

Terms of Reference for Tenth Round of SANEI

Perspective on Inter/Intra Regional Migration

South Asia presents a diverse range of migratory flows, including internal, international (inter-regional), and intra-regional movements. The trends and patterns of the movements have become complex and multidimensional in nature. During the centuries for example people moved within South Asia due to economic reasons, natural disasters, wars, and religious and ethnic conflicts. Today, factors such as population pressure and poverty, economic imbalances, environmental degradation, employment opportunities, and search for peace and security have triggered both internal and international migration.

The South Asia region shows two distinct patterns in terms of international (inter-regional) flows; emigration for permanent settlement in Europe, Australasia and North America and temporary contract labor migration to the Middle East and a few South-East Asian countries e.g. Malaysia. These flows have profound effects on the countries of origin as well as destination. Foreign remittances are important source of foreign exchange earnings for the source countries; they account for more than half of Bangladesh's development budget, 40 percent of India's trade deficit and most of Pakistan's foreign exchange inflows. Remittances also help change the consumption patterns, improve the living standards, healthcare, education standard and social security at individual and household levels.

While foreign remittances have received some attention in research and policy making, social dimensions of emigration, workers' rights, recruiting systems operating in labor sending countries of the region, and changing intergenerational and gender relations have largely been ignored. There is also little work on the acquisition of knowledge and skill during the overseas employment that contributes to the human resource development and more income generation at the individual level. Benefits associated with the return migration of overseas workers in terms of transfer of skills and technology could be enormous for source countries. On the negative side of migration, the effects of emigration of highly qualified workers known as "brain drain" on reducing the skilled and trained workforce of labor sending countries have not been explored.

Another important dimension of inter-regional flows is the feminization of migration. However, the share of women in overseas migration differs across the region; in Bangladesh for example, their proportion is quite low whereas in Sri Lanka it has increased from 33 percent to

65 percent between 1988 and 1999. Female emigration for contract employment is not common in Pakistan, but a large number of women from Kerala (India) do move overseas for employment.

Regarding intra-regional migration, India and Pakistan, the two largest countries of South Asia, are the sixth and tenth top countries respectively in the globe for accommodating large number of migrants (and refugees). In India, it is due to economic reasons, whereas in case of Pakistan it is mainly due to wars and conflicts in Afghanistan. Nepalese move to India in search of better economic opportunities, though the movement of Nepalese to the Middle East may have affected the magnitude of this cross-border migration. Pakistan hosts about 2 million Afghan refugees. Also, it is not difficult to find Bangladeshis working in Karachi, the largest city of Pakistan. The number of Sri Lankan refugees returning from India and unsuccessful asylum seekers returning from abroad has also increased. All these intra-regional migratory flows in South Asia are not well researched.

Rural-urban migration is also pronounced in South Asia, contributing to rapid urbanization. Migration to cities has been a predominantly male phenomenon, but more recently there has been a growing share of female migrants. Because of declining economic opportunities in rural areas, there are some indications of family migration to cities. What are the labor market implications of rural-urban migration? Does it contribute to rural development and poverty reduction? Or does it merely transfer poverty to cities? Are internal flows linked to inter-regional migration?

For the Tenth Round of SANEI, research proposals are invited on the broad theme of migration, both internal and intra regional migration within South Asia and inter regional migration from South Asia to the rest of the world. Proposals will be policy oriented and may cover and no more than two of the following areas:

- (a) Incentives and barriers to migration, including poverty, access to credit, immigration laws and other barriers.
- (b) Implications for the labour market at the origin and destination.
- (c) Human capital and migration, including skill acquisition, “brain drain” and “brain circulation” etc.

- (d) Differential migration of men and women and its social and economic impact on those left behind.
- (e) Contract migration, recruiting systems, possible exploitation of recruits including human trafficking.
- (f) National, regional and multilateral approaches to legal and illegal migration.
- (g) Migrant Rights and human rights.
- (h) Impact of remittances on the household of the emigrant and on economy of the migrant's country
- (i) Any other relevant issue for South Asia.

We expect the researchers to choose a few (not more than two) topics. Each research proposal will make explicit the issues chosen for the analysis, the research methodology and the data to be used in the analysis, likely result and the budget. The relevant deadlines details for the format of the proposal can be found at the SANEI website <http://www.saneinetwork.net>