



International  
Labour  
Organization

► **Impact of COVID-19 on nexus  
between climate change  
and labour migration in selected  
South Asian countries:  
An exploratory study**



▶ **Impact of COVID-19 on nexus  
between climate change  
and labour migration in selected  
South Asian countries:  
An exploratory study**

Copyright © International Labour Organization 2021  
First published 2021

Publications of the International Labour Office enjoy copyright under Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. Nevertheless, short excerpts from them may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation, application should be made to ILO Publishing (Rights and Licensing), International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, or by email: [rights@ilo.org](mailto:rights@ilo.org). The International Labour Office welcomes such applications.

Libraries, institutions and other users registered with a reproduction rights organization may make copies in accordance with the licences issued to them for this purpose. Visit [www.ifrro.org](http://www.ifrro.org) to find the reproduction rights organization in your country.

---

ISBN: 978-92-2-035199-4 (web PDF)

---

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the International Labour Office, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

Information on ILO publications and digital products can be found at: [www.ilo.org/publns](http://www.ilo.org/publns).

Cover: Copyright © UN4U/Mukhopadhyay Somenath.

Produced by the Publications Production Unit (PRODOC) of the ILO.

Graphic and typographic design, layout and composition,  
printing, electronic publishing and distribution.

The ILO endeavours to use paper sourced from forests managed  
in an environmentally sustainable and socially responsible manner.

Code: JMB-REP

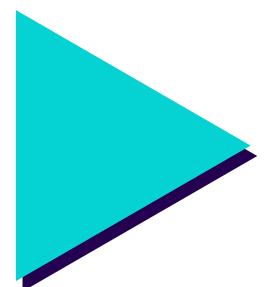
## ► Acknowledgements

---

In order to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the nexus between climate change, the labour market and migration in South Asia, the ILO's labour migration branch (MIGRANT), in collaboration with the ILO's RESEARCH department, initiated a desk study in selected countries. Professor Tasneem Siddiqui of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) conducted the research. Shabarinath Nair, Regional Migration Specialist at ILO's Decent Work Team for South Asia, Héloïse Ruaudel, Senior Technical Specialist on crisis migration, Mahanam Bhattacharjee Mithun, Junior Professional Officer in the ILO MIGRANT branch, and Rishabh Kumar Dhir, Research Officer in ILO's RESEARCH department in Geneva, provided guidance and input to this research throughout all its phases.

The study benefited from substantial input from different organizations, as well as academics and practitioners, in particular Dr Benoy Peter, Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development (CMID); Dr Amina Maharajn, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD); Tatcee Macabuag, Migration Forum in Asia (MFA); Mihir Bhatt, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI); Chandima Arambepola, Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA); Dr Atle Solberg, Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD); Dr Matthew Scott, Raoul Wallenberg Institute (RWI); Maximilian Pottler, International Organization for Migration (IOM); Dr Saleemul Haque, International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD); and Zakir Hossain Khan, Change Initiative, Bangladesh.

Staff members of the ILO country offices provided relevant documents and input: Basanta Karki and Neha Choudhary, ILO Nepal; Thilini Fernando, ILO Sri Lanka; Laetitia Weibel Roberts, ILO Bangladesh; Cristina Martinez, ILO Bangkok. The study was also reviewed by Alexandra Hallqvist and Eva Majurin in the Coordination Support unit for Peace and Resilience of ILO's DEVINVEST branch, by Monica Castillo in the Green Jobs Unit of ILO's ENTERPRISES department and by Michelle Leighton and Paul Tacon in the ILO MIGRANT branch.



## ▶ Contents

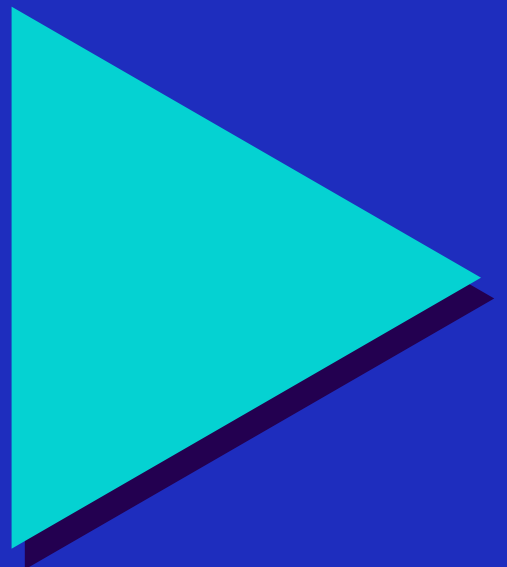
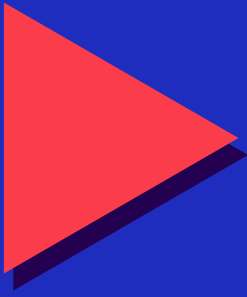
---

▶ Acknowledgements	iii
▶ Acronyms	v
<hr/>	
▶ Introduction	1
▶ 1. Scope, methodology and areas of enquiry	3
▶ 2. Migration induced by climate change and environmental disasters in South Asia	5
▶ 3. COVID-19 – a stress multiplier for migrant workers	10
Facing COVID-19 in countries or regions of destination	10
Experience of return migrant workers	12
▶ 4. Multiple stresses of returned and circular migrant workers in area of origin	15
▶ 5. Management of crises – good practices at the regional and country levels	18
▶ 6. Summary, conclusions and recommendations	24
Summary and conclusions	24
Recommendations	26
▶ References	32
<hr/>	
▶ List of boxes	
▶ Box 1. Climate change	5
▶ Box 2. Disaster	6
▶ Box 3. Disaster risk reduction	6
▶ Box 4. Migration to Kerala from States of India affected by climate change	7
▶ Box 5. Vulnerabilities of irregular migrant workers	11
▶ Box 6. Kerala: A state level positive practice in India	18
▶ Box 7. Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants: Good practice in Bangladesh	22

## ► Acronyms

---

<b>BCSM</b>	Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants
<b>BMET</b>	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
<b>CEPA</b>	Centre for Poverty Analysis
<b>CMID</b>	Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development
<b>COP</b>	Conference of Parties
<b>CRI</b>	Climate Risk Index
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease 2019
<b>DECCMA</b>	Deltas, Vulnerabilities and Climate Change: Migration and Adaptation
<b>FEB</b>	Foreign Employment Board
<b>ICCCAD</b>	International Centre for Climate Change and Development
<b>IDMC</b>	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>MFI</b>	Micro-finance institution
<b>MGNREGA</b>	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
<b>MoEWOE</b>	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental organizations
<b>PDD</b>	Platform on Disaster Displacement
<b>RMMRU</b>	Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit
<b>SAARC</b>	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
<b>TFD</b>	Taskforce on Displacement
<b>UNFCC</b>	United Nations Convention on Climate Change
<b>VGD</b>	Vulnerable Group Development
<b>VGf</b>	Vulnerable Group Feeding
<b>WEWB</b>	Wage Earners' Welfare Board



## ► Introduction

---

Climate change has been identified as the single greatest risk for achieving the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals. There is increasing evidence of climate change becoming an additional driver of migration, both internal and international. Rapid onset climate events displace people directly, while in the case of slow onset events, climate variables interact with other key drivers, including lack of decent work and employment opportunities in the area of origin, weak governance, population growth, individuals' aspirations, access to information on job opportunities in the destination countries, and so on. Such factors can lead to the migration of one or several members of the concerned household, the entire household or even the community to establish new homesteads or to diversify livelihood options. In South Asia, the world of work can be affected by various aspects of climate change including extreme heat, flooding or drought, or that can cause a rise in water-borne diseases, dengue or malaria, or bring pests that damage crops, among other disasters. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the risks to the world of work have been magnified in both rural and urban areas, particularly in the informal economy.

Since the beginning of 2020, the world has been grappling with the impact of COVID-19. By March, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic. COVID-19 has had a devastating effect on the world of work, causing massive suffering and creating extreme vulnerabilities for millions of workers.<sup>1</sup> Among the workforce, migrants who are on the move in the context of climate change bore the brunt of the crisis more than nationals or locals working in similar jobs.<sup>2</sup> Health shocks and risks, job and income losses, partial or non-payment of wages, inability to maintain social distances, limited access to healthcare,<sup>3</sup> untimely and unplanned return, unsafe routes and means of transportation, and securitization and stigmatization in the places of origin and areas of destination have been experienced by all types of migrants in varying degrees, including by those who moved because of vulnerabilities related to climate change in the first place. Both internal and international migrants face similar challenges, as lockdown affects both groups to move within and across the border, and these challenges need adequate attention.

Many of those who came from areas affected by climate change used migration as one of the adaptation tools.<sup>4</sup> During the outbreak of COVID-19, a large number of migrant workers, both internal and international, had to return to their areas of origin where they did not have any source of income or, in some cases, a shelter of their own. The pandemic has not only exposed these migrant workers and their families to extreme risks but has also disrupted one of their principal adaptation options, that is, migration. For instance, family members who were left behind were exposed to major food insecurity, since the loss of income of their migrant relatives resulted in a reduction of the flow of remittance to the household.<sup>5</sup> Remittances

1 ILO, *Protecting Migrant Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, April 2020a.

2 ILO, *Protecting the Rights at Work of Refugees and other Forcibly Displaced Persons during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, June 2020b.

3 Action Aid, [COVID-19 crisis shows South Asia is unprepared to protect climate migrants](#), 6 May 2020.

4 Foresight, "Migration and Global Environmental Change", *Final Project Report*, 2011.

K. Warner and T. Affi, "Where the Rain Falls: Evidence from Eight Countries on how Vulnerable Households use Migration to Manage the Risk of Rainfall Vulnerability and Food Insecurity", *Climate and Development* 6 No. 1 (2014), 1–17.

S. Blondin, "An Environmentally-Fragile and Remittance-dependent Country Facing a Pandemic: the Accumulation of Vulnerabilities in Kyrgyzstan", *IOM Environmental Portal*, 2020.

Emily Wright and Dennis Tänzler, *Climate Change Adaptation under Pressure*, 2020.

IOM, 4, 2016.

M. Martin et al., "Making Migration Decisions amid Climate Change in Bangladesh. Climate Change Related Migration in Bangladesh", Briefing Paper No. 1, 2012; idem, "Climate Induced Migration in Bangladesh: The Need for Policy Realignment", *Development Policy Review*, doi:10.1111/dpr.12260, 2017.

5 Siddiqui, Tasmeen (ed.). *The Other Face of Globalisation: COVID-19, International Labour Migrants and Left-behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).





Climate change impact on people's livelihood: Increasing storms, cyclones, and other natural disasters have a direct impact on the life and livelihood of fisherman communities in coastal areas of Bangladesh. @ UN4U.

have increased in some South Asian countries due to cash incentive initiatives taken by some governments, but better capturing of remittance statistics does not mean the families left behind are better off.<sup>6</sup> Many migrant workers who returned to their places of origin faced multiple climate-related shocks such as floods and cyclones.<sup>7</sup> Governments of South Asian countries did initiate different programmes to support those who lost their jobs and income because of COVID-19, but in many cases those who moved in the context of climate change, and members of their families who were left behind, fell between the cracks and could not benefit from such support.<sup>8,9</sup> The extreme vulnerabilities and inability of the policy attempts to include climate-induced migrants make it imperative to explore systematically the implications of the pandemic on the world of work of this group of migrants.

---

6 V. Mercer-Blackman and Y. Li, "Six reasons why remittances soared in South Asia during COVID-19", *The World Bank Blogs*, 2021.

7 IDMC, *Internal displacement 2020: Mid-year update*, 2020.

8 A. Maharajan, R. S. Decampos and C. Singh, *Migration and Climate Change in South Asia: What Happens when Spatial Diversification of Livelihood is not an Option Anymore* (ICIMOD, August 2020).

9 RMMRU, *Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2020: Achievements and Challenges* (Dhaka, 2021).

## ► 1. Scope, methodology and areas of enquiry

---

**Purpose and scope:** The aim of the policy brief is to better understand how internal and international migrant workers who moved in the context of climate change have been affected by the outbreak of COVID-19, considering that they are not a homogenous group and that the impact of the pandemic may vary according to age, gender, indigenous or ethnic identities, minority groups, disability status, type of employment of household members, and socio-economic status, among other attributes. The brief draws on the diverse challenges experienced by internal and international climate-induced migrant workers from selected South Asian countries, particularly India, Bangladesh and Nepal, and to some extent Sri Lanka. It also collates the good examples and innovative measures undertaken by the governments and civil society organizations of these countries in protecting the migrant workers during the pandemic. The research also offers some policy recommendations while factoring in the intersectional realities of migrant workers.

**Methodology:** This is primarily a desk research conducted over the period from November 2020 to May 2021. A systematic methodology was followed in order to understand the complex relationship between climate change and labour migration in face of the impact of COVID-19. A thorough literature review was conducted to explore the existing information on the impact of COVID-19 on people who migrated earlier, both internally and internationally, from various South Asian countries subject to climate change and climatic disasters. The review also covered the impact of COVID-19 on the migrant households that had been left behind, as well as those who had to return to their places of origin because of the outbreak of COVID-19. On 19 January 2021, ILO and the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) jointly organized a consultation meeting with various stakeholders in order to locate available resources related to the study. Thirty-five participants, including academics, experts, ILO and other UN officials, as well as civil society activists, participated in the virtual consultation. To understand the country-specific realities of COVID-19, climate change, migration and the labour market, more in-depth follow-up interviews of ten resource persons from academia, civil society organizations and UN agencies were arranged. Some of these resource persons were from the organizations mentioned above, and some were from other organizations.

This study covers three types of climate-induced migrant workers – (i) those who lost their homestead land and had been obliged to move to a different location as displaced persons; (ii) those who were displaced temporarily but could go back to their places of origin at a later stage; and (iii) those who did not lose their homestead but lost their sources of income, such as arable land, the opportunity of undertaking decent work or off-farm income avenues, and who moved to different places in search of a livelihood. People belonging to this last group usually move individually but some are accompanied by their entire family or bring their family members gradually to reside together in the new location. The figures for displaced persons mentioned in this study are taken from Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reports and mostly concern those who had to be evacuated temporarily or permanently because of environmental disasters. The study is unable to account for those who moved gradually as a result of work opportunities diminishing in their locality because of the loss of arable land or other assets linked to rapid- and slow-onset climate events.

**Areas of enquiry:** The study examines the effects of COVID-19 on the socio-economic situation of populations in areas impacted by climate change, and also of migrants driven to other destinations in the context of climate change. They include specific groups, for example, women, indigenous and tribal peoples, and persons with disabilities. The study investigates the types of protection measures available to the different groups of migrants, and also explores the impact of return measures on migrants who have moved for motives related to

climate change in the first place. Coping mechanisms of the migrant households left behind and no longer receiving remittances also constitute an important area of investigation. The strategies adopted by the South Asian countries in dealing with migrants affected by COVID-19 are studied, and finally, we have compiled the positive experiences of migrant workers and the governments in their places of origin and destination in reducing the negative outcome of COVID-19.

The following section sets the context of internal and international migration related to climate change in selected countries of South Asia.



Rickshaw pullers in Dhaka, most of whom are displaced from rural areas due to climate change events and migrate to big cities in search of work.  
© Marcel Crozet / ILO.

## ► 2. Migration induced by climate change and environmental disasters in South Asia

South Asia is acutely vulnerable to climate change, with every country exposed to multiple climate-related stresses. Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are severely affected by the rising sea level, floods, changing rainfall patterns, heat stress, landslides, drought and desertification. Land-locked Afghanistan, Bhutan and Nepal, in addition to rising temperatures and drought, also face melting snow and glacial retreat.<sup>10</sup> Although a small country, Nepal has a diverse geography and is prone to flooding in some areas and avalanches in mountainous regions. It has also been hit by severe earthquakes.<sup>11</sup> Bangladesh is even more vulnerable for being a lower riparian country. Some 700 rivers and their tributaries flow through the country to the Bay of Bengal, and floods, flash floods, coastal and riverbank erosion are major sources of stress for the inhabitants. Maldives is the lowest country in the world; in a worst-case scenario, the entire archipelago may be submerged by the rising sea level. The Global Climate Risk Index (GCRI) has ranked Bangladesh seventh, Pakistan eighth and Nepal tenth among the top ten countries in its long-term Climate Risk Index (CRI) which covers the period from 2000 to 2019.<sup>12</sup>

### Box 1. Climate change

A change of climate, which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to other natural climate variability that has been observed over comparable time periods.<sup>13</sup>

Climate change impacts and risks have grave implications for jobs and livelihoods, particularly for people and groups already facing social and economic vulnerabilities in the region, including women, persons with disabilities and indigenous and tribal peoples, among others.<sup>14</sup> Millions are displaced in stand-alone or in some cases simultaneously occurring events. Since 2010, 700 million people in this region have been impacted by at least one climate-related rapid-onset disaster. In 2019, 9.5 million people were displaced in this region because of floods and cyclones.<sup>15</sup> The same year, in Bangladesh, 7.8 million people were displaced: 4 million due to floods; 1.7 million due to cyclone Fani and 2.1 to cyclone Bulbul. Also that year, India was hit by eight tropical storms, and 5 million new displacements occurred there, while in Nepal, 121,000 people were displaced – the majority triggered by monsoon rain, the rest by landslides. Sri Lanka also saw 45,000 people displaced by floods and landslides.

The World Bank and other organizations have predicted the threat of future displacement. In a study commissioned by the World Bank, Rigaud et al. (2018) estimate that by 2050, in a pessimistic scenario, 143 million people all over the world will be displaced internally, solely because of climate change. Under the same scenario, they predicted that 35.7 million could

10 ADB. *Nepal May See 10% GDP Loss From Glacier Melts*, Climate Extremes, 2014.

11 The link between earthquake and climate change is not yet well established. It is now argued that low-pressure centres of typhoons can prompt vibrations of earthquake faults.

12 Global Climate Risk Index, 2021.

13 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Article 1(2).

14 M. Oelz, R.K. Dhir and M. Harsdorff, *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: From Victims to Change Agents through Decent Work*, ILO, 2017.

15 IDMC, *Internal displacement 2020: Mid-year update*, 2020.

be displaced internally in South Asia, including 13 million from Bangladesh alone. The study also predicts that a quarter of the total internal migrants of South Asia will be induced by climate change, and that Bangladesh will account for half of all internal migrants.

### Box 2. Disaster

A disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins.<sup>16</sup>

Eastern and northern Bangladesh, the northern part of the Gangetic plain and the coastal cities of India, in particular the metropolitan areas of Mumbai and Chennai, have been identified as major source areas for displacement.<sup>17</sup> Data on displacement occurring from slow-onset climate events such as drought, desertification and deforestation are mostly qualitative in nature. Case studies of different locations presented in the Migration Data Portal<sup>18</sup> show that a process of migration to cities is also taking place owing to slow-onset climate-change events from drought-affected and drier areas of some of the South Asian countries, as water-dependent livelihoods are quickly disappearing.<sup>19</sup> These movements are difficult to track because they take place gradually. Besides, the mega-city centric growth policies<sup>20</sup> of most of these countries are drawing the people affected by climate change towards only a few cities.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish between the relatively better-off voluntary aspirant migrants from slow-onset climate-stressed areas and those who have been forced to move from the same area because they lost their residence and livelihood.

### Box 3. Disaster risk reduction

The concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events.<sup>22</sup>

An ILO report,<sup>23</sup> while developing a policy framework for the inclusion of internal migrant workers, shows a number of migration corridors between the different States of India that are affected by climate change. It is pertinent to note that migrant workers rarely start a new

16 The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, n.d.)

17 According to Rigaud et al., 2018, climate change affected people who lost their livelihoods but not their homesteads. Some of them also migrate, but usually one or two members of the family migrate, and the rest stay back in their rural home.

18 Migration Data Portal, *Environmental Migration*, 2021.

19 M. Kugelman, *Climate-Induced Displacement: South Asia's Clear and Present Danger* (Wilson Center, 2020).

20 Neil Adger, Ricardo Safrá de Campos and Tasneem Siddiqui, "Priorities for Government Action on Climate Change Migration", *IOM Environmental Portal*, 2020.

21 Tasneem Siddiqui et al., "Policy Opportunities and Constraints for Addressing Urban Precarity of Migrant Populations", *Global Policy*, 2020.

22 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) terminology on disaster risk reduction, 2009.

23 Divya Verma Rajiv Khandelwal, Benoy Peter, Divya Varma and Shabarinath Nair, *ILO Road Map for Development of Policy Framework for the Inclusion of Internal Migrant Workers in India*, ILO, 2020b.

migration trajectory and mostly follow the pre-existing migration path. The coastal regions of Maharashtra, Kerala, West Bengal and Odisha are important places of origin of many climate-induced migrants. Sundarbans comprises the largest mangrove forest in the world, and people living in the region are also impacted by climate change. Some 60,000 migrants come from the West Bengal side of the Sundarbans, many of them working in the construction sector in Kerala. People from Bihar have long been migrating to Mumbai and Delhi, yet the influence of broader social and economic issues and climate change has exacerbated movement. Similarly, people from Doab, which is an area between the Ganga and Jamuna rivers and Uttar Pradesh, also migrate internally, mainly to Delhi and Mumbai, while people from Bihar migrate to different cities in Gujarat.<sup>24</sup> Migration due to climate change also takes place from the Assam, Nagaland and Tripura provinces of Northeast India.<sup>25</sup> In this region, floods are the major climate hazards, displacing 15 million people in Assam alone in 2012. States such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are affected by heat waves. Jharkhand and parts of Odisha and Rajasthan endure droughts and severe heat waves that cause human fatalities. A case study of Kerala, both the origin and destination of climate change induced migrants, is presented in Box 4 to show the extent of internal migration from areas of India affected by climate change to one particular State. Interestingly, the coastal area of Kerala is also vulnerable to disasters related to climate change.

#### Box 4. Migration to Kerala from States of India affected by climate change

Kerala has attracted migrant labourers from other States of India because of its spectacular economic growth, mostly linked to international labour migration from the area. In 2018, 3.5 million interstate migrants were working in Kerala.<sup>26</sup> A substantial number of these migrant workers originated from areas which are also affected by climate impacts, namely Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Of course, many other factors contribute towards migration.

Migrants from Odisha, many of whom may be affected by the impacts of climate change, come to work in the timber industry in Ernakulam district. During the 1990s, the emergence of Kanjikode in Palakkad as a hub of the iron and steel industry led to sourcing of workers from Bihar.<sup>27</sup> Migration from Odisha increased significantly, and there emerged a new stream of workers from Assam, particularly skilled in plywood production. Unskilled workers from West Bengal, Bihar and Assam followed in the footsteps of skilled migrant workers.<sup>28, 29</sup> This may indicate that the loss of jobs due to climate change in the areas of origin may have pushed some people to move; however, economic opportunities and the availability of work corresponding to the skills of people from specific areas also worked as a draw. Nonetheless, Kerala also saw the worst floods in decades in 2018. A large part of the State was devastated, and migrant workers were badly affected.

24 Interview with Dr Mihir Bhatt, 30 January 2021.

25 People cannot move that easily within some of the northeastern states (including Nagaland) of India because of the so-called “inner line permit” issue. Even then, migration does take place.

26 Government of Kerala, *Welfare to Rights: Implementation of Select Legislations: A Review*. (Thiruvananthapuram: Administrative Reforms Commission, 2018).

27 Benoy Peter and V. Narendran, *God's Own Workforce: Unravelling Labour Migration to Kerala* (Perumbavoor: Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development, 2017).

28 Benoy Peter and K. Gupta, “Implications of Forest Conservation Interventions of the Judiciary on Human Migration: an In-depth Exploration into the Causes of Labour Migration to Plywood Industry in Kerala”. *Indian Journal of Social Development* 12, No. 1 (2012), 1–14.

29 Government of Kerala, *Economic Review 2009*. (Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Planning Board).



Self resettlement of a displaced household in Shatkhira, one of the climate affected coastal districts in Bangladesh. @ RMMRU.

In 2015, two consecutive earthquakes took place in Nepal, the first at a magnitude of 7.8 and the second at 7.3. In total, 9,000 Nepalese lost their lives, and 90,000 people moved to Kathmandu. The same year, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) ranked Sri Lanka as the 13th most disaster-affected country in the world. For every million, 15,000 were at risk of internal displacement. In 2017, the country experienced seven disasters, including flood and landslides, displacing 135,000 people. The loss of access to traditional lands, as well as land degradation due to deforestation and climate change, have led indigenous and tribal peoples in many South Asian countries to seek employment in the informal economy in rural and urban areas. Research has shown that indigenous women and men also rely on rural-to-rural migration in order to find work, often on plantations in exploitative conditions.<sup>30</sup> Migration away from traditional areas has become an important strategy for many indigenous people who are attempting to improve their socio-economic situation, including when faced with climate impacts.<sup>31</sup>

Climate change mainly drives migration internally; however, a DECCMA<sup>32</sup> survey conducted in 50 climate hotspots of Bangladesh shows that international short-term contract migration also takes place from areas affected by climate change.<sup>33</sup> Sixty-eight per cent of the people affected by climate change who migrated moved internally, while 32 per cent of the migrant workers moved internationally as short-term contract workers.<sup>34</sup> The study finds that most migrant workers who moved internationally were male, with only a small proportion of women. The majority of the male migrant workers who moved internationally are relatively better off compared with the 68 per cent who moved internally. There is, however, a gender twist: RMMRU and SDC panel data reveals that females who migrate internationally to take

30 A. Shah et al., *Ground Down by Growth: Tribe, Caste, Class and Inequality in 21st-century India* (Delhi: OUP, 2018).

31 M. Oelz, R.K. Dhir and M. Harsdorff, *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: From Victims to Change Agents through Decent Work*, ILO, 2017.

32 DECCMA was a five-year multi-country research project entitled: "Deltas, Vulnerabilities and Climate Change Migration and Adaptation". The countries are Bangladesh, India and Ghana. These findings are drawn from the survey of the origin area in the Bangladesh component.

33 Tasneem Siddiqui et al., *Accommodating Migration in Climate Change Adaptation*, 2018a.

34 Ibid.

part in the short-term labour markets of the Gulf States and other Arab countries constitute the lowest economic strata. They are even poorer than the female migrant workers who move internally.<sup>35,36</sup> This is argued on the basis of ownership of land, percentage of divorced or separated female-headed households who are extremely desperate for an income, educational level of the migrant, and so on. Land holding is an important indicator of economic status. Of the female international migrant households, 28 per cent did not even own homestead land, whereas only 8 per cent of the female internal migrants belong to this category. Furthermore, 26 per cent of female international migrants were either widowed or divorced, which was the case for only 7 per cent of female internal migrant workers. This indicates that international women migrants who participate in domestic work are more desperate for work compared with the women who migrated internally.<sup>37</sup>

---

35 Siddiqui, Tasmeen, and R. Mahmood. *Impact of Migration on Poverty and Local Development* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2015).

36 Tasneem Siddiqui, A. Nelim, C. R. Shabab, and M. Hasan, *Impact of Migration on Poverty and Growth in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2018b).

37 Ibid.



### ▶ 3. COVID-19 – a stress multiplier for migrant workers

---

As seen in the previous section, the groups who lost their homes as well as those who lost their livelihoods because of climate-related disasters and the impact of climate change resort to migration as one of their measures of adaptation. Most of them move internally, but some do cross borders to find work. However, to prevent the spread of COVID-19, lockdowns were imposed across all South Asian countries by March 2020. National, inter-district and interstate borders were closed, and in some instances, all types of transport were suspended for several weeks. Industries and other non-essential establishments were shut down, with severe implications for the informal economy. In the absence of adequate social protection, and the loss of income and work opportunities, especially in the informal economy, many migrant workers also struggled to return home because of the lockdowns.

#### Facing COVID-19 in countries or regions of destination

**International migrant workers.** Research is yet to assess the impact of COVID-19 on those who migrated internally or internationally owing to climate change in particular. Because of the lack of specific research and precise data, there is limited evidence for assessing whether migrant workers from areas affected by climate change had to face worsening working conditions that made them more vulnerable compared with their places of origin. Many of these migrant workers who are moving internationally also have to face other socio-economic challenges, and resort to international migration to benefit from income-generating opportunities and to overcome the challenges they face locally.

By extrapolating the available global data, there is emerging evidence that migrant workers were the most affected in multiple ways as a result of COVID-19. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the infection rate among international migrant workers was higher than that of nationals of the host countries.<sup>38</sup> The working and living conditions of a majority of migrant workers in their countries of destination have made them more susceptible to infection.<sup>39</sup> For example, in Saudi Arabia, where migrants account for 38 per cent of the population, the Ministry of Health reported that, as of 5 May 2020, 76 per cent of the new confirmed cases were among foreigners.<sup>40</sup> From 15 March to 27 December 2020, some 2,330 Bangladeshis reportedly died of COVID-19 in different destination countries, 979 of them in Saudi Arabia alone.<sup>41</sup> From March to July 2020, 382 migrants died in Kuwait; 70 of them were Bangladeshi workers. Another 327 migrants died in the United Arab Emirates of whom 122 were Bangladeshi workers.<sup>42</sup> The Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies (NAFEA) estimates that Nepalese have experienced a 30 per cent job loss in the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia, 20 per cent in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, 15 per cent in Kuwait, 12 per cent in Bahrain, and 10 per cent in Oman.<sup>43</sup> Hundreds of migrant workers returning from India to Nepal went through severe physical and mental distress because of the border closure and lack of proper quarantine facilities in the place they were forced to stay for many days before

38 M.N.I. Sorker, "COVID-19 Pandemic Profoundly Affects Bangladeshi Workers Abroad with Consequences for Origin Communities", *Migration Information Source*, July 2020.

39 ILO, *Contagion or Starvation, the Dilemma Facing Informal Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020c.

40 Migration Data Portal, *Migration Data Relevant for COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020.

41 Siddiqui, Tasmeen (ed.). *The Other Face of Globalisation: COVID-19, International Labour Migrants and Left-behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).

42 RMMRU, *Labour migration from Bangladesh 2020: Achievements and challenges* (Dhaka, 2021).

43 ILO, "At least 500,000 migrant workers want to return home at the earliest, says report." May 2020d. <http://apmigration.ilo.org/news/at-least-500-000-migrant-workers-want-to-return-home-at-the-earliest-says-report>.

entering Nepal.<sup>44</sup> A study on Sri Lankan migrant workers in Qatar finds that 50 per cent of the Sri Lankan workers experienced wage or salary cuts, 25 per cent experienced depletion of savings, 21 per cent faced difficulty in repaying loans, 20 per cent experienced delayed payment of salary, 12 per cent lost their jobs.<sup>45</sup>

A majority of the South Asian female migrants are employed as domestic workers. Rashid et al. (2021)<sup>46</sup> find that, compared with any other groups, live-in domestic workers experienced loss of jobs much less than live-out domestic workers during COVID-19. However, they suffered from non-payment of wages, an exponential increase in their workload and, most importantly, mental stress because of the reduced communication with the families they had left behind. The live-out female domestic workers, on the other hand, did suffer major job losses.<sup>47</sup> Undocumented workers were also at a greater risk. They themselves were unwilling to access support services for fear of deportation.

#### Box 5. Vulnerabilities of irregular migrant workers

Kamal's story highlights the multiple vulnerabilities of irregular migrant workers during COVID-19. Kamal is from Koira village in the Sundarbans. After cyclone Aila and successive floods of the Punarbhaba River, as well as the intrusion of salt water in arable land owned by his family, they desperately needed sources of income. After borrowing money at a high interest, Kamal managed to migrate to Saudi Arabia. His contract finished years ago, but he did not return as his family would be in great trouble without his income. He did not want to avail himself of healthcare, as he feared that he would be arrested and sent back home. Unfortunately, he could not avoid arrest and was subsequently detained and deported to Bangladesh.<sup>48</sup>

**Internal migrant workers.** Like any other group of internal migrant workers, those who moved from areas affected by climate change faced major challenges in the cities once COVID-19 had surfaced. In the large and mega-cities of South Asia, millions of internal migrants were stranded without work and food.<sup>49</sup> In urban areas, migrant workers often live in cramped, unhygienic places where it is difficult to maintain physical distances and adhere to other public health measures. Lack of access to water and sanitation compound the problem further.<sup>50</sup> Compared with other South Asian countries, the plights of internal migrants of India received more attention from the media and academics. The central Government of India directed State governments to provide rations and shelter to migrant workers stranded in the cities under their jurisdiction. Urban internal migrant workers are traditionally excluded from provisioning systems.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, it was difficult for the State governments to provide various types of assistance to them.

44 B. Shrestha, "Hundreds of Nepalese stuck at India border amid COVID-19 lockdown", *Al Jazeera*, 2020.

45 Anoji Ekanayake, *Economic Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Sri Lankan Migrants in Qatar*, 1 October 2020.

46 R. S. Rashid, H. M. F. Jahid, and R. Nasrin, "Facing COVID-19 in Countries of Destination: Health Shocks, Income Risks, Detention, Deportation and Wage Theft", in Tasmeen Siddiqui (ed.), *The Other Face of Globalisation COVID-19, International Labour Migrants and Left Behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).

47 Ibid.

48 Siddiqui, Tasmeen (ed.), *The Other Face of Globalisation: COVID-19, International Labour Migrants and Left-behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).

49 ILO, *COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy: Immediate Responses and Policy Challenges*, 2020e.

50 Tadesse Kebebew, Caroline Pellaton, and Mara Tignino, "Climate Change Displacement and the Role of the Right to Water in Fighting COVID-19", *IOM Environmental Portal*, 2020.

51 Benoy Peter, S. Sanghvi, and V. Narendran, "Inclusion of Interstate Migrant Workers in Kerala and Lessons for India", *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics* 63 (2020), 1065–1086.



Migrants returning to their homes by foot in India. @ iStock by Getty images.

## Experience of return migrant workers

**International migrant workers.** Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka experienced large-scale returns of their nationals from different labour-receiving countries. As early as May 2020, Nikkei Asia reported that at least 900,000 South Asians, mostly migrant workers, were awaiting repatriation from the Middle East.<sup>52</sup> By early May, some 40,000 Sri Lankans were brought back by the government. Siddiqui (2021)<sup>53</sup> finds that 67.34 per cent of migrant workers from Bangladesh were forced to return; 9.18 per cent came back home on holiday just before the lockdown, and 25.51 per cent either returned voluntarily, or their employers helped them return to Bangladesh. The central government of India has organized the world's largest repatriation programme for its citizens from different countries after COVID-19. Under the Vande Bharat mission – an initiative to bring back stranded Indians, India brought back 6 million<sup>54</sup> migrant workers and members of their families from different parts of the world.

Return from neighbouring countries was also pronounced. Many Nepalese from the western part of the country, which experiences regular high precipitation and floods, work in India. These migrant workers found themselves stranded on the border between India and Nepal as the Nepali government imposed strict quarantine measures. Once the migrant workers reached the State borders, many were not allowed to cross over and forced to stay in temporary shelters.<sup>55</sup> When they managed to return home, villagers put up barricades in

52 Nikkei Asia, *Coronavirus Wrecks South Asian Migrant Livelihoods in Middle East*, May 2020.

53 Siddiqui, Tasmeen (ed.). *The Other Face of Globalisation: COVID-19, International Labour Migrants and Left-behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).

54 Hindustan Times, available at: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-repatriates-over-6-million-under-vande-bharat-mission-hardeep-singh-puri-101614659365140.html>.

55 "Thousands of Nepalis without food or shelter await at the Karnali". Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/>.

several areas to prevent migrant workers from entering the villages. Experiences of South Asian migrant workers who were forced to return during COVID-19 revealed that a large number of them left some of their financial and other assets behind. Salaries and other dues of a substantial majority of these migrant workers were not fully cleared by their employers.

**Internal migrant workers.** COVID-19 resulted in a massive return of both internal and international migrant workers in almost all the South Asian countries. Internal migrant workers, who moved in the context of climate change or otherwise, of India, Bangladesh and Nepal, found it impossible to ensure food and pay for accommodation in their urban locations and started to move back to their places of origin. In several instances, indigenous and tribal peoples living and working in urban areas, and reliant on the informal economy, also started to move back to their communities, thereby raising the risk of the virus spreading to remote communities.<sup>56</sup> In India, in the absence of transport services, the desperate migrant workers and their families, including women and children, had no other choice than to make their journey to remote villages of West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha on foot, across hundreds of kilometres, carrying all their belongings.<sup>57, 58</sup> A number of them, including children, died during the arduous journey.<sup>59</sup>

In Bangladesh, following the lockdown measures imposed on 26 March 2020, large and small, formal and informal businesses remained closed for months. As in India, millions of workers lost their livelihoods.<sup>60</sup> A nationwide survey conducted by BRAC in April 2020<sup>61</sup> showed that during the lockdown, poverty rates had also gone up by 14 per cent and that 93 per cent of the respondents, predominantly internal migrants, experienced a decline in income. It also revealed that 51 per cent of rickshaw pullers, 58 per cent of factory workers, 66 per cent of hotel and restaurant workers and 62 per cent of urban day labourers experienced zero income during the first month of the outbreak of COVID-19. A large number of the rickshaw pullers of Dhaka city originate from the Gaibandha district, which is subject to flood and river erosion, while many of the construction workers are from the drought-prone Chapainabanganj district. Male workers from three hill districts of Chattogram Division work as watchmen in Dhaka and Chattogram city. Factory workers, predominantly women, come from specific areas of the country. A sizeable number of hill women work in Chattogram export processing zones. Women from Barishal migrate to the Sundarbans to take part in shrimp-processing industries as well as garment manufacturing. Almost all these internal migrant workers moved back to their villages. They were unable to maintain social distancing when they travelled back. A majority of those who worked in factories had wages unpaid. The excess supply of returnee labourers in their areas of origin has significantly lowered the wage rates. The prices of agricultural products, mostly milk and dairy products, vegetables and fruits, plummeted.<sup>62</sup>

In Bangladesh, at the beginning of May 2020, a number of employers and economists notified the Government that if factories were to remain closed, not only would the owners miss their shipments and lose buyers for the future exports, the workers would also suffer from loss of employment and food insecurity. On 10 May, the government permitted the manufacturers to restart their businesses and to bring back workers. The lockdown was lifted, but public transportation remained non-operational. The employers instructed migrant workers that

56 ILO, *COVID-19 and the World of Work: A Focus on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*, 2020f. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_746893.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/dgreports/-/dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_746893.pdf).

57 Benoy Peter, S. Sanghvi, and V. Narendran, "Inclusion of Interstate Migrant Workers in Kerala and Lessons for India", *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics* 63, 1065–1086, 2020.

58 ILO, *COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy: Immediate Responses and Policy Challenges*, 2020e.

59 Benoy Peter, S. Sanghvi, and V. Narendran, *ibid.*

60 Zyma Islam and Md Aminal Islam, "Doomed, Either Way", *The Daily Star*, 6 April 2020.

61 BRAC, *Rapid Perception Survey on COVID-19 Awareness and Economic Impact*, Bangladesh, April 9, 2020.

62 *Ibid.*

if they did not come to work they might lose their jobs.<sup>63</sup> Internal migrant workers in formal garment manufacturing industries are predominantly young women.<sup>64</sup> Women from climate-affected areas such as Barishal, Rajshahi, Satkhira and Khulna are deeply engaged in the manufacturing sector. They rushed back to the cities hiring private vehicles and paying exorbitant fares, and in many instances walking long distances. Under such circumstances, it was not possible for them to observe social distancing. The decision to resume operations in the industries in the midst of the pandemic triggered huge criticism. Faced with the outcry, the employers decided not to reopen their factories. These migrant workers were asked to go back to their villages, again having to pay out of their own pockets.<sup>65</sup>

In Sri Lanka, garment and other manufacturing workers, the majority being female migrant workers, remained stranded in different export processing zones. The army, in cooperation with the employers, transported them back to their places of origin.<sup>66</sup> In India, internal migrant workers were stranded within different interstate borders, because many States had imposed restrictions on interstate movements. Some of the State governments organized camps to shelter internal migrants. NGOs also looked after them, yet many faced major hostility of locals.<sup>67</sup>

Nepal has 2.6 million internal migrant workers, of whom 13 per cent are women.<sup>68</sup> They were also stranded in the cities, and gradually a majority of them organized their return to their places of origin.

---

63 Zyma Islam and Md Aminal Islam, "Doomed, Either Way", *The Daily Star*, 6 April 2020.

64 World Bank, 2017.

65 Zyma Islam and Md Aminal Islam, "Doomed, Either Way", *The Daily Star*, 6 April 2020.

66 Interview with Chandima Arambepola, CEPA (Centre for Poverty Analysis), 6 April 2021.

67 Divya Verma Rajiv Khandelwal, Benoy Peter, Divya Varma, and Shabarinath Nair, *ILO Road Map for Development of Policy Framework for the Inclusion of Internal Migrant Workers in India*, ILO, 2020.

68 National Labour Force Survey 2017–18.

## ► 4. Multiple stresses of returned and circular migrant workers in area of origin

---

**Experience upon return to origin area.** Figures are not available for the percentage of internal and international migrant workers originating from areas affected by climate change and who had to return home. In India and Bangladesh, media reports citing the places of origin of returned migrants included climate-affected areas. For instance, migrant workers from Delhi, Mumbai, Kerala and Gujarat were returning to Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Nagaland, Assam, and so on. Workers from Dhaka and Chattogram returned to different climate-affected areas such as the Sundarbans, Chapainabanganj, Bagerhat, Rajshahi, Patuakhali, Barishal, Barguna and the three districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Both male and female migrant workers who went back to their villages faced multiple crises, such as the absence of any means to access livelihoods as well as the simultaneous outbreak of natural disasters.

Sundarbans is a good example of how people experienced multiple crises at the same time. Migrants from both sides of the Sundarbans who returned from different destinations were affected in several ways.<sup>69</sup> A combination of rise in sea level, destructive storms, land erosion and increase in water salinity made both parts of the Sundarbans (India and Bangladesh) a major source area for climate-induced displacement followed by livelihood migration. The inhabitants of the Indian side of the Sundarbans usually migrate to Kolkata, Delhi, Kerala, while those from the Bangladesh side go to Khulna, Dhaka and Chattogram. They do so because of loss of income and employment in their place of origin, which are influenced to a large extent by climate-related hazards. Once COVID-19 had broken out, those who had migrated earlier found themselves without jobs or income and returned to their original homes with no means of maintaining their subsistence, which caused them to experience deep anxiety. Families dependent on remittances not only had to manage without their major source of income, they also had extra mouths to feed. At this point, they were struck with another disaster: cyclone Amphan hit both sides of the Sundarbans from 16 to 21 May 2020. It displaced 2.4 million Indians and 2.5 million Bangladeshis, the world's largest disaster-related displacement in 2020.<sup>70</sup> Owing to COVID-19, government response to cyclone management in both countries was faced with extreme challenges. Social distancing measures reduced the capacity of the shelters to 40 per cent. The National Disaster Management Authority of India and the Department of Disaster Management in Bangladesh organized an evacuation and awareness campaign that helped reduce the loss of lives. On both sides of the Sundarbans, standing crops were destroyed, creating food insecurity for the inhabitants.

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief of Bangladesh has not reported on the condition of migrant workers or their households who returned to rural areas because of COVID-19. Similarly, ministries and departments who were in charge of coordinating the COVID-19 situation do not appear to have any knowledge of how the pandemic impacted the areas affected by disaster and climate change, nor has any partnership emerged with the same ministry that manages disaster.<sup>71</sup> Cyclone Amphan originated from Sri Lanka; however, its impact on people was less as it progressed towards the coastal areas of India and Bangladesh. Around 2,000 people in east Sri Lanka were affected.

---

<sup>69</sup> Moitrayee Sengupta, "A Triple Crisis in the Indian Sundarbans", *IOM Environmental Portal*, 2020.

<sup>70</sup> IDMC, *Internal Displacement 2020: Mid-Year Update*.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Dr Salimul Haque, ICCCAD, 10 February 2021.

Two weeks after Amphan, the Indian States of Maharashtra and Gujarat India were hit by another cyclone, Nishorgho. It displaced 170,000 people.<sup>72</sup> Maharashtra was also the hardest-hit State of India with respect to COVID-19.<sup>73</sup> In the government relief operations, neither internal and international migrant workers nor their households were seen as a distinct category with special needs.

Just a month after cyclone Amphan, monsoon rain inundated a quarter of Bangladesh and part of the northeastern State of Assam in India, some parts of Nepal and Bhutan as well as Sri Lanka. In Bangladesh, 5.4 million people were affected by the floods. In Assam, 2.7 million men, women and children were displaced by three different flood episodes, which not only destroyed the standing crops: many of the farmers could not cultivate new crops in the following winter season. At the same time, international and internal migrant workers had started returning. Migrant households had to manage without any external resources. In the case of Bangladesh, Ansar et al.<sup>74</sup> found that along with food insecurity and the task of looking after children because the educational institutions were closed, increased incidents of gender-based violence in both migrant and non-migrant households were documented in flood-affected areas.

When migrant workers remained in their destination areas but were unable to send remittances, the families they had left behind endured major financial problems. Billah et al.<sup>75</sup> and RMMRU<sup>76</sup> find that the income of international migrant households dropped drastically during the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant households used different strategies to cope with partial or full suspension of remittances. The strategies include self-mobilization, solidarity-based mobilization and institutional mobilization methods. Self-mobilization involves cutting down on goods and services, reducing intake of relatively expensive food items, and so on. In Bangladesh, migrant households downsized family expenditure from US\$250 to \$100 per month and 74 per cent of these households reduced their consumption of meat, 72 per cent reduced their children's milk intake, and 43 per cent cut down their consumption of eggs.<sup>77</sup> Solidarity-based mobilization included mutual aid based on family and friendship networks, direct financial support, requested solidarity, and so on. Institutional mobilization included support from the State, the civil society and the market. Adoption of these coping strategies did not follow a linear process.

In collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh, IOM conducted research on 2,765 return migrants, including 1,486 international and 1,279 internal in May and June 2020.<sup>78</sup> A total of 55 per cent of the respondents who had returned from abroad had accumulated unpaid debt. The respondents owed money to family and friends (55 per cent) to MFIs, self-help organizations and NGOs (44 per cent) and moneylenders (15 per cent). In total, 86 per cent of the debt owed to family and friends was charged at zero interest, while more than 65 per cent of the debt owed to MFIs, NGOs and private banks carried an interest rate of between 10 and 15 per cent, and the interest on 62 per cent of the debt owed to moneylenders

72 IDMC, *Internal Displacement 2020: Mid-Year Update*.

73 T. V. Padma, "When Natural Disasters Cross the Path of COVID-19", Prevention Web, 2020.

74 A. Ansar, M. Sultana, and R. C Das, R. C., "In pursuit of Resilience: Revisiting Migration and Gender-based Violence amid COVID-19 Pandemic", in Tasmeen Siddiqui (ed.), *The Other Face of Globalisation COVID 19, International Labour Migrants and Left Behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).

75 M. Billah, T. Akash, N. Ahsan, et al., "Left Behind Migrant Households: Coping with Partial or Full Suspension of Remittances" in Tasmeen Siddiqui (ed.), *The Other Face of Globalisation COVID 19, International Labour Migrants and Left Behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).

76 RMMRU (Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit). 2020. "The Other Face of Globalization COVID-19, Arbitrary Return of Bangladeshi Migrants and their Unpaid Dues", Policy Brief 29 (Dhaka).

77 M. Billah, T. Akash, N. Ahsan, et al., "Left Behind Migrant Households: Coping with Partial or Full Suspension of Remittances" in Tasmeen Siddiqui (ed.), *The Other Face of Globalisation COVID 19, International Labour Migrants and Left Behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).

78 IOM, *Rapid Assessment Needs and Vulnerabilities of Internal and International Return Migrants in Bangladesh*, 2020.



Climate change has an adverse impact on the agriculture sector of Pakistan. © ILO/Khalil Shah.

amounted to 50 to 150 per cent.<sup>79</sup> It is clear that the involuntary and precipitate return of the migrant members brought hardship to the migrant households. Displaced communities are at a greater risk of suffering from mental health issues.<sup>80</sup>

**Immobility of circular migrants.** Other dimensions of immobility affect the households of areas stressed by climate change. Between 30 million and 100 million Indians reside in their places of origin but take part in seasonal migration. Both men and women move from rural areas to other rural areas or to cities during certain seasons.<sup>81</sup> Seasonal migration is a positive strategy for migrants to diversify their income and livelihoods, particularly for those affected by seasonal hazards. COVID-19 and related restrictions on movement have prevented such seasonal migration and exposed these households to short-term food insecurity.<sup>82</sup> Women members of the households also had to manage the longer-term hardships, including nutrition and health outcomes and reduced scope of extra income.<sup>83</sup> In different South Asian countries, COVID-19 has also blocked temporary urban migrant workers from returning to their villages during the sowing and harvesting seasons. It has increased vulnerabilities, eroded household resilience to future shocks such as drought, and increased the risk of future displacement. The economic situation of mountain households in Nepal depends on multiple forms of mobility such as rural-urban commuting, and seasonal and international migration. Disruption of such mobility patterns posed serious concern.<sup>84</sup>

79 Intervention of Max Pottler of IOM at the Consultation organized by RMMRU in collaboration with the ILO's RESEARCH Department and the ILO Labour Migration Branch (MIGRANT), entitled *Impact of COVID-19 on the Nexus Between Climate Change, Labour Markets and Migration in South Asia*, 19 January 2021.

80 Robbie M Parks and Lisa Thalheimer, *The Hidden Burden of Pandemics, Climate Change and Migration on Mental Health*, IOM, 2020.

81 Chloe Sydney, *COVID-19, a Risk Multiplier for Future Distress Migration and Displacement?* IOM Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division, 2020.

82 Ibid.

83 M. Billah, T. Akash, N. Ahsan, et al., "Left Behind Migrant Households: Coping with Partial or Full Suspension of Remittances" in Tasneem Siddiqui (ed.), *The Other Face of Globalisation COVID 19, International Labour Migrants and Left Behind Families in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: RMMRU, 2021).

84 A. Maharajan, R. S. Decampos and C. Singh, *Migration and Climate Change in South Asia: What Happens when Spatial Diversification of Livelihood is not an Option Anymore*. ICIMOD, August 2020.



## ► 5. Management of crises – good practices at the regional and country levels

This section attempts to collate regional-level and country-level good practices. In the context of managing COVID-19, the governments of some South Asian countries have set the example of good practices that resulted in regional cooperation under the umbrella of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). They decided to generate a COVID-19 emergency fund. All eight SAARC countries have contributed to this fund. The Prime Minister of India proposed this initially.<sup>85</sup> Any member country can access this fund.

**Support to internal migrant workers.** Soon after the outbreak of COVID-19, the Government of India announced relief packages which included internal migrants. The Ministry of Home Affairs of India, under the Disaster Management Act 2005, mandated employers to provide wages to the workers without deduction despite their absence during the lockdown and barred house owners from charging rent.<sup>86</sup> The Government developed a scheme under which five kilograms of grains per person and one kilogram of *chana* (lentils) per family per month for two months were allotted to migrant workers who did not possess a state card and were not covered by the National Food Security Act. It announced the national “One Nation One Ration Card” scheme in March 2021. In the 2021/22 budget, the Government also announced various allocations with implications for migrants, which included elements regarding food security as well as allocations for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGS) and village and small-scale industry.<sup>87</sup> During the initial phase, a special transportation arrangement for migrant workers, *Sramik trains*, was organized by the Government across major migration corridors to help workers return home.

The Government of Kerala set up guest-worker camps to accommodate the internal migrant workers from different States during COVID-19. Along with Kerala, a few other States of India designed special programmes for the migrant workers. In Odisha, one of the important areas of origin of climate migrants, the State government set up reception centres for migrants returning from other Indian States. Odisha also organized special trains to bring back migrant workers from Gujarat.

Box 6 describes how pre-existing programmes helped provide services to migrants in Kerala.

### Box 6. Kerala: A state level positive practice in India

Kerala is the first Indian state to enact a social security scheme for migrant workers.<sup>88</sup> Since 2008, it has been engaged in promoting inclusive education for children of migrant workers under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme in select schools. Kudumbashree, the State’s initiative for empowerment of women and poverty eradication, has initiated efforts to bring migrant women into its fold. The enlistment record of these children and women acted as record or proof of their urban living during distribution of relief.

85 COVID-19 Emergency Fund, available at: <http://covid19-sdmc.org/covid19-emergency-fund>.

86 Supreme Court of India. Status Report, Alok Srivastava versus Union of India. 2020

87 Rohini Mitra, Chitra Rawat and Nidhi Menon, “Budget Acknowledges Migrant Distress but Falls Short in Key Areas”, *Indiaspend*, 2021.

88 R. Srivastava, “Integrating Migration and Development Policy in India: A Case Study of Three Indian States”. *Working Paper Series 03* (New Delhi: Institute for Human Development, Centre for Employment Studies, 2020).

The Kerala Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board created a welfare fund for migrant workers. Workers in the age group between 18 and 60 years can enrol under the scheme after completion of one month from their arrival in the State, paying a renewable annual membership fee of Rs30. The Government of Kerala contributes a sum equal to three times the annual receipts through membership to the fund, and a similar contribution is also earmarked from the board itself. Membership of this scheme can serve as record to identify climate migrants. However, these groups of workers did not have to leave their workplace, as they were in government housing where the residents were exempted from paying rent.

To provide affordable rental for migrant workers, the Apna Ghar Migrant Housing Project was initiated in 2019 by the Department of Labour and Skills. A dormitory-style migrant hostel with cooking facilities, dining room and toilets was arranged for migrant workers at a subsidized rent (1,000 rupees per month).<sup>89</sup> This scheme meets the requirements of single male migrant workers and accommodates 620 people: the needs of migrant workers who move with their families are yet to be addressed.

In 2016 the same department launched the Aawaz insurance scheme, designed exclusively for migrant workers, who can enrol free of charge and benefit from an annual health insurance coverage of 15,000 rupees and accident insurance coverage of 200,000 rupees.<sup>90</sup>

In the context of South Asia, Kerala sets a good example of State government attempts to create welfare programmes for internal migrant workers. These programmes acted as a record of internal migrants which have been used in relief operations during COVID-19. The Government of Kerala has also ensured that migrants from different States of India have equal access to a vaccine for COVID-19.

The Government of Bangladesh also took measures to protect the internal migrant workers. On 25 March 2020, it announced a 50 billion Bangladeshi taka (US\$588,235) stimulus package for the employers indirectly targeting the internal migrants working in different garment industries. It is a soft loan, sanctioned at 2 per cent interest, to the owners of manufacturing companies to continue paying their workers' salaries. However, 85 per cent of the workers, both men and women, are engaged in the informal economy and remained outside the purview of the stimulus programme. In May, the Government introduced a relief measure for the urban informal workers. A one-time cash grant of 2,000 taka (equivalent to US\$24) was disbursed to 500,000 families living in the urban areas of Bangladesh. This is, of course, fewer than the number of migrants who live in other cities. In June, the Government launched the open-market sales programme which allowed 1,250,000 families to buy rice at a low cost, limiting it to 20 kg at a time. In the rural areas, support was provided to pre-existing Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) ration cardholders and Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme recipients among the low-income population.<sup>91</sup> These cards are mostly provided to old-age pensioners and destitute widows. The internal, or for that matter international, migrant households were not enlisted in the VGD and VGF programmes, as in the normal situation they do not belong to economically vulnerable groups. As the Government used pre-existing lists of vulnerable groups, both internal and international migrant households missed out from the social protection measures offered by the Government.

89 Renu Desai, Renu, "The Apna Ghar Project by Bhavanam Foundation Kerala and the Questions it Raises for Migrant Workers' Housing in Indian Cities", in *Here Hope has no Address: Proceedings of the Workshop on Housing for Migrant Workers* (Ahmadabad: Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action, 2019).

90 Government of Kerala, "Statement of the Facts on Behalf of the Government of Kerala in Suo-motu". WP(C)06/2020.

91 Sohail Parvez, "More than a crore with no job and hope", *The Daily Star*, 1 May 2020.

The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal formed a multi-stakeholder task force to work towards the cause of migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a 17-member joint committee, consisting of representatives from the Rights Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, the Department of Foreign Employment, the Foreign Employment Board and NGOs working in the fields of foreign employment and migrant workers' rights. The task force is a good example of government and civil society collaboration in providing assistance to the migrants.<sup>92</sup>

During the COVID-19 pandemic, at the government level, no specific programme was initiated by any ministry in any of these South Asian countries targeting households that experienced the abrupt return of a migrant member, or households that did not have access to remittances from their migrant members. These groups of workers were voiceless. The programmes designed by different government departments for the distressed population followed lists of vulnerable groups which were prepared long before the pandemic struck, and it is evident that any programme implemented on the basis of pre-existing lists would not be able to reach the households affected by the pandemic. During COVID-19, some South Asian governments set good examples of collaborating with social partners and civil society actors in providing food, shelter and other services to workers. In India, some of the internal migrant workers returning to their places of origin received support in transit camps, on the road and at railway stations from the civil society organizations (CSOs), trade unions and the private sector. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of 2005 provides a legal guarantee for 100 days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work. The MGNREGA programme created an opportunity for the Government of India to provide assistance to workers in their areas of during COVID-19.<sup>93</sup> Uttar Pradesh and Bihar joined the central government's ration card portability scheme on International Labour Day, establishing the migrant workers' right to access subsidized and free food grains in many of the States where they have been left stranded by the COVID-19 lockdown.<sup>94</sup> Mainstream NGOs working in rural areas of Bangladesh diverted the bulk of their programme resources in 2020 into feeding vulnerable groups. They mostly provided assistance to those who are members of their credit and income-generating or social mobilization programmes. Migrant workers were not included in their target population,<sup>95</sup> and therefore migrant households usually did not receive assistance from NGOs.

Migrants working in the informal economy in urban locations also remained largely outside the social safety net. In South Asian countries, many women participate in the lowest layer of the informal economy as roadside food suppliers, construction and road maintenance workers and in other services. They were some of the most acutely affected who needed assistance, yet they could not be reached easily. Again, it was difficult to bring them under cash grant programmes, as their names were not recorded or enlisted anywhere.

**Support to international migrant workers.** Each South Asian government undertook a number of measures to provide services to international migrant workers. The Indian Government introduced the Skilled Workers Arrival Database for Employment Support to record the skills profile of returning migrant workers, which can also be used by employers to recruit workers in India. During the first few months of COVID-19, the Government of Sri Lanka brought back 40,000 migrant workers from different parts of the world.<sup>96</sup> Soon after the outbreak of COVID-19, it created a dedicated hotline to receive information from distressed

92 Chandan Kumar Mandal, "Government Considers Bringing Back Nepali Migrant Workers from Covid-19-affected Countries", *The Kathmandu Post*, 5 May 2020.

93 S. Narayanan, C. Oldiges, and S. Saha, *Employment Guarantee During Times of COVID-19: Pro-poor and Pro-return-migrant?* (Mumbai: Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, 2020).

94 "Coronavirus | U.P., Bihar migrants can now avail ration portability", *The Hindu*, 1 May 2020.

95 The target population for this programme comprises widows, widowers, persons with disabilities, absolute poor.

96 United Nations, 68,000 Sri Lankans awaiting return – Foreign Secretary, Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations 3 January 2021.



Providing care kit and prevention information for returning migrants at community quarantine centers in Myanmar.  
© ILO/Mawk Kon Local Development Organization (MKLDO).

migrants. It also established an online information portal, “Contact Sri Lanka”, for overseas Sri Lankans, including migrant workers, to provide immediate support. On 25 May 2020, the Nepali government passed an executive order to facilitate the repatriation of Nepali citizens who needed to return home. The government set its criteria for providing priority to persons with special concerns. Pregnant women, migrant workers who had lost their jobs, those who were suffering from sickness other than COVID-19, or those who had lost a family member back home, and also those migrants who had overstayed their visas, constitute the priority list.<sup>97</sup> From June to October 2020, 103,807 Nepalis from 59 countries were repatriated; a large number of them are labour migrants.<sup>98</sup>

The Foreign Employment Board (FEB) of Nepal carried out a study on seven destination countries to estimate the number of migrant workers expected to return home and of those who had lost their jobs.<sup>99</sup> The National Planning Commission of Nepal led a task force and assessed the effect of COVID-19 on foreign employment and its impact on Nepalese economy, with a particular focus on remittance. On 1 April 2020, the Supreme Court of Nepal issued an interim order directing the government to rescue migrant workers stranded in vulnerable conditions.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, the Supreme Court also issued an interim order to the Government to bring home all Nepali citizens stranded at the Indian border who were willing, and put them

97 Chandan Kumar Mandal, “Government Considers Bringing Back Nepali Migrant Workers from Covid-19-affected Countries”, *The Kathmandu Post*, 5 May 2020.

98 Chandan Kumar Mandal, “No Takers for Government’s Migrant Repatriation Plan”, *The Kathmandu Post*, 15 October 2020.

99 ILO, *Impact of COVID-19 on Nepali Migrant Workers: Protecting Nepali Migrant Workers during the Health and Economic Crisis: Challenges and the Way Forward*, 2020g.

100 Nepal’s top court orders rescue of migrant workers stranded abroad, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-nepal-migrants-trf-idUSKBN21Z2DO>.

under quarantine.<sup>101</sup> To support migrant workers stranded without employment and food in selected countries, the FEB spent a total of approximately US\$68,000.<sup>102</sup>

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nepal Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security had developed innovative methods of collecting grievances of migrants in different destination countries through its call centres. These centres also provided a counselling service to the migrant workers and their families. The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka maintained communication with their counterparts in different destination countries to ensure protection of the migrants of these countries.<sup>103</sup>

The Sri Lankan government organized its reintegration programme for the migrant workers who returned because of COVID-19 under the sub-policy on Reintegration, framed in 2015. All Sri Lankan nationals who returned from overseas were kept in government-organized quarantine centres. During quarantine, the government conducted a survey and collected all relevant information on their experience of COVID-19, their intentions and desired modalities of reintegration, the types of support they would require to reintegrate locally, and so on. The Sri Lankan government also introduced a skilled passport system. This enables both employers and workers of Sri Lanka to compare their skills with various assessment frameworks and helps workers to find jobs that match with their skills.

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) of Bangladesh provided emergency food supplies and medicine worth US\$1.3m among the distressed migrant workers in different destination countries from April to June 2020. The Wage Earners' Welfare Board (WEWB) of the MoEWOE initiated a special scheme for the reintegration of involuntarily returned international migrants to the sum of US\$23,529,412. The WEWB also provided funds to the Expatriates' Welfare Bank, which is disbursing the loan to the returned migrants and their family members. The migrants are encouraged to borrow from US\$1,200 to US\$6,000 at a 4 per cent interest rate. In May 2020, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh announced a budgetary allocation of US\$58,823,530 to expand the reintegration programme initiated by the MoEWOE. For its part, the Bangladesh Bank undertook an initiative in 2020, under which it has provided loans to migrants who were forced to return because of COVID-19.<sup>104</sup>

#### **Box 7. Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants: Good practice in Bangladesh**

The civil society organizations of South Asian countries have played a significant role in upholding the rights of migrant workers during the COVID-19 crisis. In Bangladesh, they have worked together under the umbrella of the Bangladesh Civil Society for Migrants (BCSM) and strongly demanded budgetary allocations from the government to support the migrants and the households they left behind, to overcome the hardship caused by the pandemic.<sup>105</sup>

On 20 April 2020, through an open letter, BCSM members appealed to the Prime Minister to allocate resources for the distressed migrants and family members left behind. The letter argued for an increasing incentive for the transfer of remittances through formal institutions from 2 to 4 per cent. It also requested the Prime Minister to be vigilant in reducing the scope of trafficking. The BCSM members urged the

101 Himalayan Times, "Hopes of Nepalis stuck abroad dashed". <https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/hopes-of-nepalis-stuck-abroad-dashed>.

102 ILO, *Impact of COVID-19 on Nepali Migrant Workers: Protecting Nepali Migrant Workers during the Health and Economic Crisis: Challenges and the Way Forward*, 2020g.

103 Interview with Ramini Jayasundare, Asia Foundation, June 2020.

104 RMMRU, *Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2020: Achievements and Challenges* (Dhaka, 2021).

105 Ibid.

Prime Minister to strongly present the concerns of migrants in various multilateral forums and to take the initiative of creating a positive mindset about the migrants to ensure that they are treated with dignity. Some 20 days after the appeal for providing support to the international migrants, the Prime Minister declared a stimulus package of US\$58,823,530.

On 27 April 2020, the BCSM submitted a memorandum to the United Nations Secretary General highlighting the plight of the Bangladeshi migrants and migrants from other countries. It requested the Secretary General to use his good offices to advise the destination countries not to pursue arbitrary return of the migrants. If return becomes unavoidable, it demanded that the due wages of the migrants should be cleared.

On 12 April 2020, the BCSM, Migrant Forum Asia and the RMMRU organized a joint one-minute silence campaign for the migrant workers who lost their lives because of COVID-19. On 27 August 2020, the BCSM articulated a demand for the immediate and unconditional release of 219 involuntarily returned Bangladeshi migrants who were arrested and detained by the law enforcement agencies. In March 2021, the BCSM and RMMRU jointly published a book entitled *The Other Face of Globalisation: COVID 19, International Labour Migrants and Left-behind Families in Bangladesh*, with voluntary efforts from all its members. The research worked as a major advocacy tool for CSOs and the media in arguing for a greater resource allocation for international migrants.

## ▶ 6. Summary, conclusions and recommendations

---

### Summary and conclusions

**Lack of data and systematic comparative research:** There is a major dearth of empirical research on how climate-induced internal and international male and female migrant workers of South Asia faced COVID-19, and how they have coped and continue to cope with concurrent events of COVID-19 and other environmental factors or disasters. None of the South Asian countries has a system of maintaining data on internal migrant workers and on international returnee migrant workers. Lack of age and gender segregated data made it difficult to adequately target migrant populations under schemes or programmes to reduce their socio-economic vulnerabilities, including distribution of cash grants, rations or other forms of support.

**Migrants' experience of COVID-19:** When COVID-19 broke out, both internal and international migrant workers experienced major job loss, non-payment or partial-payment of wages, inability to pay rent or food insecurity. Crowded working and living environments, participation in front-line jobs and lack of access to protective measures caused higher infection and death rates than those of their nationals among the international migrant workers in different destination countries.<sup>106</sup>

**Challenges upon returns:** Many of the internal migrants in all the countries included in this study headed back towards their villages. Their return journey was particularly arduous. Owing to the closure of roads and highways, and a complete halt on public transportation, a number of internal migrants died during their return journey because of hunger, fatigue or accident: 381 people died in road accidents alone while returning home.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, international migrant workers faced many challenges during their return journey. Social protection was not provided to those working abroad, and they were put at risk without social protection benefits or decent employment opportunities.

**Barriers to movement:** These prevented people from migrating as an adaptation measure or to cope with the crisis. After losing many of their traditional livelihoods, numerous households in the areas affected by climate change have used different types of migration as one of the tools for adaptation. People from climate-affected areas in usual situations mostly move internally. Recent research indicates that, over a decade or so, they also started participating in the international labour market as short-term contract workers, because of displacement or job loss in their local areas, among other reasons. When COVID-19 surfaced many international and internal migrant workers had to return to their place of origin. Many of the internal, as well as international, migrant workers had to return to their places of origin, where they did not have access to work in the first place. Some of the people affected by climate change who reside in villages and migrate seasonally had to stay put in their places of origin, were constrained to manage without any extra income. Lockdown measures thus prevented these populations of work and income opportunities. Migrant workers residing in urban areas were also deprived of their extra earnings, which they usually generate by migrating to rural areas during the harvest period.

**Facing simultaneous risks:** The year 2020 highlighted the fact that people in areas affected by climate change faced multiple simultaneous stresses. These include health risks, labour market collapse and disasters related to climate change, as well as COVID-19. The intersectional realities of many people, such as their migrant status, gender, disability status

---

<sup>106</sup> ILO, "Protecting Migrant Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Policy Brief*, 30 April 2020a.

<sup>107</sup> COVID-19 and the plight of migrants in India. <https://pmj.bmj.com/content/97/1149/471#ref-6>.

and indigenous or tribal identity, exacerbated their vulnerabilities to these multiple stressors. Furthermore, the outbreak of COVID-19 was accompanied by several natural disasters such as cyclones Amphan and Nishargo, and protracted floods in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. Many migrant and non-migrant families in areas hit by natural disasters had to face a situation where the evacuation centres could only accommodate 40 per cent of their usual capacity.<sup>108</sup> While efforts from governments and other actors ensured that death tolls from such natural disasters remained low, these disasters nevertheless greatly impacted livelihoods and magnified the socio-economic vulnerabilities of migrants who had returned to their home villages.

**Lack of welfare support for informal workers:** A review of the literature points out that in almost all the South Asian countries, internal migrants working to some extent in the formal economy could be brought under a few welfare programmes. However, many of those working in the informal economy remain outside any meaningful social safety networks. Women working in the informal economy were even more inaccessible, and thus vulnerable. Lack of data on those who work in the informal economy became a major barrier in assisting them. Those countries or the States of those countries that did better are those that had pre-existing records and policies in place. Where listings of formal and informal workers were available, assistance could be extended to internal migrant workers. Records of school enrolment, membership to insurance schemes, availing community housing, among others, also enabled a greater reach to the migrant populations.

**Households left behind:** The manifestation of multiple stresses became clear in the case of those migrant workers who returned to areas particularly vulnerable to climate impacts, such as the Sundarbans in India and Bangladesh. These families were deprived of remittances, a valuable resource for household consumption and other expenditures. Lack of remittances directly contributed to food insecurity of many households. Those who returned from urban areas to their rural origin, as well as those who returned from the Gulf, and other Arab and Southeast Asian countries, were not only in distress but often remained outside the social protection measures undertaken as a response to COVID-19. Some of these households were also considered relatively better off as they had migrant family members abroad. For that reason, they were not included in any listings of vulnerable households that had been created previously. In disbursing assistance during the COVID-19 period, the governments mostly followed previous listings.

**Lack of intra-governmental coordination:** Limited coordination and collaboration between ministries covering issues of labour, health, climate and natural disasters were present in some countries and created gaps in ensuring the inclusion of all groups of migrants.

**Emergency protection guideline:** None of the South Asian countries has emergency protection guidelines for serving the migrants during a crisis. Most of the South Asian countries are yet to have an internal migration policy. At a global level, too, there is no international body to monitor the protection of internal migrant workers. Moreover, in most of the countries an effective mechanism is yet to emerge to document migrant workers' grievances during a crisis. This would include all types of migrants, climate-induced or otherwise, internal or international.

**Positive steps forward:** This policy brief reveals that there is a major opportunity for South Asian countries to learn from each other's experiences on managing multiple crises. The MGNREGA programme of India created a possibility for providing employment to the returnee migrant workers during COVID-19. In the case of internal migrants, the Indian State of Kerala set great examples. It had pre-existing policies and programmes in place that helped the State to support the internal migrants who came to work in Kerala. The Government of Odisha also shouldered its responsibility of its migrants by opening reception centres

---

108 IDMC, *Internal Displacement 2020: Mid-Year Update*.



for the migrants who started returning from other States of India. The Supreme Court of Nepal played a proactive role in ensuring government action to facilitate return of its workers from India, the Gulf and South East Asian countries. Bangladesh set a good example by creating a reintegration fund to support the involuntarily returned migrants, while Sri Lanka successfully returned its female internal migrants from different Export Processing Zones during the lockdown and also set an example in respect to the reintegration of returned international migrants.

## Recommendations

Based on the desk research, consultation webinar and interviews, the following recommendations are offered. Some of these are addressed to the governments of South Asian countries. International organizations, CSOs, employers and trade unions can also support the implementation of these recommendations.

**Data collection and analysis:** The governments of South Asian countries need to collate and update periodically field-level data on displacement and livelihood internal migration induced by climate change. A smart data management system should be established, including the application of a GIS or remote sensing system for data management. An innovative system should be set up for generating data on the return of international migrants. All the databases should include age, gender, occupation, skills, destination details, and so on.<sup>109</sup> Few countries collect or have the ability to collect data on return migration. To address this issue, the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians endorsed in 2018 the Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration.<sup>110</sup> The guidelines have proposed a conceptual framework to collect data on *international labour migration* that recognizes three concepts: international migrant workers; for-work international migrants; and return international migrant workers. The concept of return international migrant workers focuses on measuring the work experience of persons returning after being international migrant workers abroad and defines them as “all current residents of the country who were previously international migrant workers in another country or countries”. The guidelines provide relevant classifications, core indicators and data collection and tabulation items on return migrants. Potential data sources on return migration could include household surveys, such as labour force surveys.

**Comparative analysis:** A comparative empirical research should be conducted on South Asian countries following the same methodology, to capture specifically the experiences of climate-induced migrants in facing multiple crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, along with disasters such as cyclones or floods. This will help identify and monitor the specific needs of climate-induced migrants during future crises.

**Ensuring inclusivity:** Climate-induced migrants should be recognized as a specific category while organizing support during disasters, conflict, health or financial crises. Climate migrants should be meaningfully integrated in development and recovery as well. This should include all three stages of crisis management – prevention, during crisis and durable solutions after crisis. This is required to respect the rights to inclusion of climate-induced internal migrants as per the UN guiding principles on Internal Displacement as well as the SENDAI framework and SDG 2030.

**Use of multilateralism:** Decent work issues with regard to climate change and migration also need to be better addressed under the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) framework, so as to promote “a just transition of the workforce and the creation of

<sup>109</sup> The IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix can generate some idea about how to create data of internal and international migrants who have been displaced earlier. <https://dtm.iom.int/about>.

<sup>110</sup> ILO, *Guidelines concerning statistics of international labour migration*, 2018



ILO at COP25 during launch of ILO report on skills for a greener future a global view. @ ILO.

decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities”, as noted in the Paris Agreement on climate change.<sup>111</sup> The South Asian governments should place decent work issues in the regular meetings of SAARC, Colombo Process or Abu Dhabi Dialogue.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, the Task Force on Displacement and the Global Compact on Migration also highlights the importance of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures to address the drivers of migration.

**Role of International Labour Standards:** In case of ensuring protection of international and internal migrants and promoting decent work opportunities in a more concerted manner, including in the context of the threats from climate change, ILO’s International Labour Standards are critical. Furthermore, particularly in the context of disaster risk reduction, as well as climate mitigation and the adaptation and creation of green jobs, the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205) and the ILO Guideline for Just Transitions, provide important guidance.<sup>113</sup> The ILO Fair Recruitment guideline is particularly relevant to all labour origin and destination countries of South Asia.

An awareness programme with a particular focus on the vulnerabilities faced by female internal and international migrant workers should be organized before they depart for work. Awareness-raising should include the ILO Convention No. 100 of 1951 on Equal Remuneration,<sup>114</sup> Convention No. 111 of 1951 on Discrimination,<sup>115</sup> Convention No. 190 of 2019 on Violence and Harassment,<sup>116</sup> and Recommendation No. 206 of 2019 on Violence and

111 UNFCCC, *The Paris Agreement*, adopted 12 December 2015.

112 ILO, *Employer’s Guide on Managing your Workforce During COVID-19*, 2020h.

113 ILO, *Just Transition Guidelines – Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation*, No. 205, 2017.

114 ILO, Equal Remuneration Convention, No. 100, 1951.

115 ILO, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, No. 111, 1958.

116 ILO, Convention on Violence and Harassment, No. 190, 2019a.

Harassment.<sup>117</sup> Convention No. 119 of 2019<sup>118</sup> recognizes the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment.

**Leverage of ILO programmes:** Programmes and actions targeted towards providing protection to climate change related migrants in crisis should try to link their actions with ILO's recent initiative of Green Jobs<sup>119</sup> and a Just Transition for Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific. ILO Recommendation 205 particularly suggests how to deal with crisis through employment with regard to conflict and disaster.<sup>120</sup> In order to promote peace, prevent crisis, enable recovery and build resilience, the ILO approach to decent work for peace can be vital. Using the suggestions of the ILO on Green Recovery, South Asian countries can initiate a special employment programme for those who have lost their jobs temporarily because of COVID-19. Planting trees to protect and restore the natural environment, restoration of the irrigation programme and environmentally sustainable businesses are some avenues to provide social protection during COVID-19.<sup>121</sup>

**National level emergency guidelines.** National guidelines should be framed on emergency protection for internal and international migrants, inclusive to gender, age, caste, indigenous or ethnic identity, and disability status. Migrants affected by climate change and disasters should be included as one of the sub-categories of stakeholders. The emergency guidelines for crisis situations can be a sub-policy under existing government policies related to internal and international migration, as well as policies on climate change adaptation and disaster displacement. They should concentrate more on longer-term solutions, along with rules and regulations to be followed during emergencies. All types of crises, including natural disasters, economic depressions, financial crises and health disasters, should be included.

**Policy coherence.** Specific provision should be made for displacement and livelihood migration in relevant policies or plans of the South Asian countries, such as the National Adaptation Plan, Disaster Management Strategies and Plans, and other relevant plans and policies aimed at addressing climate change, as well as local-level planning. It should be ensured that gender and disability issues, the specific circumstances of indigenous and tribal peoples, and the needs of vulnerable groups such as those displaced are adequately taken into account in disaster risk reduction legislations of the national government. Collaboration and coordination among the different government ministries, particularly with labour ministries, is essential.

**Longer-term solutions.** The COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the conviction that longer-term solutions have to be set in place to provide support to the climate-induced migrants. This necessitates the preparation of a National Strategy by individual governments for management of displacement and other forms of migration induced by climate change and disasters. Bangladesh has already adopted such a strategy, and the other countries may follow. Individual country strategy should incorporate all three stages of displacement, that is, durable solutions pre-displacement, during displacement and post-displacement, in line with international normative frameworks).<sup>122, 123</sup> The eight elements provided in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) framework on durable solutions should be integrated in such a strategy.

117 ILO, Recommendation on Violence and Harassment, No. 206, 2019b.

118 ILO, *Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169 Towards an inclusive, sustainable and just future*, 2019c.

119 ILO, Green Jobs and a Just Transition for Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific. 2019d. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/asia/ro-bangkok/sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_734147.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/asia/ro-bangkok/sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_734147.pdf).

120 ILO, COVID-19 Response and Recovery in Countries Affected by Disasters and Climate Vulnerability: Challenges and Opportunities, 17 July 2020i. [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/WCMS\\_751300/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/WCMS_751300/lang-en/index.htm).

121 ILO, Sustaining Peace Through Employment and Decent Work. [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/WCMS\\_769059/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/WCMS_769059/lang-en/index.htm).

122 UN OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). 2001. *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. New York. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/IDpersons/pages/standards.aspx>.

123 UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). 2015. "The Paris Agreement", 12 December.

**Green recovery.** It could be useful to include green recovery actions in any investment packages that countries are designing for economy recovery post-pandemic. South Asian countries already have programmes such as the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)<sup>124</sup> in India assisting the green economy recovery. This could lead to inclusivity (that is, women international migrants), since promoting green jobs also can promote more decent work positions for the international women migrants who are worse off than the internal women migrants.

**Social protection.** Governments should plan and provide social protection for people or migrant workers affected by climate change and COVID-19 (such as access to healthcare, education, basic needs, and resources for human right violations and harassment for both men and women including children). The 2021 International Labour Conference's Recurrent Discussion Committee on Social Security (CDR) reaffirmed the importance of ensuring social security entitlements for all, including migrant workers, and emphasized multilateral agreements to provide social security to migrant workers and their families.

**Use of ILO expertise and approaches.** The ILO advocates for creating decent work opportunities at home as a means to make migration a choice, not a necessity. Where this is not possible, migration is a coping strategy to help migrants and their families build resilience and support their communities. South Asian countries should leverage ILO's expertise, as the ILO is well positioned to work alongside States and regional groups to consider the role of labour migration within climate mitigation and adaptation strategies, and in contributing to a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all. The ILO has the technical expertise in promoting green jobs and is well positioned to bring together real economy actors, namely governments, trade unions and employers' organizations to address the challenges emerging for migrant workers from multiple crises in the region. The ILO has also participated in international efforts through UNFCCC and the Conferences of Parties (COP). It is collaborating with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to include migration-related challenges. The ILO is also taking part in the Task Force on Displacement under the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage. In addition, the ILO is contributing to the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) through the implementation of regional and integrated projects and plans of action. The ILO labour migration branch<sup>125</sup> is currently working along with green jobs and other technical branches on projects related to labour migration induced by climate change.

The ILO's vast experience in labour migration governance in the region provides a window of opportunity to support individual countries in developing longer-term programmes for the climate-induced internal and international migrants. It can support these countries in drafting effective bilateral agreements, facilitating social dialogue and bringing in the voice of employers and trade unions, facilitating strong sub-regional and regional cooperation, organizing capacity-building training on decent work for all workers, including climate-induced migrant workers, ensuring skills development and attaining recognition of the qualifications of migrant workers, ensuring effective reintegration in the communities of origin, and so on. The ILO can contribute towards enhancing the capacity of South Asian governments in assisting programmes that help migrants to better adapt locally or through migration by ensuring decent work conditions.

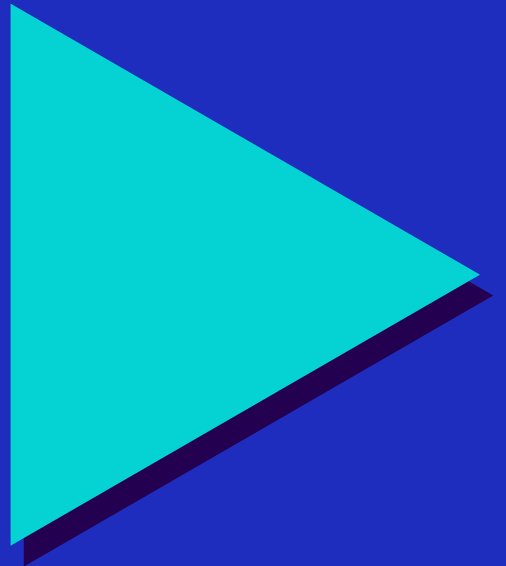
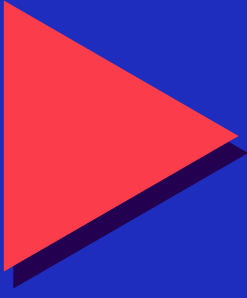
---

124 The Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE), <https://www.un-page.org/about/who-we-are>.

125 For more details please visit our webpage on [Climate Change, Displacement and Labour Migration](#).



Improving access to technical and vocational skills development for women to facilitate green jobs creation. @ ILO/Alan Dow/BMET.



## ► References

---

ADB (Asian Development Bank). 2014. *Nepal May See 10% GDP Loss from Glacier Melts, Climate Extremes*. Available at: <https://www.adb.org/news/nepal-may-see-10-gdp-loss-glacier-melts-climate-extremes-report>.

Adger, Neil, Ricardo Safra de Campos, and Tasneem Siddiqui. 2020. *Priorities for Government Action on Climate Change Migration*, IOM Environmental Portal. Available at: <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/priorities-government-action-climate-change-migration>.

Anand, S. 1986. "Migrant Construction Workers in Kerala: A Case Study of Tamil Workers in Kerala". Unpublished M.Phil. dissertation. New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Ansar, A., M. Sultana, and R. C. Das. 2021. "In Pursuit of Resilience: Revisiting Migration and Gender-based Violence amid COVID-19 Pandemic". In *The Other Face of Globalisation COVID 19, International Labour Migrants and Left Behind Families in Bangladesh*, edited by Tasneem Siddiqui. Dhaka: RMMRU.

Baniya, J., S. Bhattarai, B. J. Thapa, and V. Pradhan, with M. Gurung, D. Tumsa, Kambang, B. Limbu, and B. Dulal. 2020. "COVID-19 and Nepali Labour Migrants Impacts and Responses". Research Paper, Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility.

Billah, M., T. Akash, N. Ahsan, et al. 2021. "Left Behind Migrant Households: Coping with Partial or Full Suspension of Remittances". In *The Other Face of Globalisation COVID 19, International Labour Migrants and Left Behind Families in Bangladesh*, edited by Tasneem Siddiqui. Dhaka: RMMRU.

BRAC. 2020. *Rapid Perception Survey on COVID-19 Awareness and Economic Impact, BRAC Bangladesh*, 9 April. Available at: <https://brac.net/images/news/2020/Perception-Survey-Covid19.pdf>.

Castles S. and S. Vezzoli. 2009. *The Global Economic Crisis and Migration: Temporary Interruption or Structural Change?* Available at: <https://www.migrationinstitute.org/files/news/castles-and-vezzoli-the-global-economic-crisis-and-migration.pdf>.

ColomboPage. 2021. "Army Troops with FTZ Authorities Transport over 5100 Stranded FTZ Employees Home", *Sri Lanka Internet Newspaper*, 27 March. Available at: [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_20A/Mar28\\_1585336575CH.php](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_20A/Mar28_1585336575CH.php).

Desai, Renu. 2019. "The Apna Ghar Projects by Bhavanam Foundation Kerala and the Questions it Raises for Migrant Workers' Housing in Indian Cities. In Here Hope Has No Address". *Proceedings of the Workshop on Housing for Migrant Workers*. Ahmadabad: Prayas Centre for Labour Research and Action.

Ekanayake, Anoji. 2020. "Economic Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Sri Lankan Migrants in Qatar. 1 October. Available at: <https://thegenderhub.com/blog/economic-impact-of-the-covid19-pandemic-on-sri-lankan-migrants-in-qatar/>.

Foresight. 2011. "Migration and Global Environmental Change". *Final Project Report*, Government Office of Science: London.

Global Climate Risk Index, 2021. Available at: [https://germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202021\\_2.pdf](https://germanwatch.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Climate%20Risk%20Index%202021_2.pdf).

Government of Kerala. 2009. *Economic Review*. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Planning Board.

- . 2018. "Welfare to Rights: Implementation of Select Legislations: A Review". Thiruvananthapuram: Administrative Reforms Commission.
- . 2020. "Statement of the Facts on Behalf of the Government of Kerala in Suo-motu". WP(C)06/2020 filed before the Honourable Supreme Court, Government of Kerala. Available at: [https://www.livelaw.in/pdf\\_upload/pdf\\_upload-375917.pdf](https://www.livelaw.in/pdf_upload/pdf_upload-375917.pdf).
- IDMC. 2019. *Global Report on Internal Displacement*. Available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/2019-global-report-on-internal-displacement>.
- . 2020. *Internal Displacement 2020: Mid-year Update*. Available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2020%20Mid-year%20update.pdf>.
- ILO. 1951. Equal Remuneration Convention. ILC 100.
- . 1958. Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention. ILC 111.
- . 2017. *Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation: Just Transition Guidelines*. ILR. 205.
- . 2019a. Violence and Harassment Convention. ILC 190.
- . 2019b, Recommendation on Violence and Harassment, ILR 206.
- . 2019c. *Implementing the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. Towards an Inclusive, Sustainable and Just Future*. ILC 169.
- . 2019d. *Green Jobs and a Just Transition for Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific*. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_734147.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_734147.pdf).
- . 2020a. *Protecting Migrant Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Policy Brief, April. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms\\_743268.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_743268.pdf).
- . 2020b. *Protecting the Rights at Work of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS\\_748485/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-migration/publications/WCMS_748485/lang-en/index.htm).
- . 2020c. *Contagion or Starvation, the Dilemma Facing Informal Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_744005/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_744005/lang-en/index.htm).
- . 2020d. *At Least 500,000 Migrant Workers Want to Return Home at the Earliest, Says Report*. Available at: <https://apmigration.ilo.org/news/at-least-500-000-migrant-workers-want-to-return-home-at-the-earliest-says-report>.
- . 2020e. *COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy: Immediate Responses and Policy Challenges*. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_743623.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/briefingnote/wcms_743623.pdf).
- . 2020f. *COVID-19 and the World of Work: A Focus on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_746893.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_746893.pdf).
- . 2020g. *Impact of COVID-19 on Nepali Migrant Workers: Protecting Nepali Migrant Workers during the Health and Economic Crisis: Challenges and the Way Forward*. Available at: <http://apmigration.ilo.org/resources/impact-of-covid-19-on-nepali-migrant-workers-protecting-nepali-migrant-workers-during-the-health-and-economic-crisis>.
- . 2020h. *Employer's Guide on Managing your Workforce During COVID-19*.



—. 2020i. *COVID-19 Response and Recovery in Countries Affected by Disasters and Climate Vulnerability: Challenges and Opportunities*, 17 July. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/WCMS\\_751300/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/WCMS_751300/lang--en/index.htm).

—. N.d. *Sustaining Peace Through Employment and Decent Work*. [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/WCMS\\_769059/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-promotion/recovery-and-reconstruction/WCMS_769059/lang--en/index.htm).

IOM. 2016. *Assessing the Climate Change Environmental Degradation and Migration Nexus in South Asia*. Available at: [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/environmental\\_degradation\\_nexus\\_in\\_south\\_asia.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/environmental_degradation_nexus_in_south_asia.pdf).

—. 2020. *Rapid Assessment Needs and Vulnerabilities of Internal and International Return Migrants in Bangladesh*. Available at: [https://bangladesh.iom.int/sites/default/files/publication/BGD\\_Returnee\\_edited.pdf](https://bangladesh.iom.int/sites/default/files/publication/BGD_Returnee_edited.pdf).

Islam, Zyma and Md Aminul Islam. 2020. "Doomed, Either Way", *The Daily Star*, 6 April. Available at: <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/doomed-either-way-1889980>.

Khandelwal, Divya Verma Rajiv, Benoy Peter, Divya Varma, and Shabarinath Nair. 2020 *ILO Road Map for Development of Policy Framework for the Inclusion of Internal Migrant Workers in India*, ILO. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new\\_delhi/documents/publication/wcms\\_763352.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_763352.pdf).

Kebebew, Tadesse, Caroline Pellaton, and Mara Tignino. 2020. "Climate Change Displacement and the Role of the Right to Water in Fighting COVID-19", IOM Environmental Portal. Available at: <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/climate-change-displacement-and-role-right-water-fighting-covid-19>.

Kugelman, M. 2020. *Climate-Induced Displacement: South Asia's Clear and Present Danger*. Wilson Center. Available at: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/climate-induced-displacement-south-asias-clear-and-present-danger>.

Kumar, P. 2016. "Contours of Internal Migration in India: Certain Experiences from Kerala". MPRA Paper No. 80586. Munich Personal RePEc Archive.

—. 2020. "No Takers for Government's Migrant Repatriation Plan", *The Kathmandu Post*, 15 October. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/10/15/no-takers-for-government-s-migrant-repatriation-plan>.

Kuttikrishnan, A. P. 2019. "State Interventions for Promoting Inclusive Education for Children of Migrant Workers in Kerala". Presentation made at the Consultation on Inclusion of Migrant Children held on 24 June. Thiruvananthapuram.

Maharajan, A., R. S. De Campos, and C. Singh. 2020. *Migration and Climate Change in South Asia: What Happens when Spatial Diversification of Livelihood is not an Option Anymore*. ICIMOD, August. Available at: <https://www.icimod.org/article/migration-and-climate-change-in-south-asia-what-happens-when-spatial-diversification-of-livelihoods-is-not-an-option>.

Mandal, Chandan Kumar. 2020. "Government Considers Bringing Back Nepali Migrant Workers from Covid-19-affected Countries". *The Kathmandu Post*, 5 May. Available at: <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2020/05/05/government-considers-bringing-back-nepali-migrant-workers-from-covid-19-affected-countries>.

Martin, M., Y. H. Kang, M. Billah, T. Siddiqui, R. Black, and D. Kniveton. 2012. "Making Migration Decisions amid Climate Change in Bangladesh". Climate Change Related Migration in Bangladesh Briefing Paper No. 1.

—. 2017. "Climate Induced Migration in Bangladesh, The need for policy realignment", *Development Policy Review*, doi:10.1111/dpr.12260.

MDP (Migration Data Portal). 2020. *Migration Data Relevant for COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/migration-data-relevant-covid-19-pandemic>.

—. 2021. *Environmental Migration*. Available at: [https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/environmental\\_migration](https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/environmental_migration).

Mercer-Blackman, V. and Y. Li. 2021. "Six Reasons Why Remittances Soared in South Asia During COVID-19", *The World Bank Blogs*. Available at: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/six-reasons-why-remittances-soared-south-asia-during-covid-19>.

Mitra, Rohini, Chitra Rawat, and Nidhi Menon. 2021. "Budget Acknowledges Migrant Distress but Falls Short in Key Areas", *Indiaspend*. Available at: <https://www.indiaspend.com/budget/budget-acknowledges-migrant-distress-but-falls-short-in-key-areas-722383>.

Narayanan, S., C. Oldiges, and S. Saha. 2020. *Employment Guarantee during Times of COVID-19: Pro-poor and Pro-return-migrant?* Mumbai: Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research. Available at: <http://www.igidr.ac.in/pdf/publication/WP-2020-034.pdf>.

National Labour Force Survey 2017–18. Available at: [https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/20/bNLF3-III\\_Final-Report.pdf](https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/20/bNLF3-III_Final-Report.pdf).

Nikkei Asia. 2020. *Coronavirus Wrecks South Asian Migrant Livelihoods in Middle East*. May. Available at: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Coronavirus/Coronavirus-wrecks-South-Asian-migrant-livelihoods-in-Middle-East>.

Oelz, M., R. K. Dhir, and M. Harsdorff. 2017. *Indigenous Peoples and Climate Change: From Victims to Change Agents through Decent Work*, ILO. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/WCMS\\_551189/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/indigenous-tribal/WCMS_551189/lang--en/index.htm).

Padma, T.V. 2020. *When Natural Disasters Cross the Path of COVID-19*, Prevention Web. Available at: <https://eos.org/articles/when-natural-disasters-cross-the-path-of-covid-19>.

Parvez, Sohel. 2020. "More than a crore with no job and hope", *The Daily Star*. 1 May. Available at: <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/more-crore-no-job-and-hope-1898554>.

Parks, Robbie M., and Lisa Thalheimer. 2020. *The Hidden Burden of Pandemics, Climate Change and Migration on Mental Health*. IOM.

Peter, Benoy, and K. Gupta. 2012. "Implications of Forest Conservation Interventions of the Judiciary on Human Migration: An In-depth Exploration into the Causes of Labour Migration to Plywood Industry in Kerala". *Indian Journal of Social Development* 12 (1): 1–14.

Peter, Benoy, and V. Narendran, 2017. *God's Own Workforce: Unravelling Labour Migration to Kerala*. Perumbavoor: Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development.

Peter, Benoy, S. Sanghvi, and V. Narendran. 2020. "Inclusion of Interstate Migrant Workers in Kerala and Lessons for India", *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics* 63: 1065–1086. Available at: <https://rdcu.be/cdPAZ>.

Rashid, R. S., H. M. F. Jahid, and R. Nasrin. 2021. "Facing COVID-19 in Countries of Destination: Health Shocks, Income Risks, Detention, Deportation and Wage Theft". In *The Other Face of Globalisation COVID 19, International Labour Migrants and Left Behind Families in Bangladesh*, edited by Tasneem Siddiqui. Dhaka: RMMRU.

Rigaud, K., et al. 2018. *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*. World Bank, Washington, DC. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/2946>.

RMMRU (Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit). 2020. "The Other Face of Globalization COVID-19, Arbitrary Return of Bangladeshi Migrants and their Unpaid Dues", Policy Brief 29, Dhaka. Available at: <http://www.rmmru.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Policy-Brief-30.pdf>.

- . 2021. *Labour migration from Bangladesh 2020: Achievements and challenges*, Dhaka.
- Sengupta, Moitrayee. 2020. "A Triple Crisis in the Indian Sundarbans", IOM Environmental Portal. Available at: <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/triple-crisis-indian-sundarbans>.
- Shah, A., J. Lerche, R. Axelby, D. Benbabaali, B. Donegan, J. Raj, and V. Thakur. 2018. *Ground Down by Growth: Tribe, Caste, Class and Inequality in Twenty-first Century India*. Delhi: OUP.
- Shrestha, B. 2020. "Hundreds of Nepalese Stuck at India Border amid COVID-19 Lockdown", *Al Jazeera*. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/4/1/hundreds-of-nepalese-stuck-at-india-border-amid-covid-19-lockdown>.
- Siddiqui, Tasmeen, and R. Mahmood. 2015 *Impact of Migration on Poverty and Local Development*. Dhaka: RMMRU.
- Siddiqui, Tasneem, M. R. A. Bhuiyan, P. K. Das, G. Chakraborty, and M. Hasan. 2018a. *Accommodating Migration in Climate Change Adaptation: a GBM Delta Bangladesh Perspective*, RMMRU: Dhaka. Available at: <http://www.rmmru.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Accommodating-Migration-in-Climate-Change-Adaptation.pdf>.
- Siddiqui, Tasmeen, A. Nelim, C. R. Shabab, and M. Hasan. 2018b. *Impact of Migration on Poverty and Growth in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: RMMRU.
- Siddiqui, Tasmeen, L. Szaboova, W. N. Adger, R. S. Campos, M. R. A. Bhuiyan, and T. Billah. 2020. "Policy Opportunities and Constraints for Addressing Urban Precarity of Migrant Populations", *Global Policy*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12855>.
- Siddiqui, Tasmeen (ed.). 2021. *The Other Face of Globalisation: COVID-19, International Labour Migrants and Left-behind Families in Bangladesh*. RMMRU. Available at: <http://www.rmmru.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/The-Other-Face-of-Globalisation.pdf>.
- Sorker, M. N. I. 2020. "COVID-19 Pandemic Profoundly Affects Bangladeshi Workers Abroad with Consequences for Origin Communities", *Migration Information Source*. July. Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/covid-19-pandemic-profoundlyaffects-bangladeshi-workers-abroad-consequences-origin>.
- Srivastava, R. 2020. *Integrating Migration and Development Policy in India: A Case Study of Three Indian States*. New Delhi: Institute for Human Development, Centre for Employment Studies. Working Paper Series 03.
- Sydney, Chloe. 2020. *COVID-19, a Risk Multiplier for Future Distress Migration and Displacement?* IOM Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division. Available at: <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/blogs/covid-19-risk-multiplier-future-distress-migration-and-displacement>.
- Supreme Court of India. 2020. Status Report, Alok Srivastava versus Union of India.
- The Hindu. 2020. "Coronavirus | U.P., Bihar Migrants can now Avail Ration Portability", 1 May. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/coronavirus-up-bihar-migrants-can-now-avail-ration-portability/article31484347.ece>.
- The Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE). Available at: <https://www.un-page.org/about/who-we-are>.
- UNDRR (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction). 2015. *The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030*. Available at: <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>.
- UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). 2015. "The Paris Agreement", 12 December. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

United Nations. 2021. 68,000 Sri Lankans Awaiting Return – Foreign Secretary, Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, 3 January. Available at: <https://www.un.int/srilanka/news/68000-sri-lankans-awaiting-return-%E2%80%93-foreign-secretary>.

UN OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). 2001. *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. New York. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/idps/43ce1cff2/guiding-principles-internal-displacement.html>.

Warner, K. and T. Afifi. 2014. “Where the Rain Falls: Evidence from Eight Countries on how Vulnerable Households use Migration to Manage the Risk of Rainfall Vulnerability and Food Insecurity”, *Climate and Development*, 6 (1): 1–17.

