

# Roots & Routes

Vol 9, No. 07, July, 2020



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# Editor's Note



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Dear friends,  
Greetings!

While the COVID-19 pandemic is still raging, GRFDT and its fellows have not paused their efforts on advocating for the rights of migrants, and on raising the publics' awareness on people on the move.

In the time of the pandemic, the governance of migration issues, such as migrant labours and domestic helpers, educational opportunities for children with migration backgrounds, and solidarity between states, has become crucial to many state authorities. Alyona Seth and Parul Srivastava recorded the GRFDT online panel on global and regional migration governance, in which the panelists have urgently called for attention to the vulnerable migrants to stop them from being left behind. Moreover, Owasim Uddin Bhuyan reported on the economic problems of migrant workers that occurred particularly after the outbreak of COVID-19. A dip in remittance of migrant workers may result in significant impact on the sending countries, and the rights of these workers. GRFDT has also brought together various exceptional panelists to speak on topics such as the demand of transitional justice mechanism for migrants, and the migration management experience under the Covid-19 pandemic in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Two book reviews are also included in this newsletter. Migrants, Refugees and the Stateless in South Asia, provides a big picture of the irregular migrants in South Asia, with inclusions of discussions on diverse ethnic groups, regional regime, and other various dimensions. Migration and International Trade: The US Experience since 1945 addresses the link between trades and immigration in the US, and clearly explains how the trade trend have affected migration flow.

The final section of this newsletter is a brief of an interview with Prof. R. K. Jain by Prof. Brij Maharaj, addressing the anthropological aspect of diaspora.

Enjoy your reading, and do not hesitate to contact us through social media, or at [editorinchief@grfdt.com](mailto:editorinchief@grfdt.com) for any inquiry or comments!

**Sharlene Chen**

# Migration governance during the pandemic: Marginalising the already marginalised?

Parul Srivastava

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has caused turmoil all across the globe. Nearly every country is dealing with a never-seen-before situation, at least since the Spanish Flu of 1918 which resulted in the death of approximately 50 million people worldwide. Today, USA has the largest number of COVID positive cases in the world, followed by Brazil and India. We have witnessed the migrant crisis in India since the onset of lockdown and how it got from bad to worse and therefore, in such a situation, it becomes imperative to ponder over global and regional migration while focusing on the pandemic induced migrations and the vulnerable situation that the migrants are left in.

Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) along with two important organisations namely Migrant Forum Asia (MFA), and Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM) organized a rather beneficial and tremendously insightful discussion on “Global and Regional Migration Governance During COVID-19 Pandemic” on July 7th 2020. This session was moderated by Shabari Nair, a Labour Migration Specialist for South Asia, based in the International Labour Organization in New Delhi. This 11th GRFDT virtual panel was attended by policy makers, practitioners and government officials from various numerous countries.

Nicola Piper, Director of Sydney Asia Pacific Migration Centre in Australia spoke about the global level of governance of labour migrations. Although we have come a long way in terms of understanding of what migration entails, in political and institutional terms we still have a dysfunction at global migration systems and this has become more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Talking about the three aspects of the global mi-

gration governance, she spoke about the ‘what/how/by whom. Migration management trumps over the rights based approach to migration and this is reflected in the priority given to other types of migrations as opposed to what happens at the workplace. She stressed on the gaps that arises between rights on paper and rights in practice and this is highly relevant in the current pandemic wherein there are many migrants, undocumented workers who’re working on contract/ temporarily in essential services and key sectors of the economy but they still don’t have residential rights, have little or no access to social security. This pandemic has exposed the fundamental flaws which exist in many bilateral agreements and memorandum of understanding (MoU).

ShahidulHaque, former Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh broadly talked about how this pandemic is reshaping migration and where is it making an impact: remittance, labour flow, return and human rights. He emphasised that inter-State relations will change, international cooperation will change an hence, migration will change which will result in a change of world order. He talked about four new factors that will unfold (which he has termed as ‘New Migration order’) namely new economic landscape, development paradigm, power shift and environmental factors. These four forces were functioning but the pandemic has exposed some weaknesses and accelerated few changes in the world of migration and mobility.

This is the first time that the world is facing a migration crisis without the migrants being major stakeholders because this migration crisis is the result of a pandemic. Another issue that this pandemic has created is the problem of ‘return’ which has resulted due to the fact that around 400



million migrant workers have lost their jobs and hence, they will have to return to their home countries. Interestingly, he talked about the 'trapped population' which has lost its jobs but is unable to return to their native countries and are therefore on the streets in a foreign country.

Pietro Mona, Ambassador for Development, Forced Displacement and Migration (Government of Switzerland) believes that COVID has highlighted the vulnerabilities as well as the weaknesses of the current system at local, national and global levels. This pandemic which is now turning into a micro-economic crisis at the global level has had a great impact on the field of migrations. For a lot of challenges that we are seeing today, there are possible solutions or at least an ideas on how to approach them. The real question of the hour is do we have the political will, the instruments, the actors that can implement what has been discussed so far.

There is also a dire need to focus on the issue of migration is connected with other issues like gender, education, to name a few and find inclusive solutions. One very crucial point that Pietro Mona made was that proposing 'us' and 'them' creates barriers and we need to understand that migrants are very much a part of our society. Horizontal adaptation/ expanding the government structure horizontally which means that all partners should be included at the same table and vertical expansion is also of equal importance which involves the issues of migration with other overarching relevant issues that are interconnected.

William Gois from the Migrant Forum in Asia from Philippines talked about how the transmission isn't as smooth and that there is a fault line between regional and global. This disconnect is also present between capitals and other places which isn't just a bureaucratic process but also a politically affected process. However, migration for politicians isn't a vote worthy topic which is why they wouldn't pick it up from a human right perspective as it won't be received well by the majority.

The current discourse on migration has become extremely polarised, India being a classic example of it which involves prioritising oneself and othering the other. The pandemic has put migrant workers in an extremely difficult position. Otherwise hailed as 'heroes', they're now unable to return back to their communities due to fear of community spread (in case they are carriers of the COVID-19 virus). A new political will has to be generated which would ultimately bring people out of situations of crisis such as the ongoing pandemic. Migrants live within the State's jurisdiction and hence it is the State's responsibility to protect every human being living in it's jurisdiction without any discrimination.

Roula Hamati, from the Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrant in Lebanon questioned as to how do global frameworks translate at the national and regional level. There are a number of obstacles when we talk about translating them at the ground level and she spoke about it in the Arab context as to how countries that receive refugees have not really ratified the refugee convention.

Charles Obila from IGAD, a membership of 8 of 55 States of Africa. Migration is a means to survival as one cannot live without the options of migrating. For certain African countries, Migration is very dynamic in nature as they cannot really differentiate between refugees and migrants and they have mixed migrations where people belonging to various categories move together, using similar means. This is mostly because they're all looking for similar things- livelihood and employment opportunities and hence, migration is happening towards the gulf countries, European union as well as Southern African countries. Obila mentioned quite interestingly that the most resilient migrants and refugees are in the urban areas as they are the ones who are able to find employment with limited support and are able to support/ provide for their families.

Migrant returns and deportations was happening from Southern African countries and the Gulf countries and this led to a growth of discussions

on how to co-ordinate better and also deal with stranded migrants who're out of employments due to this pandemic. This has further led to a reverse flow of migration where people are looking forward to moving back to rural areas from urban spaces. The political leadership of IGAD countries came together and took a decision of developing regional health response strategy and one unique thing that was specifically mentioned was the integration of vulnerable population including the migrants and the refugees in the health responses. There is a need of multilateralism or international cooperation especially in the recovery and post recovery stages.

Professor Andrew Geddes, Director of Migration Policy Centre in Italy spoke about the governance in Europe but concentrating on four things, namely crisis, policy, politics and the future. Based on previous crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic would not lead to major changes in the EU and European migration and asylum crisis. Attitudes towards migration are becoming more favourable as opposed to how such issues have been politicized and presented.

The regional negotiations are very important for the regions so we should have a SAARC negotiation with the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries where we are sending our people to. It

becomes essential for the sending countries, civil society groups, trade unions, intellectual groups to participate in discussions concerning the migrations that have been induced by the ongoing pandemic. Multilateralism is really the way forward and the dialogue and discourse needs to become very empathetic and the stereotypes that were being practised for so long need to be recognized. Professor Binod Khadria, former faculty at JNU concluded by highlighting EAA (Equitable adversary analysis) wherein one needs to put themselves in the shoes of the adversary and then try to look at the issue from the other side because one cannot pretend that migration is just like an exchange of commodities or like some kind of a trade because it's not so. It's a flow of human beings and hence, empathy becomes of primary value here and it is something that COVID-19 is constantly reminding us of.

Parul Srivastava is a researcher, pursuing her PhD from the Department of History, University of Hyderabad, India. She can be reached at 17shph05@uohyd.ac.in or via Twitter on @paroollll


[Published in India Education Diary.](#)

**GRFDT Virtual Panel Discussion Series 11**

## GLOBAL AND REGIONAL MIGRATION GOVERNANCE DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC

**Tuesday , 07 July 2020, 05:30 pm , (IST, GMT+5:30)**

### PANELISTS

 <p><b>Mr. Shahidul Haque</b> Former Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh</p>	 <p><b>Amb. Pietro Mona</b> Ambassador for Development, Forced Displacement and Migration, Government of Switzerland.</p>	 <p><b>Prof. Nicola Piper</b> Director, Sydney Asia Pacific Migration Centre, Australia</p>
 <p><b>Mr. William Gois</b> Migrant Forum in Asia, Philippines</p>	 <p><b>Ms. Roula Hamati</b> Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrant (CCRM), Lebanon</p>	 <p><b>Prof. Andrew Geddes</b> Director, Migration Policy Centre, Italy</p>
 <p><b>Mr. Charles Obila</b> Migration Officer, IGAD Secretariat.</p>	 <p><b>Mr. Shabari Nair</b> ILO Decent Work Team South Asia (Moderator)</p>	

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# COVID-19: Opportunity to Improve Global and Regional Migration Governance

Alyona Seth

A grapple with the twin crises of COVID-19 and a migration, the need to understand global and regional frameworks governing migration has increased. Tracing the beginnings of migration as a global issue to the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994, Shabari Nair, Labour Migration Specialist for South Asia, based in the ILO Decent Work Technical Support Team (DWT) in New Delhi, shared the notable milestones since then. Shabari was speaking at the joint webinar organised by the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT), and the Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM) on “Global and Regional Migration Governance during COVID-19 Pandemic.” He added at the establishment of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), hosting of the first UN High Level Dialogue on Migration; adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and more recently the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) in 2018, as some of the major milestones. Further Shabari shared that at the regional level intergovernmental organisations such as SAARC and ASEAN and Regional Consultative Processes such as Abu Dialogue, Colombo Process, and Bali Process are all engaged on migration issues.

## Global Migration Governance and Rights

Since the 1990s migration governance has been governed mainly by non-binding instruments and the migrant worker conventions remain under-ratified, especially by destination countries. Even among those states that have ratified the instruments, implementation remains lax. Migration management has hitherto been rooted in an economic and securitisation approach. This

prioritisation of migration management over rights-based approach is reflected in the priority accorded to regulation, port of control and return of migrants to the detriment of paying more attention to the governance of the workplace. William Gois of the Philippines linked the deficit of human rights in the migration discourse to the politicisation of the issue. Migration is not a popular topic for political leaders.

*Any politician who takes on the issue of migration from a rights-based perspective is not going to curry favour with a domestic audience.*

States are the key constituents of global migration governance, designing and funding the many relevant international institutions such as ILO and IOM. States have been diverting funding to border management rather than in the workplace which contributes to the overlooking of migrant rights. Even though rights exist on paper, a huge gap remains in terms of translating them into practice and Prof. Piper claimed this discrepancy is highly relevant to the ongoing pandemic. Many undocumented workers have been key essential workers during this pandemic, but COVID-19 has seen many employers withholding wages. Prof. Nicola Piper highlighted that enormous barriers had been put in place to prevent migrants from seeking justice and organising politically. Moreover, great resistance exists to extending protections to undocumented migrants despite the non-discriminatory nature of COVID-19.

## Pandemic Reshaping Migration

According to ShahidulHaque, former Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh, the world order is in flux. Geopolitical tensions, new economic landscape

comprising of gig workers, and the collapse of post-World War II liberal order are some of the ongoing changes. The pandemic has accelerated some of these changes to affect migration and mobility. The politicisation of migration has heightened and COVID-19 is being wielded as a weapon to restrict mobility. An unexpected consequence of the pandemic has been a large-scale migration crisis which Haque claimed was the first of its kind in that it was not born out of migrants themselves.

The pandemic has necessitated a fundamental rethinking of migration. Even though migration finds itself at a crossroads at present, Haque argued that migration will not stop. The GCM, the only comprehensive global framework for governing migration, will continue to operate. However, he emphasised the need for a global dialogue on migration governance that is reflective of changing realities and circumstances. In the absence of such a dialogue, the future of migration will remain ad-hoc and make victims of migrants everywhere. Echoing a similar sentiment, Ambassador Pietro Mona of Switzerland also called on governments to resist the retreat to nationalism and embrace multilateralism to address migration challenges.

The challenges facing migrants in the midst of COVID-19 have been touched upon in the past in the UN during negotiations of the GCM as well as at the regional level. The pandemic has not only exacerbated these vulnerabilities, but also shown a light on the weakness of the current system at all levels. According to Ambassador Mona, many of the ongoing challenges such as labour rights, protective measures for domestic workers, remittances, mobility, return and reintegration, etc. have been deliberated upon before and solutions have been devised. However, he also contends that implementation has suffered due to an absence of political will.

## **Regional Migration Governance**

Global frameworks on migration are important but ground reality often throws up a different picture. Speaking of the Arab context, Roula Hamati highlighted how many of the frameworks on mi-

gration and refugee flows had not been ratified by the governments in the region. The countries that had signed on to the frameworks were countries that do not necessarily host migrants.

Despite the lack of concrete action on the ground, Hamati argued that the value of these global frameworks was in norms and standard setting. Since countries are invested in belonging to the global community, there is an incentive for them to undertake reforms to meet certain standards. The GCC countries have made numerous policy reforms over the past few years on labour governance, human trafficking, and irregular migration. In order to make such reforms a more comprehensive process, it is important to move beyond the low-hanging fruit approach. The pandemic has impacted migration by heralding a resurgence of states as primary actors in migration governance.

In the Horn of Africa, Charles Obila pointed out that a recent political decision had been taken by the heads of states coming together to develop a regional response strategy which specifically mentioned migrants and refugees. Even though discussions have been initiated with the GCC countries and Southern Africa on involuntary return and deportations of migrants, a huge pile up of migrants in urban areas in the Horn of Africa countries persists. The region had also seen support from the EU, Sweden and Switzerland for such initiatives that ensured no one is left behind in the fight against COVID-19.

*Migration has been a key component of EU–African relations. The previous migration crisis in 2015 spurred a political crisis in Europe and drove numerous global developments including the creation of the Global Compact on Migration.*

However, Prof. Andrew Geddes argued that neither the 2015 crisis nor the 2008 financial crisis resulted in significant institutional and policy changes in the EU. Therefore, he expects that COVID-19 is also unlikely to result in fundamental alterations to existing EU migration and asylum policies. Similar to global dynamics, immigration has become politicized in the EU as well. Howev-



er, Prof. Geddes highlighted that it was a misunderstanding that attitudes toward migration had become more negative in the region. On the contrary, he claimed that what had happened was the increasing salience of migration as an issue. Immigration has now become a new dividing line in the EU and regional integration has become associated with this new dividing line.

### **Future of Migration Governance**

Ambassador Mona proposed a two-prong approach to devising the future of migration governance: horizontal adaptation and vertical expansion. A horizontal expansion of existing governance structure that includes all partners including private sector, civil society organisations (CSOs), trade unions, and local authorities is extremely important. Simultaneously, it is also important to make connections between migration issues and overarching themes that governments are addressing. Such a vertical expansion would take the form of addressing challenges of domestic workers by tying it in a broader gender policy; ensuring access of migrants to healthcare ties in to a broader debate on public healthcare.

In line with Ambassador Mona's horizontal adaptation, Gois also said it is important to note who is seated at the negotiating table and also in what capacity are they involved in the negotiations. Are the non-state actors there to contribute, participate, and design? Multilateral negotiations need to also diverge from current practice of going for the lowest-hanging fruit and seek more ambitious solutions. COVID-19 has necessitated the need to look at migrants as neither different nor alien, but as those who live within the jurisdiction of our state. Therefore, it becomes the obligation of the state to protect them with rights and duties without discrimination. This will only be possible once an honest assessment has been made of what has

happened to migrants during these times. According to Gois, the pandemic has made us lose our sense of what human dignity is all about.

Any attainment of global objectives is contingent on the region and its adoption of regional standards. The European Commission is currently developing a new compact on migration. According to Prof. Andrew Geddes the response in Europe to this new compact will be extremely important. The survival of the EU may not hinge on the adoption of this Compact, but the rejection of the Compact by a number of member states will expose the potential limits of regionalism. Prof. Geddes contended that if we were to see limits to regionalism, we would then see limits to globalisation. Similarly, in the Asian context, Gois called on Asia to identify its shared reality by putting aside politics and see each other not as independent states, but as neighbours coming together.

The SDGs talk about "leaving no one behind", but as the panellists pointed out COVID-19 has left most migrants behind. The narrative surrounding migrants has shifted from one of promise to dread – from economic heroes to disease carriers. Multilateral dialogue at the regional and global levels that engages all relevant stakeholders are thus critical in migration governance. A burning house needs to be rebuilt, for which ideas are key and only dialogue can contribute to the flourishing of such ideas.

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Alyona Seth, a public policy researcher, is pursuing Masters in International Affairs at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University Singapore.

[Published in Delhi Post.](#)



# Strong Campaigns Suggested for Establishing Transitional Justice Mechanism for Migrants

## Staff Correspondent

Strong movements should be launched at the national, regional and global levels campaigning for establishment of the transitional justice system to realize migrant workers' theft wages and protect their entitlements amid global COVID pandemic situation, experts said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a virtual meeting, senior government officials, civil society leaders, trade unionists and rights activists from different countries in Asia emphasized on creating global funds under auspice of the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for supporting the repatriation of the distressed migrant workers from the destinations.

During the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of the poor migrant workers have been the worst victims of the wage theft at their destinations, especially in the Gulf countries as they have been forced to return to their homes amid the COVID pandemic, they said.

The virtual panel series-13 on "Transitional Justice: Towards "Building Back Better" was jointly organized by Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Manila, Philippines, Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT), New Delhi, India and Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM), Beirut, Lebanon.

MFA regional coordinator William Gois, also a global migration expert, moderated the webinar which was online joined by about 550 distinguished participants.

In his welcome address, William recalled that on 1st of June, a coalition of civil society organizations and trade unions launched an appeal for an

"Urgent Justice Mechanism", to address the plight of millions of migrant workers who have been repatriated or are awaiting repatriation as a result of pandemic-related job loss.

They have appealed to the governments to establish a transitional justice mechanism that would specifically address the huge volume of cases of wage theft and other outstanding claims heightened in the course of the pandemic, ensuring migrant workers ability to access justice and receive their due compensations.

As a panelist, Bangladesh former foreign secretary Md ShahidulHaque said that there were some migrants' inequalities, injustices and wage thefts taking places amid the COVID pandemic situation.

Over 500,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers have returned home penniless from the destination countries after they were terminated there, he said.

Shahidul Haque said that Bangladesh prime minister has been raising the issues of the migrant workers at the international forums.

He advised the civil society organizations to boldly launch campaigns for establishing transitional justice system for the migrant workers.

Another panelist Neha Misra, Senior Migration Specialist of Solidarity Center in Washington DC, called for ensuring 'basic workplace rights' of the migrant workers as per the ILO standards.

She stressed the need for allowing the workers' 'freedom of associations' to help realize their wage theft at the destinations.

Among other noted panelists, Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament, India and Former Senior UN Diplomat, Dr. Dilip Ratha, Lead Economist, Migration and Remittances and Head of KNO-MAD, World Bank, Ryszard Cholewinski, Senior Migration Specialist, ILO Regional Office for Arab States, Beirut and Roula Hamati, coordinator, Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants also spoke.

[Published in Migration News BD.](#)



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# Tharoor: Mission Houses Should Record Indians' Wage Grievances Before Repatriation

*World Bank lead economist says that wage theft is leading to dip in remittances*

## Rejimon Kuttappan

Indian missions in the Arab Gulf countries should record wage grievances of Indian workers who are leaving due to the COVID-19 outbreak as documentation is vital in addressing the wage theft issue, Dr Shashi Tharoor, MP and former Minister of State at the Ministry of External Affairs, said.

Tharoor was speaking at an online panel discussion on "Transitional Justice: Towards "Building Back Better" jointly organised by Manila-based Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Delhi based Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) and Beirut-based Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM).

"I will write to the Indian Minister of External Affairs Dr S Jaishankar to set up a platform at Indian missions where the workers' grievances, especially on the wage front, can be recorded," Tharoor said.

According to him, currently, there is no mechanism available globally to address the wage theft issue and ensure justice for the migrant worker.

### Escrow Fund

Tharoor suggested that an escrow fund be set up where six months of wages can be deposited by the employer when the visa is approved for the worker.

"This escrow fund can help to pay the worker when pay default happens, especially when a COVID-like crisis happens," Tharoor said, adding that the pandemic has become an excuse for employers in the Arab Gulf to remove migrant workers without clearing their unpaid wages and end of service benefits.

He added that considering the limitations of mission houses, countries of origin should put pressure on countries of destination to ensure justice for the migrant workers. He also said to fight against wage theft, civil society organisations should take a lead in organising trade unions.

Wage theft, the practice of employers failing to pay workers the full wages to which they are legally entitled, is a widespread and deep-rooted problem that directly harms millions of Asian migrant workers each year.

Unfortunately, countries of destination and origin have begun repatriation procedures of these workers, without any proper redress mechanism, since courts and other labour dispute mechanisms have also been closed during the period of the lockdown.

Therefore, these violations are piling up and either not be addressed or overburdening the existing dispute resolution mechanisms.

The stranded worker gets a call from the mission house giving him 48 hours maximum to purchase a return ticket. The companies often clear the migrant workers' papers only after the worker gets a travel confirmation call from the embassy.

Eventually, the worker does not have enough time to register his grievances.

India started evacuating Indians from COVID-hit countries from May 06. And from then, till July 16, Air India has evacuated 2,15,495 Indians. Meanwhile, Indian private carriers evacuated 12,258 Indians, Indian private charters evacuated 1,35,000. In addition to this, foreign charters evacuated

2,11,361 Indians.

In all, around 6.87 lakh Indians were flown into India from COVID-hit countries.

There are around 35 million migrant workers in the Arab Gulf countries who work under Kafala system, a peculiar employer-employee contract which restricts many rights and freedom of migrant workers.

Out of the 35 million migrant workers, nearly 10 million are Indians.

### **Claims Commission**

Detailing on wage theft and justice mechanism, Roula Hamati, coordinator, Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants, said that the pandemic has normalised wage theft in all sectors and only a few go to courts.

“We can’t continue like this. Numbers should not be a criterion in taking up this issue. We should set up an International Claims Commission to deal with the wage theft issue,” Roula said.

According to Roula, the International Claims Commission must be set up as a specialised international quasi-legal body of expedited justice to adjudicate on claims of migrant workers in cases related to wage theft and other outstanding claims and to provide equitable remedies.

“Cases could be received directly from migrants themselves or through entities providing support or legal representation to migrants. All pre-existing case documentation should be referred to the Claims Commissions for resolution,” Roula said.

Roula added that the International Claims Commission could be administered jointly by International Labour Organisation and International Organisation for Migration, together with other relevant stakeholders.

The latest ILO estimates show that working hour losses have worsened during the first half of 2020,

reflecting the deteriorating situation in recent weeks, especially in developing countries.

The ILO report reveals that during the first quarter of the year, an estimated 5.4% of global working hours (equivalent to 155 million full-time jobs) were lost relative to the fourth quarter of 2019.

“Working hour losses for the second quarter of 2020 relative to the last quarter of 2019 are estimated to reach 14% worldwide (equivalent to 400 million full-time jobs),” the report adds.

### **Remittance Dip Vs Wage Theft**

Meanwhile, Shahidul Haque, Former Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh, said the discussion that making rights as an entitlement for migrant workers only can resolve the issues.

“So far, we discussed how to govern migration. But we missed the rights angle. We should not repeat that. Additionally, we should force countries to honour global compact on migration even if it’s a non-binding one. As they (countries) have signed it, they should honour it,” Shahidul said.

While detailing the woes of Bangladeshi workers who returned penniless due to job loss from COVID-hit countries, he also endorsed the need of setting up an international claims commission to address the wage theft.

According to the former foreign secretary, some 500,000 Bangladeshis have returned jobless from COVID-hit countries.

Meanwhile, responding to a query raised by moderator William Gois, regional coordinator of MFA on wage theft and remittance, Dr Dilip Ratha, Lead Economist, Migration and Remittances and Head of KNOMAD, World Bank, said that the wage theft is a significant factor that impacts remittance.

“Due to pandemic, a 20% remittance dip is forecast. And in this 20% remittance dip, wage theft has a significant role,” he said.



India had received some \$80 billion as remittance during the last year.

Ryszard Cholewinski, Senior Migration Specialist, ILO Regional Office for Arab States, Beirut, said that ILO can look into the possibilities of setting up a Claims Commission if trade unions and CSOs come forward.

Neha Mishra, Senior Migration Specialist from Solidarity Center said that lack of freedom of association for migrant workers is leading to wage theft.

Around 450 migration experts, academicians and

rights activist attended the online meeting from different parts of the world.

Rejimon Kuttappan is a migrant rights defender and independent journalist. He was Chief Reporter for Times of Oman until he was deported in 2017 for exposing human trafficking and modern slavery in the Arab Gulf.

[Published in The Lede.](#)

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# Tharoor urges Indian missions in Gulf to record workers' wage issues during COVID-19

## Onmanorama Staff

New Delhi: Lawmaker and former Union Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor has urged the Indian missions in the Gulf countries to record wage grievances of Indian workers, who were forced to return home in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. "This is vital in addressing the wage theft issue," he opined while addressing an on-line panel discussion recently.

He promised to write to Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar to set up a platform at the Indian missions to record the workers' grievances, especially on the wage front.

Tharoor suggested that setting up of an escrow fund (a third-party fund) would help tackle the wage theft issue. "Employer can deposit wages for six months in this account when the country approves VISA for a worker. This fund can be utilised when the employer defaults on wage payment," he said.

Tharoor said the pandemic outbreak has become an excuse for the employers in the Gulf to retrench migrant workers without clearing their unpaid wages and end of



service benefits. "Considering the limitations of mission houses, countries of origin should put pressure on countries of destination to ensure justice for the migrant workers, and to fight against the wage theft, civil society organizations should take a lead in organizing trade unions," he said.

Wage theft is the practice of failing to pay workers the legally entitled wages. It affects millions of Asian migrant workers.

Arab countries employ around 35 million migrant workers, out of which nearly 10 million are from India.

The panel discussion - Transitional Justice: Towards Building Back Better – was jointly organized by Manila-based Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Delhi-based Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) and Beirut-based Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM).

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[Published in Onmanorama.](#)

# COVID-19: Remittance Dip Over Migrant Workers' Wage Theft, Says World Bank

Owasim Uddin Bhuyan

Migrant workers' wage theft occurring at the countries of destinations amidst global COVID-19 pandemic situation has become a significant factor in the remittance dip, according to a lead economist from the World Bank.

"Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and shutdown induced economic crisis, a 20 per cent remittance dip is forecast. And in this 20 per cent remittance dip, wage theft has a significant role," Dr DilipRatha, Lead Economist, Migration and Remittances and Head of KNOMAD, World Bank, said.

Dilip made the remarks on Tuesday (July 21) while responding to a query at an online panel discussion on "Transitional Justice: Towards "Building Back Better" jointly organized by Manila-based Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Delhi based Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) and Beirut-based Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM).

Wage theft, the practice of employers failing to pay workers the full wages to which they are legally entitled, is a widespread and deep-rooted problem that directly harms millions of Asian and African migrant workers each year.

Senior government delegates, civil society leaders and rights activists from different countries across the world attended the webinar, stressed the need for creating global funds under the auspice of the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) for supporting the distressed migrant workers.

They also stressed launching strong movements at the national, regional and global levels campaigning for the establishment of the transitional justice system to realize migrant workers' theft wages as, during the

pandemic, hundreds of thousands of the poor migrant workers have been the worst victims of the wage theft at their destinations, especially in the Gulf countries as they have been forced to return to their homes.

MFA regional coordinator William Gois, also a global migration expert, moderated the webinar recalled that on 1st of June, a coalition of civil society organizations and trade unions launched an appeal for an "Urgent Justice Mechanism", to address the plight of millions of migrant workers who have been repatriated or are awaiting repatriation as a result of pandemic-related job loss.

They have appealed to the governments to establish a transitional justice mechanism that would specifically address the huge volume of cases of wage theft and other outstanding claims heightened in the course of the pandemic, ensuring migrant workers ability to access justice and receive their due compensations.

According to the World Bank, the projected fall, which would be the sharpest decline in recent history, is largely due to a fall in the wages and employment of migrant workers, who tend to be more vulnerable to loss of employment and wages during an economic crisis in a host country.

Remittance flows are expected to fall across all World Bank Group regions, most notably in Europe and Central Asia (27.5 per cent), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (23.1 per cent), South Asia (22.1 per cent), the Middle East and North Africa (19.6 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (19.3 per cent), and East Asia and the Pacific (13 per cent).

The large decline in remittances flows in 2020 comes after remittances to LMICs reached a record \$554 billion in 2019. Even with the decline, remittance flows are expected to become even more important as a

source of external financing for LMICs as the fall in foreign direct investment is expected to be larger (more than 35 per cent).

In 2019, remittance flows to LMICs became larger than FDI, an important milestone for monitoring resource flows to developing countries.

“Those workers who remain to continue in the countries of destination will be forced to work for slashed wages. This is again a form of wage theft and it is also going to impact the remittances,” Dilip said.

### **Wage Theft**

Employers refusing to pay promised wages, paying less than legally mandated minimums, failing to pay for all hours worked, or not paying overtime premiums deprives working people of billions of dollars annually. It leaves hundreds of thousands of affected workers and their families in poverty.

Unfortunately, countries of destination and origin have begun repatriation procedures of these workers, without any proper redress mechanism, since courts and other labour dispute mechanisms have also been closed during the period of the lockdown.

Therefore, these violations are piling up and either not be addressed or overburdening the existing dispute resolution mechanisms.

The stranded worker will get a call from the mission house giving him some 48 hours maximum to purchase a return ticket. The companies often clear the migrant workers' papers only after the worker gets a travel confirmation call from the embassy is received.

Eventually, the worker won't have ample time to register his grievances if there are any.

There are around 35 million migrant workers in the Arab Gulf countries who work under the Kafala system, a peculiar employer-employee contract which restricts many rights and freedom of migrant workers.

### **Claims Commission**

Meanwhile, details on wage theft and justice mechanism, Roula Hamati, coordinator, Cross-Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants, said that pandemic has made wage theft a normal thing in all sectors and only a few go-to courts.

“We can't continue like this. Numbers should not be a criterion in taking up this issue. We should set up an International Claims Commission to deal with the wage theft issue,” Roula said.

According to Roula, the International Claims Commission must be set up as a specialized international quasi-legal body of expedited justice to adjudicate on claims of migrant workers on an expedited basis in cases related to wage theft and other outstanding claims and to provide equitable remedies.

“Cases could be received directly from migrants themselves or through entities providing support or legal representation to migrants. All pre-existing case documentation should be referred to the Claims Commissions for resolution,” Roula said.

Roula added that the International Claims Commission could be administered jointly by International Labour Organisation and International Organisation for Migration, together with other relevant stakeholders.

The latest ILO estimates show that working hour losses have worsened during the first half of 2020, reflecting the deteriorating situation in recent weeks, especially in developing countries.

The ILO report reveals that during the first quarter of the year, an estimated 5.4 per cent of global working hours (equivalent to 155 million full-time jobs) were lost relative to the fourth quarter of 2019.

“Working hour losses for the second quarter of 2020 relative to the last quarter of 2019 are estimated to reach 14.0 per cent worldwide (equivalent to 400 million full-time jobs),” the report adds.

### **Rights as Entitlement**

Meanwhile, Shahidul Haque, Former Foreign Secretary, Bangladesh, said the discussion that making rights as



an entitlement for migrant workers only can resolve the issues.

“So far, we discussed how to govern migration. But we missed the rights angle. We should not repeat that. Additionally, we should force the countries to honour global compact on migration even if it’s a non-binding one. As they (countries) have signed it, they should honour it,” Shahidul said.

While detailing the woes of Bangladeshi workers who returned penniless due to job loss from COVID-hit countries, he also endorsed the need of setting up an international claims commission to address the wage theft.

According to the former foreign secretary, some 500,000 Bangladeshis have returned jobless from COVID-hit countries.

While Ryszard Cholewinski, Senior Migration Specialist, ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, Beirut, said that ILO can look into the possibilities of setting up a Claims Commission if trade unions and CSOs come forward, Neha Mishra, Senior Migration Specialist from Solidarity Center said that lack of freedom of association for migrant workers is leading to wage theft.

[Published in The Cheer News.](#)

<p><b>INTERNATIONAL E-CONFERENCE</b>  <b>MIGRATION, DIASPORAS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PERSPECTIVES, POLICIES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES</b></p> <p><b>2-5 November 2020</b></p>	<p>Conference in 7 Global Languages*: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Russian, Spanish</p>	<p><b>NO REGISTRATION OR PARTICIPATION FEE</b></p>
<p><b>JOINTLY ORGANIZED BY</b>          Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT), New Delhi, India          Center for Research on North America (CISAN), UNAM, Mexico          Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Manila, Philippines          Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM), Beirut, Lebanon</p>	<p><b>PUBLICATION</b>          All the papers will be peer reviewed and published in book by reputed publishers as well as in “Migration and Diaspora: An Interdisciplinary Journal” and GRFDT Research Monograph Series.</p>	<p><b>MAJOR THEMES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perspectives on Migration and Diaspora</li> <li>• COVID 19 and Migration</li> <li>• Global Compact for Migration</li> <li>• Migration Governance and Diaspora Policies</li> <li>• Impacts of Diaspora on Foreign Policies</li> <li>• Policies related to the Economic impacts of Diaspora</li> <li>• Migrant/ Diaspora Organisations, Civil Society and Human Rights</li> <li>• Diaspora and Global Culture</li> <li>• Diaspora Engagement Online</li> <li>• Return and Integration</li> <li>• Forced Migration</li> <li>• Regional Diasporas</li> <li>• Climate Induced Migration</li> <li>• Remittances and Migration Economics</li> <li>• Gulf Labour Migration</li> </ul>
<p><b>WHERE</b>  <b>Online using Zoom Application</b></p> <p><b>Important Dates :</b>          Last date for receiving abstracts: 20 September 2020          Confirmation of Selection of Abstracts: 25 September 2020          Last date for receiving full paper: 20 October 2020          Date of Webinar: 2-5 November 2020</p> <p><b>Registration:</b> <a href="https://forms.gle/HHWJ7DEcb17nXY1NA">https://forms.gle/HHWJ7DEcb17nXY1NA</a>          Rescheduled and Fresh Advertisement. Those who applied earlier for the same conference may update their abstracts and paper.</p>		



\*To form a separate language session we need at least 10 selected papers. Otherwise presenters will have to present in English

# Justice for Migrants: Disenfranchised Workers and COVID-19

*A pragmatic coverage on justice could be achieved only when wage theft is criminalised and an International Claims Commission is established for continuing the dialogues on migrant injustices.*

## Srinita Bhattacharjee

In the wake of severe injustices meted out to migrant workers, the casualties of COVID-19, some civil society organisations (CSOs) along with trade union federations collectively launched a campaign on 1 June 2020 necessitating a transitional justice mechanism. The migrant workers, unlike their overly qualified and skilled counterpart, are excruciatingly impacted by the pandemic entailments—slumping economies, dissolving contracts, job-losses, subsequent repatriations, and the chief being ‘wage theft’. Comprising measures that would neutralise the human rights abuses, violence, and repressive circumstances encountered by migrant workers during the ongoing crisis, the mechanism demanded an urgent resolution to these impasses.

This topical issue elicited in ‘Transitional Justice: Towards Building Back Better’ a joint venture of the Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT), and the Cross-Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM). The webinar witnessed insightful deliberations from specialists, practitioners, and was moderated by William Gois, Regional Coordinator at MFA. The panellists acknowledged and broadly discoursed upon the injustices and its contextual reverberations. The twin crisis of COVID-19 and repatriation proved fatal for these migrant workers, Gois remarked, since they were forced to return empty handed with destitution writ large. Alluding to the campaign, supported by people in the business sector, governments, UN institutions, national human rights councils, academia, and CSOs, Gois dedicated the event to the fond memories of late P. Narayan Swamy, the trade union leader and President of India-based Migrant Rights Council, who had relentlessly championed for migrant labour rights and justice during his lifetime.

### Roles Played by Embassies and Missions

The deliberations commenced with Dr Shashi Tharoor, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha, explaining the nuances of wage theft following it up by responding to the queries posed by the moderator. Wage theft occurs when employees’ salaries are delayed for months; when they are forced to work on slashed remunerations, instead of the amount promised in the contractual terms and conditions, or their payments put on hold due to war-like situations.

*Dr. Shashi Tharoor said this phenomenon of wage theft has been affecting millions of Indian workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for decades.*

It was catalysed by the pandemic, which saw an exponential increase of this unjust practice, with an overwhelming number of repatriated migrant workers returning penniless; their employment contracts terminated without any compensation. Confirming the absence of a transnational mechanism that could redress these perils, Dr Tharoor commented that “there is no overarching justice mechanism for migrant labour-workers, internal or external.” Justice is an elusive element in this context as migrant workers are practically bereft of rights.

Harking back on his personal experiences, Dr Tharoor, who is often approached with appeals for wage theft remedies, claimed that evacuation is an arduous task. A majority display extreme reluctance to leave without the assets collected after years of labour since they have already incurred huge expenses for the trip and also no job opportunity or financial security is waiting for them at home. Besides, the visa restrictions and extensive documentations hardly give a choice to the migrants

other than accepting the inhuman impositions.

However, all hopes are not lost, yet. As an incumbent MP from a State that had garnered worldwide applause for rehabilitating repatriated migrants, effectively, Dr Tharoor invoked the Indian embassies, community welfare offices, governments of countries of origin and destination to implement statutes curbing the normalising tendencies of such inhuman acts. He concurred that often a timely intervention from an MP can save a worker from the prevalent injustices.

The Indian embassies are of very little assistance if the injustices are triggered in the employer's bad-faith. Since these embassies would not get involved in court cases of destination countries, the onus of a resolution strictly falls on the rightless and voiceless migrant, whose passport and documents were confiscated illegally. Dr Tharoor suggested that in such cases civil society forums like MFA should come forward and assist in their litigations. He also indicated that the host governments could permanently terminate this wage theft institution by prohibiting their nationals from hiring foreign workers unless they make a considerable deposit in the escrow fund. In case of any adverse contingencies, like the current pandemic scenario, the government would intervene and thereby save the migrant workers resourcing the money the employers owed. Moreover, since the existing systems have already proven inefficient and ineffective in handling the crisis of wage theft, Dr Tharoor summoned the civil society and humanitarian forums to work towards ensuring these workers the benefits they are entitled to.

Adding to the injustice segment, Dr Tharoor highlighted the predicaments of India's internal migrants who have minimal access to social security, negligible, or no access to health care facilities and the sheer apathy of the nation-state. There is no mechanism at the national level either to embalm their hapless conditions. He contended that "the 1983 Immigration Act is grossly inadequate in terms of recognising the dimensions of migration and the problems experienced today" and further recommended an urgent need of an amendment to protect the workers from wage theft happening within the perimeters of the nation-state. The government needs to take serious actions in favour of domestic migrant labour, he commented before signing off.

## Normalisation of Wage Theft

These 'rightless minorities' (Hannah Arendt) are caught in the quagmire of viral infections, receding economic structures, and wage theft. Migrant workers, allured by seemingly lucrative employment opportunities, are subject to blatant discrimination and violent expulsions whenever an economic downturn occurs. The current crisis engendered by COVID-19 is not an exception either. Roula Hamati, Coordinator, CCRM, speaking on the sustainable potential and temporality of the justice campaign, asserted that wage theft features as the most frequent complaint among migrant workers cutting across different employment sectors. "It is unfortunate that wage theft has become normalised and internalised not just among migrants but people who work with migrants", she added. The poor migrants leave their home countries for the potential of a better life and yet they return penniless and this is significant for triggering action against the human rights abuses encountered by these workers in a foreign land. Even though justice is delayed, it is better than being denied; so, the recurring question about the justice campaign should not be 'why now?' but 'what more could be done to leverage its output?' Hamati's petition for an international system responding and resolving the issue of wage theft, successfully, is reiterated by every speaker in the course of the discussion.

Although the pandemic is decried for aggravating the existing inequalities, Shahidul Haque, Former Foreign Secretary (Bangladesh), maintains that it presents a 'generational opportunity' to ameliorate the wage discrimination. He suggested the implementation of a few measures such as nation-states focusing less on migrant governance and more on their waning rights and justice, the establishment of an international Claims Commission, creating spaces in business sectors to encourage dialogues on migrant rights, and pushing the agenda of transitional justice at global forums such as International Labour Organisation (ILO), Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), Global Compact for Migration (GCM) – in sowing the seeds of migrant justice.

Neha Misra, Migration Specialist at the Solidarity Center, Washington DC, stated that even existing migration policies have ignored the everyday basic workplace

rights violations of migrant workers. They have always been excluded from protection regimes, social safety nets, health care facilities, and restricted from participation in host societies. Therefore, she proposed that to effectively address the wage theft issue, basic workplace rights for migrant workers should adhere to the ILO labour standards. The transitional justice mechanism would materialise only if the workers are allowed freedom of association in workplaces and the right to have agency and representation even in countries that do not permit such associations or unionisations. Having an agency would mobilise the workers collectively to demand justice.

*Constituting a league of migrant-sending countries to hammer these agendas at the ILO could be a way of dealing with unequal power relations and ensure the practical implementation of migrant justice.*

Wage theft is “a serious humanitarian difficulty” Ryszard Cholewinski, ILO Regional Officer, revealed while underlining some intriguing deficits in the national systems of justice in the host countries. Addressing the query posed by Gois as how ILO can change the existing discriminations, Cholewinski assured that the constituency would certainly strengthen its mechanisms to parade social justice at regional levels, persuade host governments to adhere to international labour standards in case of migrant workers, and explore the possibilities of initiating the Claims Commission if the CSOs and trade unions endorsed it cumulatively.

Apart from conducting the event effortlessly, William Gois’ interrogative interventions and intellectual inputs cogently set the session in context and the audience hooked to each discourse. Narrating the social evils that stirred the transitional justice mechanism in the first place, Gois forwarded the call for justice by offering some impeccable solutions towards reforming the current migrant policies. First of all, he claimed that, the Govt. of India could channelise the movement for justice by allowing the migrants to register their grievances before boarding the repatriation flights. The embassies would then pursue the struggle on their behalf, a suggestion which Dr. Tharoor promptly accepted to offer to the Union Ministry. Secondly, while the governments are beseeched to probe the inherent deficits in their justice systems, he identified the corporate mecha-

nism that has been failing the migrants by categorically depriving them of their wages. Finally, he proposed that labour agreements, labour migration governance mechanism rendering the workers powerless require thorough scrutiny; when they gain agency and are able to voice out against the injustices with sheer confidence, the battle would be won.

### **Contractual Agreements should Include Social Protection**

The unsolicited lapses in the labour migration sector have prompted a chain of catastrophes. Remittances that had overtaken foreign direct investments in 2019, observed a sharp decline in the past few months. According to the World Bank Specialist on Migrants and Remittances DilipRatha, “the twenty-percent decline in remittances in the year 2020 is happening either because of migrant’s unemployment or their wages falling due to pay cuts or the employers simply doesn’t pay.” Plummeting remittances would further cripple remittance-based home-economies (Nepal) and conflict-affected countries (Afghanistan, Haiti, and South Sudan) inducing acute poverty and food insecurities in migrant households.

Wage defalcates and other injustices could be prevented if contractual agreements include social protection measures, cash transfers, health care provisions, and the right to hygienic spaces of work and habitation. The citizens of host countries are largely dependent on migrant labour force; hence it is their ethical duty to evacuate the migrants from such horrific scenarios. Among Ratha’s some of the suggested policy measures are: Immediate assistance to the migrant workers who are stranded or detained in labour camps; Registering cases and having a track record of employers could ameliorate the injustices; Recognition of remittances as essential services; there should not be any impediments to its structural flows because it helps in the sustenance of other communities; Raising awareness among business sectors, civil societies, governments, and members of parliament of both countries of origin and destination, etc.

However, the most effective mechanism, as both Ratha and Misra recommended, would be to make the migrants aware of their fundamental rights, which, if vio



lated, should not be condoned. Employers often notoriously play on the fear-game and withhold payments. When bargaining with employers collectively becomes a real challenge for migrant workers the civil society should take a plunge and push their grievances. A new social contract must entail building back together in a democratic manner while ensuring rights, protection, social safety, and job guarantees.

As instruments of social change, each speaker remains committed to the justice mechanism campaign and is most willing to advocate strategic moves in building an inclusive society, assisting the migrants legally and politically to reintegrate so that the campaign could gain momentum at a transnational level.

### Engagements in the Post-COVID Era

Wage theft implies an irrevocable loss of social security that can drive the migrant towards suicide situations. In the post-COVID era, such barbaric acts should be axed. Gois had remarked in his introductory statement, that a democratic foundation of the idea of building back together cannot be premised upon flawed conceptualisations of justice. Restoring the national justice mechanism and reporting a crime that had gone unnoticed for years would be a gruelling task. However, these

complexities cannot deter the hopes of building an equitable future sans injustice. Justice is not a privilege; it is a fundamental human right. Every migrant worker, irrespective of their national allegiance, legal, and political status, is entitled to justice. A pragmatic coverage on justice in this context could be achieved only when wage theft is criminalised, an International Claims Commission established for continuing the dialogues on migrant injustices, and an unwavering commitment to these concerns from the labour movements, trade unions, CSO, and international forums for migrants and workers. Justice for disenfranchised migrants is the need of the hour. It was disregarded for long; now that it had grabbed worldwide attention, it should be pursued incessantly, so that every migrant worker uncompromisingly acquires the well-deserved justice.

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[Published in Delhi Post.](#)

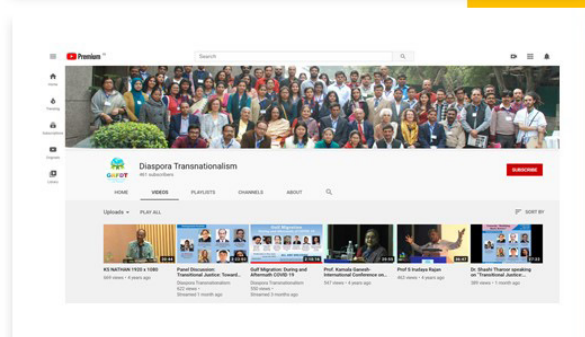
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# COVID-19 and Managing Migration: Lessons from Latin America, Africa and Asia

*Cooperation, solidarity and inclusive migration policies are required for managing migration.*

## Pratik Satyal

The plights of migrant workers have not been heard in the South American regions when the COVID-19 crisis loomed in the horizon. While for the West Africa, the Ebola epidemic was just ending and people were back to normal. A crisis within the crisis is the phrase that most suitably described the regional discourse amidst the pandemic. A strategic regional cooperation to combat the pandemic to deal with the socio-economic aspect of migration for the survival has been in consideration. Experts at the 14th GRFDT Virtual Panel on “Migration Management during COVID-19: Best Practices from Latin America, Africa and Asia” vetted the issue of migration management.

The panel discussion was moderated by Ms. Paddy SiyangaKaudsen, who pointed out the fact of isolation of the events happening in South America and Africa region. The panellists broadly discussed and elaborated the events that had already taken place and the responses that are seen. Dr Marcia Vera Espinoza, Professor in Human Geography, Queen Mary University in London, gave the insightful note on the ongoing research project on the COVID-19 effect. A comparative analysis was being put forward by the professor that is being carried out in Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay. While Dr LezaBrumat, an international relations analyst and research fellow at the migration policies centre, European University Institute of the Florence, Italy, explicitly dealt with the South American crisis, where the intra-regional migration is more prominent.

### Bottom-up and Top-down Actions

The complexities of the crisis already felt by people in the South American region due to socio-economic aspect created an urgency resulting in forced migration.

The phenomenon of returnee migration was seen characterised by mass returns on foot. Already vulnerable migrants have to take these drastic measures for survival. As the panellist highlighted, the migration was characterised by the bottom up action. In addition to this, the Latin America regions also witnessed the involuntary and forced migration due to measures taken at the border point. Bolivians and Peruvians in Chile were the first groups of nationalities that stated moving back to the country, but were unable to reach home after strong border measures. This resulted in the new risk as most people congregated to the same place and fear of spreading the virus engulfs the communities. Similarly, some migrant’s protection protocol like “Remaining Mexico Program” that enables the US to send non-Mexican people seeking asylum back to Mexico did not fare well. The people have to wait for immigration procedure and were trapped in the border cities in Mexico. A new form of measure was taken in countries like Chile, Peru and Uruguay in the form of digitalisation of migration procedure. As highlighted by the Dr Marcia, the digitalisation did not decrease the waiting time for the people awaiting the documentation.

*Furthermore, the lack of digital literacy and people not having accessed the internet data created a digital divide and did not accomplished the needed change as thought by the government agencies.*

While as the initial field report from Dr Marcia suggests, the situation worsen in terms of asylum workers as Latin American policy required a face to face meeting. As a result of the pandemic, the processes of the visa were not carried out and the migrants were left in a limbo. One of the findings that the Prof Marcia rightly pointed out is the fact that more borders restriction doesn’t stop migration, but increases migrant irregularities.

## **Role of Local Administration and Civil Societies**

The phenomenon of influx and out flux in huge numbers was tackled on policy levels which were devised to suit the gravity of the situations as highlighted by Dr LezaBrumat. Her intake into the three levels of policy making bodies provides the pathway on the functionality of the administrative bodies. On the regional level, South American countries are creating a common fund for research. The daily exchanges of information between health ministries were cited by the her. In addition, custom tariffs were reduced on the equipment that correlates with health sector and measures were implemented to guarantee free movement of goods and services. The bilateral coordination in the region are of utmost importance in the face of pandemic. In the national front different measures were taken to tackle the situation. As stated in the presentation, Argentina and Uruguay have adopted 'Privilege the society', i.e., national policies focused on the survival of the society rather than economy. The countries such as Peru, Paraguay and Ecuador have adopted the concept of society as well. In a contrasting way, Brazil opted for 'Privilege the economy' policies. As Dr Leza pointed out, some mixed module also has been seen in countries such as Chile and Columbia while some accounts of militarisation of immobility has been witnessed in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. Some state mechanisms were more in control in the local level, as Colombian municipalities enforced the local lockdown that featured the notion of 'Stay in your neighbourhood' as 'Staying in your home' is not possible.

## **Nationalism, Refugees and Practices: A Case of Africa**

In the African context, Dr Faisal M. Garba, Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Cape Town, South Africa, shared about the differential methods of restrictions followed among states. However, he also pointed out the fearful account of Ghana that initially advocated adopting a nationalistic posture in dealing with the COVID-19. He raised a fundamental question: Who belongs? As his observational accounts that he laid in the discussion one of the features of Africa is its aspect of migration as a way of living. People identities are tied with it. Some demarcation has been drawn. However, Dr Garba also rightly pointed to the positive

notion of solidarity that has been practiced in the different facets of society in the grassroots level. This has led to the nationalistic behaviour from the state to not foster in the society.

In terms of refugee camps, the Kenya government and UNHCR are collaborating to setup facilities. The refugee-led working group had produced close to 20000 face masks. As observed by the Dr Garba, the active involvement of the refugees shows the heterogeneous nature of society. While in the case of Morocco, UNHCR local agencies and state administration focused and facilitated for the online education to be provided to the refugee children.

The practices from the local administration in dealing with the pandemic have been good as per the assessment from Ms Amanda Bisong, Policy Officer, European Center for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), the Netherlands. West African region's experiences with the Ebola epidemic have prepared the countries in the region for coordinated response and setup health organisation. As stated by the Amanda, guidelines were able to be adopted in quick time. The organisations were also able to get the services from one state to another in quick time. For a country like Liberia and Sierra Leone that have lost much of the workforce due to Ebola were also able to move essential health workers during the pandemic. The combine feature of public health approach to the economic approach is being seen in the West Africa region. A phrase that have characterised most of West Africa while handling pandemic was cited by Saliou Dione, an expertise in the discussion, i.e., 'self-down' but not 'lock down'.

## **Media Literacy and Returning Migrants**

A parallel was drawn on the impact of COVID-19 in the regional behaviour and how media played the role in handling the crisis.

A major role of media in dissemination of information to the general public shapes the mindset of the population as highlighted by AmanthaPerara.

A journalist by profession and researcher in the online trauma threat faced by journalist, he cited the events circulating the national election in Sri Lanka. During

the election period, the migrant workers were perceived as heroes that have come back to that country, while in the situation of pandemic the media are portraying as if they are not welcomed. Amantha also rightly points out that the important issue in relation to migrant workers are missing out such as the remittance flow, vulnerability of returning migrants, especially women, from the media coverage. Further, media are targeting sub-story with no substance and are distracting people to take over discussion over major issues. This has led to the wrong perception of the impact of the returning migrants that will have affect in the overall country development.

## Conclusions

Migration, as a basic necessity for the subsistence of life in the region, has called for strategic policy that looks after the mobility. COVID-19 has functioned as an equaliser in society. The nationalistic and nation-state phenomenon can be witnessed at the state level, but the solidarity in the grassroots level as well as the initiation from the migrant-led organisation has called for peace and unity. Media literacy as well as digital literacy is of utmost importance to fight the pandemic and change the perception on returning migrants. Many NGOs and migrant-related international organisations have to quickly readapt and redraw the plans to confront the crisis. However, the panellists have pondered over the

role of international organisation and called for a sense of emergency response to tackle the ongoing problem. Irregular migration has worsened after the pandemic and this is the fear in the coming months as pointed out in the discussion. The challenges to the states are over the high rate of job insecurity over the crowded population in the face of limited access to health facility. A gap has been evident in between the migrants and national population. Similar events have drawn parallels to South Asian region, most notably India, where the question over the federal structure has been raised. However, a noteworthy initiation has been taken by the European Union that has called for migrants in the migration committee to better assess the situation at hand. Cooperation, solidarity and inclusive migration policies are required for managing migration.

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[Published in Delhi Post.](#)

## GRFDT Virtual Panel Discussion Series 14

### MIGRATION MANAGEMENT DURING COVID 19: BEST PRACTICES FROM LATIN AMERICA, AFRICA AND ASIA

#### PANELISTS

#### Moderator



**Ms. Paddy Siyanga Knudsen**  
Migration Governance Analyst,  
Malaysia



**Dr Faisal M. Garba**  
University of Cape Town, South  
Africa



**Dr. Marcia Vera Espinoza**  
Queen Mary University of  
London, United Kingdom



**Dr. Leiza Brumat**  
Migration Policy Center, Italy



**Mr. Amantha Perera**  
Independent Journalist,  
Sri Lanka



**Mr. Rafeek Ravuther**  
Centre for Indian Migrants  
Studies (CIMS), India



**Ms. Amanda Bisong**  
European Centre for Development  
Policy, Management, Netherlands



**DATE: Tuesday, 28 July 2020,**  
**TIME: 06:30 pm, (IST, GMT+5:30)**



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**Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism**



**Ghosh, Partha S. (2016), *Migrants, Refugees and the Stateless in South Asia*. Sage, New Delhi, pp. 356**

**Sabah Khan**

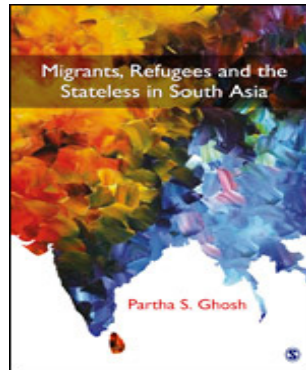
*Migrants, Refugees and the Stateless in South Asia* is a meticulous text which offers a comprehensive picture of different dimensions of migration in South Asia. Partha S. Ghosh has taken up the colossal task to bring out crucial differences between migrants, refugees and stateless people in seven out of eight South Asian states, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with the exception of Maldives. This work addresses important questions of forcible repatriation, desirability of a regional refugee regime. The commitment of the author to make this book as comprehensive as possible has been fulfilled as it cogently deals with migration, ranging from theory, political connection, security variable, aspect of rehabilitation, legal dynamics and cultural and psychological dimensions. The discussion includes wide-ranging examples of Muhajirin to West Pakistan, Bihari Muslims, Lhotshampa of Bhutan, Chin Burmese refugees, Tibetan refugees and eviction of Chinese Indians.

This book has eight chapters, including the introduction. The arguments of the book fall logically, with definitional issues at the outset. There is an ambiguity around the terms- migrants, refugees, illegal settlers or stateless persons. A distinction is brought out in the usage of concepts like migrants, refugees and stateless persons. In terms of how they are defined in the Western context and in contrast how they are used in the South Asian context interchangeably due to lack-of legal regimes. The author has categorised migration and refugee movements in South Asia in eight broad categories of Partition-related uncertainties, failure in nation-building, inter-ethnic conflict, open or virtually open borders, war related qualms, developmental and environmental effects, statelessness or virtual stateless-

ness and intra- regional and extra-regional military interventions.

The first chapter elaborates on the theories of migration to mapping the South Asian scene. It takes account of the 50 million migrants, refugees and the stateless, where they are located, reasons for crossing borders, their rehabilitation, etc. In the past six decades, there has been movement of millions of people across the intra-regional national boundaries to virtually unenforceable international borders in South Asia. Migrants

coming from Bangladesh to India and Pakistan, hosting refugees from Myanmar; Nepal receiving migrants from India and Bhutan, sending migrants to India, etc. are some of the examples of fluidity of south Asian borders. Even though it had discussed the theories, the approach of this book is primarily empirical citing cases of Partition refugees, Tibetan, Afghan, Indian Tamil, Sri Lankan Tamil, Rohingya Refugees et al. The theoretical dimensions have figured largely circumstantially as most of them are West inspired migration research and has limited usefulness for comprehending the South Asian scene. This work goes beyond the Western theories of migration in primarily two ways, firstly, Western theories of migration only takes account of indentured labour migrations during colonial times or labour migrations to gulf countries in recent times. This work brings in a discussion of post-partition and other refugee movements. Secondly, it brings out the limitations of Western inspired migration research for an understanding of the South Asian context, which has little discussed the aspect of collective violence which is critical for any explanation of cross-border migrations in South Asia. Ghosh brings out the relevance of collective violence and collective memories as a prime cause of migration in South Asia, whereby people migrate in search of security for life. In other words, how



the fear psychosis plays its role as evident in the case of Kashmiri Hindus who left for Jammu and Delhi in early 1990s and several other examples.

Ghosh has studied the interconnections between migration, politics and national security. This is studied in the context of how the issue of Kashmiri refugees continued to figure in the political discourse of Azad Kashmir, Bangladeshi migrants and inner line permit system in Assam. It raises the lesser known concerns of Bhutanese government conceiving their nationalism in ethnic terms and emphasizing cultural nationalism of Drukpas and the political connections of Lhotshampa and Nepal resulting in their exodus to Nepal. The author has explained how one of the important factors in interstate migrations and refugee movements is civil war in which neighboring state invariably gets sucked in. This creates security-related tensions between the two.

In chapter four, the author has discussed four national relief efforts as experienced by India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The remaining four states are not relevant as they are not a refugee-receiving country. It includes the discussion of partition refugee cases of Delhi and Calcutta. But not limiting it to them rather, is a comprehensive description of the Tibetan refugees, Bangladeshi liberation refugees, Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, Chakma, Afghan, Myanmarese refugees. The Bangladesh experience is discussed in context of agreement with Chakmas and finding ways to repatriate, Rohingya refugees. It offers a detailed account of the repatriation measures taken by South Asian states.

In the fifth chapter, Ghosh takes up the issue of legal dynamics. This chapter tried to address the question whether it is desirable to have a regional refugee regime. The surprising aspect is the lack of a legal regime. No South Asian state has signed the UN refugee convention of 1951 except for Afghanistan. The author points out that 'even without any refugee-specific legal regime, India and Pakistan have handled millions of refugees.' The Indian refugee protection regime can be seen in seven frameworks as pointed by a senior supreme court lawyer of India, Rajiv Dhavan. These frameworks are – the citizenship regime, fundamental rights, the statutory framework, India's obligations arising out of its international treaty obligations, judicial interventions,

the SAARC framework, the Model Law of Refugee Protection. To this Ghosh adds two further frameworks of – the bilateral framework and the informal framework. Many refugee issues in South Asia have either been tackled through bilateral cooperation without invoking state or international laws or simply by informal mechanisms without taking recourse to legal processes at all. It is seen that the SAARC's political agenda is limited and often states rely on bilateral resolution. There can be witnessed a lack of official enthusiasm, strong misgivings expressed by security agencies that porous borders may lead to unmanageable refugee entries. Despite this, a benign indifference can be noticed among the South Asian states. There is an unusual empathy towards the refugee seeking people.

In this particular work Ghosh goes beyond his shibboleth of political and security centric debates over migrations and successfully digs into the areas of migration of culture, music, violence, displacement on memory and other related areas, offering rich data and insights. It focuses on the impact of migration on cultural productions such as literature, music, painting, etc. which is one of the strengths of the book. South Asian migration shows how cultural forms and productions move alongside migrating humans. The bone of contention is that migration leads to mix of inventiveness ranging from music to culinary practices. The discussion is made rich with various examples ranging from the case of Chinese workers in India who started worshipping Indian deities to the migration of music back and forth between India and West Indies through the experience of indentured labour. The connection between migration and cinema is also brought out. Ghosh not merely provides a superficial discussion of impact on culture by confining to music and cinema rather goes deep and also unravels the impact of Partition migration on other art forms like painting, photography, Bhojpuri drama.

Ghosh emphasizes on the need to explore the negative domain of migration like migration of diseases which has not been explored much, however it forms an important issue to be addressed. He has written at length about migration, refugees and its relation to political and security dimensions and this work can be seen as an extension of his earlier writings. Despite the enriching knowledge offered, there are certain gaps in this book. It has left out some important issues which the author

himself acknowledges. For instance, while he explored the impact of Partition refugees on Hindi and Bengali cinema, there was no discussion of the impact of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees on Tamil cinema and other art-forms. Another area which remains unexplored is the issue of undocumented Bangladeshis in India. Since the book is preoccupied with the colossal task of mapping issues of migrants, refugees and stateless people in the South Asian region, it tends to overlook the intricacies of a particular migrant or refugee group. However, it remains an engaging book, extending migration research in newer domains. It succeeds in documenting

a nuanced account of migrants, refugees and stateless people in South Asia. This book would make an interesting read for scholars on migration, refugee studies, South Asian studies.

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# Roots and Routes

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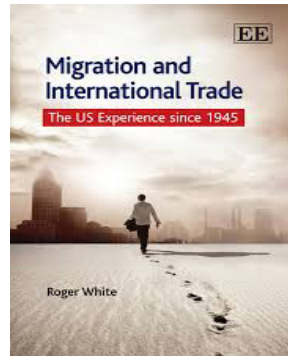


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## White, Roger (2010). *Migration and International Trade: The US Experience since 1945*. Edward Elgar Publishing, Massachusetts, pp. 226

Pulkit Buttan

The globalised world has witnessed intensification and intermingling of various activities. Migration and trade are one of them. Various works have highlighted their relationship, but most of them paid less attention to factors that underlie this relationship. The book, *Migration and International Trade: The U.S. experience since 1945*, tends to fill this void. Trade is not only about the exchange of goods and trade; instead, it involves multitudes of activities and end number of processes. This book, besides establishing a complimentary link between trade and immigration, also reflects upon those processes. Roger White, an economist and a professor of Economics at Whittier College, wrote this book.



The concerns for the book are understandable in the context in which it was written. This book is grounded in the liberal understanding of trade in IPE (International Political Economy), especially Ricardo's Comparative Advantage theory. It was published in 2010 when the recession finally ended, but the economy of the USA was lagging, and the unemployment rates were pretty high. U.S. economy grew at around 3% in late 2010. This book was a response to that crisis. The five sections of the book provide a detailed analysis of the trade-immigrant relationship in the context of the U.S. It is accompanied by a description of factors that underlies this relationship.

In the book, the year 1968 is taken as a breakthrough year in the immigration policy of the USA. The 1965 Immigration Act, implemented in 1968, opens up the entry of immigrants from around the globe. He looked into the differences between immigrants from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Europe to USA (Pre-1968) and the immigrants from other countries to USA (Post 1968) in terms of their capacity to exert pro-trade influ-

ence between their home and host country. His empirical analysis is restricted to the period between 1992 and 2006.

White offers a brief history of immigration in the USA by dividing it into 5 phases and later tries to establish its link with the immigrant-trade relationship. This book also comes up with specifications and variables to provide an objective understanding of the prevalent scenario. This book is full of classifications. For example, the very initial argu-

ment of the author is based on a two-channel model that shows the effects of immigration on trade. Immigrants affect trade through direct and indirect channels. In the direct, he mentioned preference effect and information bridge effect, and in latter, cultural bridge and enforcement bridge effect.

There are some crucial takes from this book. Firstly, this book highlights the role of immigrants in encouraging trade between home and host countries. This book shows the capacity of immigrants to act as trade intermediaries by acting as de facto intermediaries, resolving asymmetries of information and enforcement contractors. In other words, it can be said that they work as enablers for bilateral activities. For example, in Chapter 6 on trade facilitating infrastructure, White saw a link between transaction costs, quality of trade facilitating infrastructure (both hard and soft) and immigrants. He came to the conclusion that superior infrastructure can reduce the distribution margins that leads to lower product prices and consumer welfare. When there is poor TFI, immigrants have more significant opportunities to become intermediaries and reduce transaction costs.

Secondly, it helps in breaking some of the long-held myths related to immigrants. In contemporary times, many western nations have overstated/overestimated



the losses related to immigrants, but the author refutes such presumptions. He shows that the host country's residents' loss depends upon the skill sets of immigrants. For example, in the post-1960 era, there was a considerable decline in the skills of immigrants in the USA. The wage-earning and unemployment effects were instead very minor. He highlighted the immigrant induced welfare implications for the host country.

Moreover, labour demand keeps a considerable balance with labour supply in the USA. So, immigration induced adverse labour outcome is unlikely. Therefore, the author recommends policy for the USA based on immigration that is selective and allows skilled immigrants from countries of the post-1968 cohort to increase trade with such countries. It is not possible in cases of unskilled workers because former are more connected to social and business networks at home.

Third, White also keeps in mind the subjective aspect of public opinion regarding the immigrants. He found the perceived cost of immigration among public higher than the real. Therefore, he suggested a policy change that should be accompanied by an effort to change public opinion regarding the impact of immigrants on aggregate employment. It could lead to socially optimal outcomes. However, these are difficult to achieve, and as he said, is impeded by political expediency and lobbying. This further points to the need to study the real cost and benefits attached to immigration that could prove to be a game-changer in contemporary times.

Fourth, the humanitarian aspects are not side-lined for economic imperatives in the book. Although White suggested an Immigration policy that would allow skilled immigrants to come to the U.S., he argued that it should be supplemented with continuing efforts to accept refugees and asylum seekers on humanitarian grounds. It can give space for refugee integration initiatives that can better utilise the skill sets of refugees. In contemporary times, we have ample examples of countries who have tried to integrate refugees through inclusive policies.

Fifth, the author has borrowed from other fields and discipline. For example, the primacy and recency effects are derived from the field of psychology. White directly applied it to US-immigrant trade link by arguing that the influence of immigrants coming from the

countries in the pre-1968 phase may reflect the primacy effect and the post-1968 countries may reflect a recency effect. White concluded that the influence of immigrants from the pre-1968 countries (Canada, Australia, New Zealand) would be lower than the post-1968 home countries (other countries) and thus have fewer opportunities to exert pro-trade influence due to, inoperability of preference channel and information bridge effects in pre-1968 phase due to few immigrants and availability of goods and overexploitation of the information asymmetries.

Sixth, this book also looks into the manifestation of cultural relationships in economic exchange. For example, in Chapter 5, he showed how the differences and variation in consumer preferences of host (the US) and home country residents, can impact the immigrants' ability to exert a positive influence on U.S. imports from their home countries through preference channel or by information or cultural bridge effects. White also talked about how immigrants can act as intermediaries to reduce the de-merits of cultural dissimilarities and avoid hindrance of trust and rapport between the home and the host countries. So, what others might have seen as a drawback in the bilateral relationship, he referred to it as an opportunity to exert positive influence. The cultural understanding helps us to move beyond the formal relationships between states and shows the inner dynamics of bilateral trades that are beyond the jurisdiction of the state and is enforced at people to people level. He also found variation in influences of immigrants across product classification, home country and immigrant characteristics. Also, the sequencing of chapters makes it easier to understand the concept. The sequencing of chapters is deductive. White starts with a general understanding of trade-immigrant relationship by using some of the existing literature on this issue. Then, he deduces his arguments to the case of the U.S. The initial chapters establish a framework in which the later chapters can be easily understood.

However, at the methodological level, there are few limitations. Part III of the book, Examining the U.S. immigrant-trade link, is meant for those who are experts in understanding econometric specifications and models like the Augmented Gravity Model. People from other disciplines might find it challenging to comprehend. Nevertheless, one can surely find comfort in

understanding the author's observation at the end of those chapters and could make a sense out of it. A similar problem can be seen in Chapter 7. In that chapter, White tried to measure the cultural distance between the U.S. and immigrants' home countries. He used Inglehart's WVS (World Value Surveys) and EVS (European Values Surveys)- based measures of cultural distance. These value surveys contain information related to the beliefs of individuals, their attitudes and values. His calculation of cultural distance is based on TSR (Traditional Authority v Secular Rational Authority) dimension and SSE (Survival values v Self-expression values) dimensions. The significant elements of these dimensions are subjective, like adherence to family obligations, obedience to religious authority, quality of life issues. He also employed Pythagorean Theorem, and one has to resort to the concluding observation to understand the whole idea of the author. WVS has been conducted since 1981 in almost 100 countries. It investigates socio-cultural and political change. However, scholars like Thomas Hurtienne and Götz Kaufmann found its intrinsic assumptions static and bias. They pointed out that questions used in the WVS questionnaire are based on certain assumptions of different things like 'emancipation', 'democracy', and 'modernisation'. Moreover, these terms could have different meanings for different people. Therefore, they found it 'one-sided, math-focused instrument' and affirming or falsifying the dominant class ideology only.

One must also look into another aspect of the relationship that could add further interest in such research. Recently, it has been argued that immigrants promote export not only to their home countries but also the other countries. So, it points to expanding our understanding of what Oleg Firsin called as "proximate" countries. The proximity measure is contingent upon common border or linguistic or cultural factors. These factors point to business networks, communication and foreign market information as trade facilitators. So, immigrants stimulate exports to the countries which are geographically or linguistically proximate to their home country because channels that are applied in case of home countries can cross the borders. In the age of the interconnected world, this argument seems feasible and viable because it takes care of the overall impact of trade-immigration link.

In totality, the book has been able to achieve its stated goal of showing the underlying factors in the trade-immigration link. It helps in understanding the interdisciplinary nature of the phenomenon of migration. He borrowed from the discipline of sociology, International Political Economy, and political science. White has been able to maintain a delicate balance between subjective aspects and their objective explanations. Not only he describes what has happened, but he also provides some prescriptions on what could be done for better policy decisions and better-informed public. This book is useful for anyone interested in understanding the essential link between Immigration and Trade, precisely how U.S. immigration policies impact its trade outcomes.

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## RK Jain Interview

Brij Maharaj – Nice to speak to you again as it has been a long association. You’ve had a very distinguished career as a social anthropologist. How did it all start?

RK Jain – Prof. Maharaj, it’s my pleasure to talk to you again as we have been meeting in different parts of the world. You see, it started with my interest in Anthropology, History and English literature, which are the three subjects that I graduated in at Lucknow

University in India. After that, I did my PhD from the Australian National University in Canberra in Anthropology and Sociology. At that time, I studied the Indian plantation workers, South Indian plantation workers in Malaysia, and that came out as a book both from Yale University Press, New Haven and from University of Black press in Kuala Lumpur.

Brij Maharaj – You were subsequently appointed as a teacher, university professor in different parts of the world, you can talk about those experiences?

RK Jain–In today’s age when people are doing YouTube, Twitter etc., I think my career was really high bound in the sense that after doing my PhD from Australian National University, I went to Oxford to teach at the university as a University lecturer for Social Anthropology of South Asia. Since I had not done fieldwork in India at that time, I came to Madhya Pradesh in central India to conduct a study of the status and power equation in Madhya Pradesh, a state in India. But then I went back to Diaspora again because I went to Trinidad and Tobago as a visiting professor at the University of West Indies. Several years after completing my PhD

from ANU, I again went to Australian National University as a visiting professor, again after having done my PhD work there, several years after that and then I have

been consistently with the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi from which I retired in 2002. In the meantime, I have published at least half a dozen books on diaspora, Indian diaspora, as well as on Sociology and Anthropology.

Brij Maharaj – I think your main areas of interest was, what we call the old diaspora from my

own personal experience and indentured diaspora, you have got experience in Tobago Trinidad refugee and South Africa, Malaysia. Can you offer some comparative reflections on these experiences?

RK Jain – Right, I think there are people who have looked at, especially western scholars, I mean, there are exceptions, but in general, the western scholars have looked upon diaspora as a tale of woe and depression, whereas I find that people like Brij Lal who is from Fiji, he takes the view of challenging the schools. So, the old diaspora, despite adversities they stuck on to their roots can be adapted to the new circumstances in a very challenging way. Whereas the new diaspora, the NRIs and the people who are in the sort of new technology etc., these people have commodified nostalgia for India. So, I think the contrast between the old diaspora and the new diaspora, people talk of the new diaspora all the time, I think they should look at the old diaspora and the way in which they adapted and succeeded when making a distressing situation honorable for themselves.

(... for more details, please visit to our [GRFDT YouTube channel](#))





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