

## **Transnational mediated migration: Cross-border recruiters as a pre- and 'post'-pandemic mode of governance of migrant labour regimes in Asia**

Katharine Jones, Associate Professor, Coventry University and  
Co-Director, Migration for Development & Equality Research Hub.

### **Abstract**

Over the last half century, the cross-border recruitment industry has transformed global labour markets, especially in temporary labour migration flows in Asia. Recruiters broker access to jobs. They also facilitate migration, which includes the multi-faceted roles of obtaining visas, arranging birth certificates and passports, booking transportation, finding accommodation, connecting migrants to healthcare, providing training, and offering credit and remittance services. A rich empirical literature documents their pervasiveness in contemporary patterns of migration, including throughout – and despite – the recent global pandemic. An emerging conceptual literature theorises cross-border recruiters as 'mediators' of migration, as migrant 'infrastructure' and as migrant 'brokerage'. Yet, to date, the concrete and dynamic ways in which cross-border recruiters regulate the social reproduction of migrants, their waged and unwaged lives as well as of capitalist labour relations remains largely unconceptualized. This paper draws on research conducted pre- and 'post'-pandemic with recruitment agencies, migrant brokers and migrants in South Asia and the Middle East. It theorizes cross-border recruiters as a mode of private governance of the reproduction of migrant labour – and of migration. In so doing, the paper engages with the concept of labour regimes and theories of social reproduction in the context of transnational migration in the Global South.

### **Biography**

Katharine Jones is an Associate Professor at Coventry University and Co-Director of the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) [MIDEQ, Migration for Development & Equality Research Hub](#). Educated at the Universities of Newcastle upon Tyne and Manchester, Katharine has over 20 years of experience conducting migration research in academia, in civil society, for foundations and for governments. Over the past decade, she has specialised in researching and writing about cross-border recruitment intermediaries in Europe and Asia. Her research is motivated by solidarity with people who migrate as well as a desire to challenge the accelerating global precarity of migration and employment. In recent years Katharine has led funded research on intermediaries for UKRI, the British Academy, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, Humanity United and Open Society Foundations. At her home in Glasgow, Scotland, Katharine is a trustee of the

Scottish Refugee Council, of leading migrants' rights law centre JustRights Scotland, and of A Moments Peace Theatre Company.