more important role in the ideological spread in comparison to the role played by migrant workers. They are also believed to be providing monetary support to the Taliban.

Impact dynamics

The impact of Salafism on Pakistani society is threefold, i.e. social, political and religious.

Socially, the mosque plays a crucial role in the indoctrination process as it remains the first contact for young people in particular. Salafi mosques are mosque-cum-camps, the gateway to the recruitment process. Recruiting is done with ease as the banned Jamat-ut-Dawa (JuD, the successor to Lashkare Taiba) is linked to all.¹¹ Relative to those of the Deobandis their organizational structures are very strong and more comparable to institutes than traditional religious organizations. The linkage of mosque, JuD and training camps provides ground for the recruitment of youth. The recruited are sent to Muridke, Lahore, in Punjab for «Daur-e-Sufa» ideological training, then to Oghi, Mansehra, for «Daur-e-Aam» which is a basic fighting course, and lastly to «Daur-e-Khas» commando-style military training in Azad Kashmir. The next step is actual combat.¹²

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The five most important destination countries for Pakistani migrant workers and the total number of migrants from Pakistan from 1971 to 2013

Source: Government of Pakistan, Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Islamabad, <http://www.beoe.gov.pk/> quoted from «Overseas Pakistani Workers: Significance and Issues of Migration», Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, Briefing Paper 34, 2008, p. 8, «Strengthening Labour Migration Governance in Pakistan», ILO, undated http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-islamabad/documents/publication/wcms_241600.pdf

Almost all of the organizations banned in January 2002 resumed work under new names and the law certainly does not bar opening or running faith-based charity organizations.

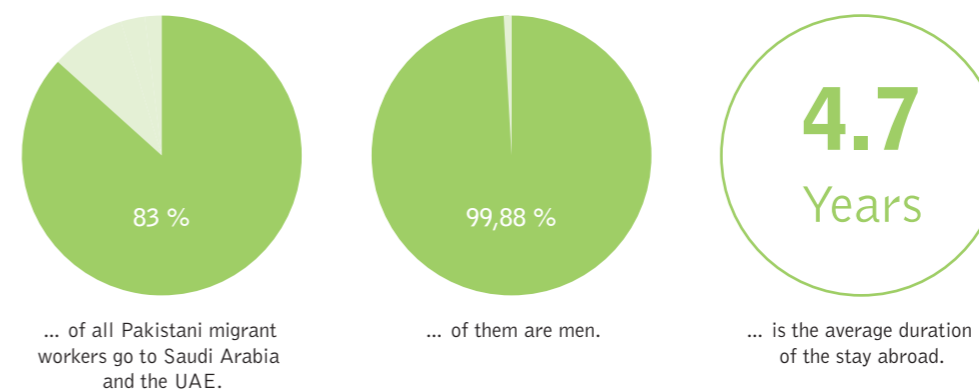
Intolerance against conflicting religious views has increased.¹³ This wave of Salafism can be seen clearly in the case study of the districts Mansehra, Batgram and Kohistan.¹⁴

Of a population of 7.2 million in the northern Hazara division, Abbottabad sends the highest number of workers to the Gulf, followed by Haripur, Mansehra, Batgram and Kohistan. The urbanized Abbottabad has the greatest number of Salafist mosques at 200, followed by 95 in Haripur, 27 in Mansehra, two in Batgram and one in Kohistan. In Mansehra, 700 households claim to be Salafist in principle, practice, outlook and affiliations.¹⁵ The remaining Salafists are individuals who become inspired, reformed and indoctrinated. Muhammad Yousaf, an individual representing a classic case of labor migration to

KSA from Batgram, and who returned with the Wahhabi ideology, founded a mosque in 2004 with Saudi funding. It was burnt by Deobandis in protest but has since been rebuilt and is once again functioning.¹⁶ As in Batgram, Salafism was brought to the complex, tribal and highly remote Kohistan by a labor returnee, Rafi-ud-din, who opened a mosque in 2010 mainly with funding from non-official Saudi sources.¹⁷ Girls above the age of 13 are rarely to be seen there.¹⁸

Women, already chattel, are being denied whatever little freedom they had.¹⁹ The traditional veil is being replaced by the Arab-style abaya, the black body veil that covers a woman from head to toe. We are also witnessing an unparalleled increase in seminaries for women. Seminaries affiliated with the Al-Huda Foundation play a significant role, for example by encouraging women to practice polygamy and observe complete veiling where only their eyes can be seen.²⁰ The fables about 7th-century Islam that female preachers impart often blind their followers intellectually – many of whom are affluent and educated. Most of them simply become docile followers of Islam, ready to accept whatever comes from the pulpit. The majority wouldn't even mind their husbands marrying another three women – while this is permitted by Islam, few realize that the attached conditions are so stringent as to make compliance almost impossible.

The biggest impact is on seminary students who are poor and unskilled, leaving them no other choice but to go for militancy.²¹ Moreover, the JuD is involved in charity, and through this mingles with society, students and media, thus finding opportunities to spread its voice and earn respect.²²



Political impact

Politically, they have created chaos and many returnees are reported to be joining jihadist outfits. Muslim Khan, a former spokesperson of TTP, Swat, was also a labor migrant to the Gulf. He went to Kuwait as a laborer in early 90s and then to the U.S., where he drove a taxi and held other odd jobs, as reported by the people in Swat. Similarly, other workers are also exposed to the version of Islam practiced in the Gulf states and its justification of jihad and an Islamic concept of the state given in the form of Qur'anic verses and Prophet sayings. Moreover, letters by overseas workers addressed to Mukaram Shah (former TTP commander in Swat) found by this author reveal a deep connection of overseas Pakistani workers to the leaders of TTP in Swat, and when they return, they challenge the existing order in the region. Some religious reforms were introduced to Pakistan's 1973 constitution during the era of military dictator Zia ul Haq, but they reflected Sunni principles related to blasphemy and no Wahhabi-influenced legislation has been put in place to date. However, Wahhabis exploit such laws and declare others blasphemous to achieve their ends. The political elite therefore cannot legislate in this controversial matter for fear of being declared blasphemous. For example, the former Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, was killed by his own security guard while defending a Christian girl accused of blasphemy in January 2011.

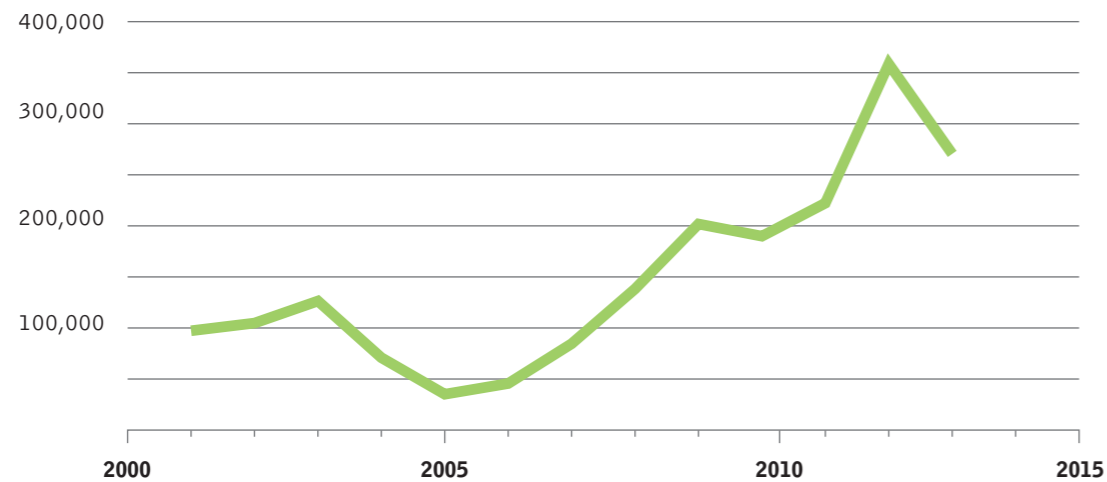
Most rural areas in the country's most populous province of Punjab have not been spared the proliferation of the Wahhabi Islam either. Religio-political as well as jihadist organizations wield considerable

social influence, particularly over youth – most of whom regularly visit seminaries and mosques that practice the Wahhabi brand of Islam, which they are made to believe also provides answers to political questions.

Furthermore, Pakistan was founded on the principles of Islam. The debate about enforcing an Islamic system has carried on since the country's inception. But with its cluster of sects, it has always been disputed as to which form of Islam out of the many interpretations should be the paradigm. It is this range of interpretations that has paved the way for the Salafists to introduce theirs – the difference being that they want to enforce it through violence.

Religious impact

Beside influencing common people into practicing Salafist Islam, i.e. through regular prayers, prompting them to stay away from shrines and forcing women to strictly observe veiling, Wahhabi-Salafi Islam also finds its manifestation in the way people name their children. The trend can be gauged by the fact that names inspired by the early fighters of the 1st and 2nd centuries of Islam are now trending in the households of Arab returnees and converted Salafists – i.e. Ameer Muawiah, Abu Talhah, Abdur-Rehman, Abu Huraira and Huzaifa. Former KPK Religious Affairs Minister Roohullah Madni argues that «the religious junta in Pakistan is left unchecked and they are not answerable to any authority; this lack of institutionalization of clergy has made it easier for Salafism to intervene in the already established religious theology.»²³ The anathematization of other sects – declaring them



Development of Pakistani work migration to Saudi Arabia from 2001 to 2013; departures per year

In the spring of 2013, Saudi Arabia began deporting illegal migrant workers. The objective of this measure was to reduce the number of non-Saudi workers by two million («Saudi Arabia's foreign labour crackdown drives out 2m migrants,» Ian Black, The Guardian, 29 Nov. 2013). The figures above are official statistics; experts assume that a significant number of cases remain unreported.

apostates and infidels and bombing their places of worship – is the gift that Salafism has brought to the area. Keeping in view the Sufi Islam as practiced by most Pakistanis, anti-Sufi Salafi perspectives have radicalized segments of the population.

The spread of Salafist ideology through migrant workers is gradually growing in KPK. When they return home and come into contact with established Salafist actors like TTP, Jamaatud Dawa (JuD, successor to the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba) and other jihadist organizations,²⁴ they challenge the existing system through active participation in terrorism, financial support and by providing an ideological foundation.

The Salafi ideology essentially represents a conflation of Al-Qaeda's anti-Westernism, a rejection of Israel and opposition to a governance system in Pakistan that it says has failed to deliver justice and economic welfare to the majority of Pakistanis. Regardless of their religious sect or ideology, the majority of Pakistanis are influenced by this narrative rooted in the Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia. Politically, Wahhabi-Salafi Islam is without a doubt gradually overtaking the traditional Debandi and Barelvi Islam. And its genesis lies not only in the CIA-ISI-led anti-Soviet jihad, where the United States provided monetary and military support to the Afghan Mujahideen to contain the Soviet Union, with additional funding coming from Saudi Arabia. This was further promoted by a major ideological shift in Pakistan under then-dictator Zia-ul-Haq, who opened religious seminaries and changed syllabi to spread the jihadi ideology. The baggage that Pakistani workers bring home with them after spending years in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries is the other significant contributor to the rise of Wahhabi-Salafi Islam. ■■■

¹ This article is largely based on the study of a few northwestern districts of Pakistan that provide a substantial number of migrant workers to the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia.

² Workers can easily be influenced and at times coerced into following the Wahhabi principles. As a majority of migrant workers are uneducated, they easily succumb to the Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic principles, given the fact that they are Muslims and have been to the land where the two holy mosques of Islam are located.

³ The different sects of Islam are well-defined and explained in the 5th paragraph of this article.

⁴ PILDAT, July 2008, «Overseas Pakistani Workers: Significance and Issues of Migration,» <http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/LabourIssue/OverseasPakistaniWorkersSignificanceandIssuesofMigration.pdf> (accessed July 9, 2014)

⁵ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Population Welfare, «Demography of NWFP,» <http://www.khyberpakhtunkhwa.gov.pk/Departments/Population%20Welfare/Demography-of-NWFP.php> (accessed July 9, 2014)

⁶ Dr. Hussein Shaheed, interview by the author, Peshawar, Pakistan, July 14, 2014. (Dr. Shaheed chairs the department of International Relations at University of Peshawar.)

⁷ Sufism can be seen as mysticism, in which knowledge of God is acquired through contemplation, while asceticism is leading a life without luxury or pleasure-seeking. Theosophy is a philosophy believing knowledge of God is achievable through intuition and meditation; acumen is having or showing good judgment. The Salafists do not believe in these philosophies and their main aim is to take Islam back to the practice of its first three generations. According to them, God is firmly established on His throne and rejects the Sufi philosophy of «one body, two souls» advocated by Al-Hallaj in the 10th century and Ibn-e-Arabi in the 13th century. The Salafists are of the view that all of these philosophies are innovations in Islam that were introduced under the influence of newly-converted Christians, Indo-Iranians and Greeks.

⁸ <http://tribune.com.pk/story/173744/wikileaks-saudi-arabia-uae-funded-extremist-networks-in-pakistan/> Muhammad Amir Rana, «Exploring Extremism,» Dawn News, 18 May 2014

⁹ The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was formed in the Pakistani tribal areas by Baitullah Mehsud in December 2007, mainly with funding from Arab fighters located in the area who shared the common view of global jihad. For that purpose, TTP was used as an instrument to tackle Ayman-al-Zawahiri's strategy of dealing with the «near enemy,» i.e. the Pakistani state.

¹¹ JuD was banned by the UN in the wake of the 2008 Mumbai attacks. However, it is still functional under the new name Falah-e-Insaniyat (FIF). It is nevertheless still known as JuD in Pakistan, where it stages rallies and appeals to the people. JuD and Lashkar-e-Taiba are synonymous, and their main role is to wage jihad against India. Salafists, a minority in Pakistan, are all interconnected. Hafiz Saeed, the founder of the JuD and an important Salafist personality, has a strong say. JuD representatives visit every Salafi mosque under the guise of missionaries and relief workers, inspiring the population by giving lectures on the Islamic heyday and its conquests and inviting the faithful to jihad through the mosques.

¹² LeT commander, interview by the author, Mansehra, Pakistan, July 6, 2014

¹³ In Pakistan Islam is divided into different sects. Shia, being the minority, are always under fire and are declared infidels and killed. Moreover, the Sunni sect is further divided into subsects, i.e. Deobandis, Barelvis, Panjpeeris and Salafis/Wahhabis. (See box next pages.)

¹⁴ Located in the northeast of Pakistan, a gateway to picturesque northern areas of the country, Hazara is the administrative division of KPK province consisting of the Haripur, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Batgram and Kohistan districts, south to north respectively.

¹⁵ Abu Yousaf, interview by the author, Mansehra, Pakistan, July 8, 2014. (He only disclosed his alias, not his real name; he is Khateeb of the grand Salafi mosque Mansehra)

¹⁶ Muhammad Yousaf, interview by the author, Batgram, Pakistan, July 9, 2014

¹⁷ Rafi-ud-din, interview by the author, Kohistan, Pakistan, July 10, 2014

¹⁸ As the society is tribal and lacks modern education, it still follows the practice of child marriage and women are simply not allowed to leave their homes without their male relatives.

¹⁹ Veiling in particular has been observed in the Indo-Pak region for centuries. Women were not treated very well even before the rise of the Salafists, but after Salafi thought came to the region strictness increased with regard to covering women's whole body from head to toe. Women also cannot leave their homes alone without their males. And all this is interpreted from the Quran.

²⁰ Al-Huda international was founded in 1994 by the Islamic scholar Dr. Farhat Hashmi, whose main objective is to educate women and children. For more details please visit <http://www.farhathashmi.com/> and <http://www.alhudapk.com/>.

²¹ Tariq Hayat, interview by the author, Peshawar, Pakistan, July 14, 2014. Tariq works for an NGO, Peace Education and Development Foundation (PEAD), which is working on a madrassah reform project, «Social cohesion and resilience.»

²² Mushtaq Yousafzai, interview by the author, Peshawar, Pakistan, July 14, 2014.

(Yousafzai works for the English daily, The News)

²³ Rooh-ullah Madni, interview by the author, Peshawar, Pakistan, July 14, 2014

²⁴ Jihadist organizations like Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Harkat-ul-Ansar (HuA), and Lashkar-e-Taiba, which were founded in the 1980s to counter the Soviet threat in Afghanistan and later used as proxies in Kashmir against India, are now turned against the Pakistani state for its alliance with the West in the aftermath of 9/11.

Islam in Pakistan

Apart from Hindu and Christian minorities, 95 to 98 percent of the 186 million Pakistani women and men are Muslims, and of those more than 80 percent are Sunni. But there are several currents of Islam – the Sunni with numerous subgroups such as Deobandis, Barelvis, Panjpeeris and Salafists/Wahhabis and the minority Shia, which is suppressed and whose adherents are often being predicated as infidels; this stigmatization is a relatively new phenomenon in the region, not seen before the influx of Wahhabism. Below there are various Islamic schools of thought:

WAHHABI

This school considers itself to be «true Islam» as preached by the puritan reformist Muhammad Ibn Wahhab (1703–1793) in Saudi Arabia. The Taliban in Afghanistan and in Pakistan advocate Wahhabism, which is characterized by severe restrictions to women’s freedoms and a ban of music, dance and movies. They consider Shia Muslims to be non-believers and consider themselves justified in attacking them physically. Some Wahhabis go as far as to consider other Sunni groups to be heretics (takfir) who may be killed. This clearly political view of Islam has won influence through Al-Qaeda’s pan-Islamist ideology that resonates with numerous Muslims across the globe.

SALAFI

The main aim of Salafists is to take Islam back to the traditions of its first three generations. While their beliefs are closely related to Wahhabism, not all Salafists consider themselves Wahhabites. They reject the centuries-old Sufi view that it is possible to become one with God. Salafists argue that such ideas are heretic and were brought to Pakistan by Christians, Indo-Iranians and Greeks who had converted to Islam.

BARELVI

Barelvis are Sunni Muslims and followers of Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi (1856–1921), who founded a movement in Bareilly, India, to defend mystic traditions of Islam and counter the spread of Deobandism. A majority of Muslims in Pakistan, India and Kashmir (a total of 200 million people) are believed to be Barelvis. Barelvi Islam formerly dominated the Pakistani regions bordering Afghanistan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA).

DEOBANDI

Deobandis are followers of an Islamic movement inspired by Wahhabism that was founded in 1866 in Deoband, a city in northern India that is also home to the second most important Islamic university after Al-Azhar in Cairo. They follow an orthodox view of Islam and criticize the Barelvi practice of worshipping at graves of saints. They reject Sufism as well. Deobandis are now gradually outnumbering the Barelvis through missionary work, and they have gained considerable political influence in Pakistani society.

SUFI

Sufism has a long tradition in Pakistan and has integrated many old popular traditions into Islam. It is a form of mysticism in which knowledge of God is acquired through contemplation. A second aspect of Sufism is asceticism – leading a life without luxury or pleasure-seeking. Many Pakistanis gather at shrines where famous Sufis are buried. Such shrines have been attacked in the past by followers of stricter interpretations of Islam.

Youth in Transition

Why leaving Afghanistan might be the preferred choice for the young and restless

Susanne Schmeidl

Mobility has long been a survival strategy for many Afghans during the past decades of conflict and economic uncertainty. This article discusses the impact of a deteriorating security situation, international security transitions, a faltering economy and declining international assistance, and the demographic stress of rapid population growth and urbanization on the two-thirds of the Afghan population under the age of 25 – Afghanistan's youth. It suggests that the most viable coping strategy for young Afghans may once again be to leave their homes in search for a better future.

The overall positive spirit around the 2014 Afghan presidential elections, an important transition from Hamid Karzai who has ruled since 2002, has led to new uncertainties for the country's population due to allegations of election fraud, a lengthy audit process and the inability of the two lead candidates to come to an agreement. How this political transition plays out will affect socio-politics, security and peace, feeding trends that are already in motion. The continuous deterioration of the security situation and the foreign withdrawal set to be complete by the end of the year have added to the growing crisis.

Young adults in Afghanistan, in rural and urban areas alike, have grown up with a collective unease and the worry that the coming decade will mirror the previous. The hope that was prevalent in the early years of the Karzai administration has gradually diminished and the outlook of many adolescents for the years ahead holds little promise. Many feel increasingly that their future lies elsewhere, because progress has been too slow, and Afghanistan is still very much

behind even poor neighboring countries. It would therefore not be surprising if it came to another displacement crisis in a country where mobility has long been a major coping mechanism of a war-plagued population.

This paper discusses the current push factors for displacement in Afghanistan, as well as facilitating factors and migration paths.

Displacement trends – going, going, gone again

Internal displacement has been on the rise in Afghanistan. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), nearly 700,000 individuals had left their homes in mid-2014,¹ half of whom had been displaced over the past three years.² Though no longer in first place, Afghanistan is also among the top three countries of origin for asylum seekers worldwide (75,273 in 63 countries, with Turkey and Germany being the top two recipient countries).³ Many Afghans arrive as unaccompanied minors, particularly boys under the age of 18.⁴

These confirmed figures are likely just the tip of the iceberg, with UNHCR acknowledging that it does not have the means of recording displacement in insecure areas, and that it only recently started to grapple with profiling and counting urban displaced populations. These figures also do not include those displaced by natural disasters.

The only reason we might not see as large an external displacement as in the past is that traditional exit options (Iran and Pakistan) are no longer as attractive, and many Western states have established

stronger barriers for would-be refugees. This has forced Afghans to either displace internally or use more creative ways of reaching a safe haven abroad. Those with resources have already begun to move their families to Dubai (figures are sketchy, but since 2010 an estimated \$6.9 billion was transferred from Afghanistan to Dubai in cash alone and around 300,000 Afghans are estimated to live there).⁵ Officially, around 10,000 Afghans are currently studying abroad (half in India, the rest in Pakistan, Europe, North America and Australia)⁵ and possibly as many as 3.4 million live and work abroad undocumented or in temporary work arrangements (all but 400,000 in Iran and Pakistan).⁷ Marriage to exiled Afghans with dual nationality or reunification with relatives in the West has also become a popular exit option. «Afghans who can afford to will pay as much as \$24,000 for European travel documents and up to \$40,000 for Canadian. (Visas to the United States, generally, cannot be bought.)»⁸

By far the biggest flow of people, however, is into major Afghan urban centers. Currently there are about 7.2 million urban dwellers in Afghanistan (30 percent of the population), with at least 2.2 million of them having arrived in the past few years (about half from rural areas and half refugee returnees), though actual figures could be higher.⁹

The push: Why people are on the move once again

Afghanistan has made major, albeit uneven, progress since 2001, with high economic growth, improvements in social indicators

and investment in government institutions and infrastructure. In contrast, there has been weaker performance in agriculture and urban development and governance has been deteriorating. A former development minister recently suggested it might take the country ten more years just to reach least-developed status.¹⁰ This is a sobering reality after so many aid dollars were spent.

Family reunification and marriage are a way out that avoids lengthy and possibly unsuccessful asylum bids

Prevailing insecurity is usually one of the key drivers of displacement and thus a fairly good indicator or predictor for future population movements. The recent spike in violence in Afghanistan does not provide much confidence that conflict-induced displacement will diminish any time soon. In 2013, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded a 14 percent increase in civilian casualties from the year before.¹¹ In the first six months of 2014, UNAMA documented 4,853 civilian casualties (1,564 civilian deaths and 3,289 injured) – 4,600 in the first quarter alone¹² – accounting for a 24 percent increase in civilian casualties compared to the first six months of 2013.¹³ A new trend, however, is that deaths and injuries due to ground engagement and cross-fire between Afghan national security forces and anti-government forces are surpassing those caused by improvised explosive devices, indicative of the spreading fighting.¹⁴ Human Rights Watch warns: «The ability of Afghan security forces to hold government-held territory, let

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alone retake insurgent-controlled areas, is unclear, and security concerns for much of the population remain high.»¹⁵

This trend has persisted for several years. A 2010 poll by three news agencies found that only roughly half of Afghans felt adequately protected from the Taliban and other armed groups, a share essentially unchanged from the previous year.¹⁶ In 2013, another opinion poll reported that a majority of Afghans feared for their own safety or that of their family, and that they were afraid when travelling within the country.¹⁷

Those who can afford it send their children to one of the numerous private schools or try to obtain a coveted scholarship to study abroad.

The choices of civilians living in areas that are contested or controlled by antigovernment elements are limited: stay and acquiesce, leave to government-controlled major urban areas, or be killed.

Wide-spread injustice/impunity

Added to insecurity is the failure of the Afghan government to protect its citizens from predatory behavior. In a recent study by the Liaison Office, a majority of those interviewed listed as a main grievance the failure of the Afghan government to provide rule of law and equal justice for all, and to hold those in power, including government officials, accountable for abusing their positions.¹⁸ A carpet dealer from Mazar-e Sharif sums up what many think: «Punishment is for those who do not have power. But for those who have power or have links to powerful persons, there are rewards and not punishment.»¹⁹

A majority of respondents also believe the government does not respect rights enshrined in the constitution. Several studies have pointed to the fact that especially in rural areas, 70–80 percent of conflicts are resolved informally, as many feel that the formal justice sector, rather than protecting them, violates their rights through extortion.²⁰ The complaints are widespread: non-prosecution of corrupt officials, impunity of strongmen, failure to assist the poor. While registering some progress, Afghanistan's security apparatus continues to falter in the face of armed opposition and has been unable or unwilling to protect civilian populations adequately. Elements within the force, especially the Afghan Local Police, have been credibly accused of widespread human rights violations.²¹

Corrupt, self-serving and unresponsive state

Corruption has been consistently identified as one of Afghanistan's most serious problems, «ahead even of poverty, external influence and the performance of the Government» according to a 2013 UN survey, a finding also supported by other opinion polls.²² The Kabul Bank scandal and the failure of the government to address it weighed especially heavy on the Afghan psyche, given the sheer scale of the fraud and its ties to the elite. Many see the government as dominated by self-serving politicians. In the words of a female teacher from Herat: «They are busy with their luxury lives and forgot about us. There is no one to listen to us.»²³

Uneven quality of key service delivery

Despite significant progress in the delivery of basic services (such as education,

health care and roads) across the country, arrangements remain uneven at best in quality and reach. There has been minimal improvement on the Millennium Development Goals, and Afghanistan still ranks below the average of countries in the low human development group (175 of 187).²⁴ Women are often worse off than their husbands or brothers, with Afghanistan's Gender Inequality Index – reflecting disparities in reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity – ranking the country next to last (147 of 148).²⁵ Many Afghans feel they can only obtain services from the state if they have contacts, and there is mention of widespread nepotism and clientelism.

Though education is often used as a success story, a 2011 study by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) criticized that the focus had been on quantity and not quality.²⁶ While student numbers have increased, their literacy levels have not; a 12th year graduate might not be able to read or write properly.²⁷

The ACBAR study also critiqued the quality of health care, with the World Health Organization describing Afghanistan's health status as one of the worst in the world, with inequality in access being a significant problem.²⁸ This makes for pitiful health statistics: One in ten children will not live to start primary school, and one Afghan woman dies every two hours due to complications during pregnancy.²⁹

Although generally urban areas in Afghanistan are better off when it comes to access to key services,³⁰ service delivery and government policy has not yet caught up with the challenges of growing urban poverty, especially food security.³¹

As a result, a majority of the Afghan population is unhappy about the imbalance between the resources and money poured into Afghanistan's administration since 2001 and the lack of quality of service delivery, often citing experiences in exile as a reference point for what could be better. Thus, those who can afford it may attend

Many young Afghans feel that their future is elsewhere.

the growing sector of private educational institutions or try to obtain a coveted scholarship to study abroad. Others spend entire family fortunes in travelling to Pakistan or India – some even to the West – for treatment unavailable in Afghanistan.

Lack of economic growth, livelihoods and employment

In contrast to population growth, economic activity appears modest at best. The after-effects of violence across the country, especially in Kabul, have caused anxiety to rise and consumer confidence to plunge. Uncertainty over the transition is only compounding this trend. However, Afghanistan's dependence on international assistance – and an illicit drug economy – does not provide for a sustainable future. With the departure of the foreign military, a great deal of international assistance will also dry up. The recently-released *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment* found that unemployment and underemployment is high, especially for women, youth, and rural populations. The share of the working population in vulnerable employment – own-account

workers, day laborers and unpaid family workers – is 81 percent (79 percent for men and 87 percent for women).³² Compared to men, female work is much more concentrated in just a few sectors, particularly in livestock tending and food processing.

Three in four Afghans have experienced forced displacement at some point in their lifetime.

The anxiety of an increasingly young and also more educated population vis-à-vis their future is acutely felt when speaking to them: Nearly eight in ten name unemployment as one of their greatest problems, followed by underemployment. The opportunities for many young Afghans are slim: remain and stay unemployed or underemployed (in lieu of joining pro-government or anti-government armed groups), go abroad for (mostly illegal) work, or attempt to make it to the West.

Factors facilitating out-migration

Return has been less sustainable than hoped: Despite initially hailing the Afghan return story (over five million) as a success, the UNHCR is the first to admit that return has been unsustainable for many – if not a majority – due to the struggle to obtain a place to live and make a living, let alone access basic services and security and protection. Many returnees live in secondary displacement, unable to go home, or have left again in search for employment, security and basic services such as health care and

education. This has made displacement protracted and durable solutions difficult to find.

Demographic stress – the young and restless in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is currently facing the classic dilemma of least developed countries: chronic underdevelopment, weak economy, rapid population growth³³ and swift urbanization (too swift for service delivery to keep pace). Those under the age of 25 make up nearly two-third of the Afghan population, which is estimated at around 30 million.³⁴ This means greater competition for resources such as land, services and employment in a country struggling to provide for its current population. Simple math will tell us that the larger a population, the greater the pool of future displacement. It also means more demand for education, both basic and higher.

Afghanistan is a country that has historically excluded youth (and also women) from key decision-making by focusing power in the hands of older male elites. The 2013 draft Afghan National Youth Policy (ANYP), for example, chose to define youth within the Afghan context as «*a person who is between the age of 18 and 30.*»³⁵ For some young adults, these attitudes can shut them out of the adult world until an age where many in other countries may have already begun successful careers.

Some analysts suggest that a society unable to absorb new generations is more conflict-prone than others. Anti-government groups in Afghanistan, but also pro-government militia, are getting increasingly young; «There aren't many suicide bombers over 20 years old.»³⁶

Past displacement experience and a widespread diaspora is helpful in weighing options. This would not be the first time Afghans have been displaced in recent history. In fact, it has been the norm: about three in four Afghans have experienced forced displacement at some point in their lifetime.³⁷ Most Afghans have an exit strategy, and many no longer have the strong connection to their land and livelihood that would once have kept them there.

Having spread their risk during past displacement, extended families are often dispersed across numerous countries, increasing the destination options. Unlike those in Pakistan and Iran, refugees who travelled further have often obtained citizenship in their new homes. Family reunifications or marriages of in-country and diaspora Afghans have occurred in the past and are likely to increase as they provide tickets out that bypass lengthy asylum procedures and rejections. Furthermore, migration research has shown that the existence of diasporas always lowers the threshold for out-migration, as a path has been established and a support network exists.

Where will people go? New migration pathways

Knowing where people are likely to go would help to focus assistance and prevent subsequent displacement. With traditional exit options increasingly difficult (Pakistan insecure and impatient, Iran simply impatient), and new ones usually demanding a considerable access to resources (financial or educational), displacement will likely be concentrated internally.

The rush on Afghan cities

Kabul is considered «one of the fastest growing cities in the region,»³⁸ expanding three-fold over the past six years to a population of more than five million; other cities are also expanding quickly. Government officials informally estimated that a majority of the urban population in Kabul and other major cities lives in informal settlements that house the displaced. Young people from 15 to 24 years are more numerous in urban areas, suggesting that young adults tend to be drawn to cities regardless of their families' residence.³⁹ Also, those families wishing an education for their daughters, or women wishing to work, will prefer urban over rural areas.

Dubai, the new Pakistan for the Afghan elite

Many old and new Afghan elites and the rising middle class have begun to seek out residence visas in Dubai. The new trend is for the family to be based in Dubai while the mostly male breadwinner returns to Afghanistan. This is a foot in the door for worse times to come.

India

The most promising education route for young Afghans, India, has become the new neighbor of choice, for study and also health care travel, for those who can afford it. Both young men and women study abroad, though more often than not young men dominate.

The West

This mainly involves the costly smuggling of mostly unaccompanied minors (under 18) and travel on marriage visas. As noted

earlier, existing diaspora networks have facilitated legal immigration through marriage visas for both young men and women. The illegal route remains popular, however, especially for young men. While costly, a family might pool their money to give one young man a chance to make it to the West, hoping for reunification later. In this one respect, being young and male proves to be an asset. ■■■

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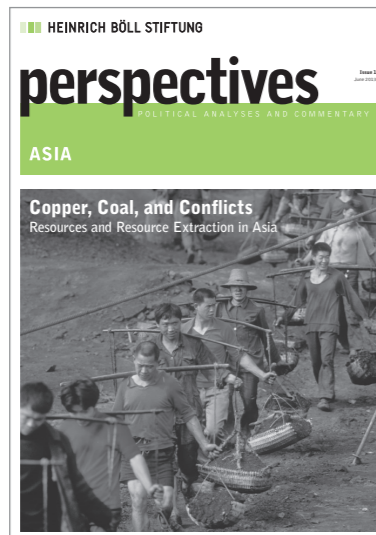
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The circular migration graph shows migration streams between Asian countries over the five-year period 2005–2010. The width of the streams indicates their size in increments of 100,000 migrants. To be shown, a stream must have a minimum size of 19,000 migrants. The lengths of the circle's segments correspond to a country's total volume of migration (immigration and emigration). The migration flows visualized here were published in the journal *Science* and are estimates based on United Nations data.

Credit: Revised graph by Nikola Sander. Data source: «Quantifying Global International Migration Flows» by Guy J. Abel and Nikola Sander, in: *Science*, Vol. 343; March 28, 2014.



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